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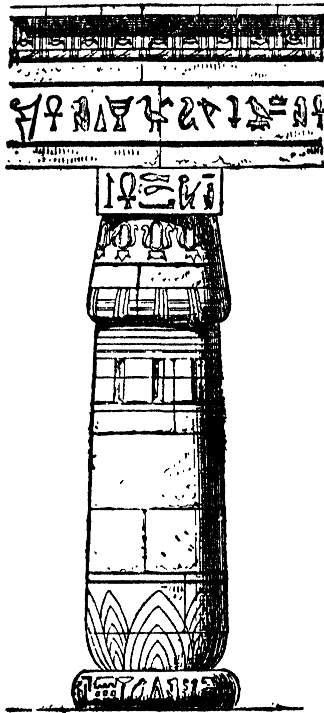


A SPECIMEN OF
EGYPTIAN ARCHITECTURE

THE WORKS OF MAN

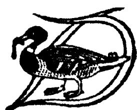
BY

LISLE MARCH PHILLIPPS

AUTHOR OF "FORM AND COLOUR," ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

HERBERT READ



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INTRODUCTION

By Herbert Read

LISLE MARCH PHILLIPPS was born at Cove, Tiverton, Devon, in 1863, a member of the ancient family of March Phillipps de Lisle of Garendon and Grace Dieu. He was educated at Blundell's School, Tiverton, and then an early love of the sea led to his entering the Merchant Service. Later he joined a friend as a tea-planter in Ceylon, and spent some years there. His interest in art and architecture was already aroused, and he travelled extensively in pursuit of this interest. He was in South Africa when the war broke out, and at once joined Rimington's Guides as a private. He was with this regiment until they were disbanded, receiving a commission and returning as a Captain. His letters written during the campaign were later collected and published under the title " With Rimington " (1901). In 1902 he married Isabel Coulson, a sister of Evelyn Coulson, M.P. After his marriage he settled in England and devoted himself continuously to writing, the results of which appeared eventually as " In the Desert " (1905), a book of travel; the volume now reprinted; and " Form and Colour " (1915). " Europe Unbound," a polemic occasioned by the war, appeared in 1916, and at the time of his death, which occurred on January 31st, 1917, Lisle March Phillipps was engaged in editing the letters of Mrs. Drew, the daughter of Gladstone. Of his books other than " The Works of Man " it may be said that whilst all of them are interesting, none of them attains the distinction of his masterpiece. " Form and Colour,"

intended as a complement to "The Works of Man," is disappointing; it takes a doubtful proposition, that form is the art idiom of the West, colour the art idiom of the East, and attempts to make the whole field of western art conform to this rigid distinction. But "The Works of Man," first published in 1911, was at once acclaimed by a discriminating public, and a new edition was printed in 1914. The second edition has now for some time been out-of-print, much to the regret of many students of art who never cease to recommend it; indeed, the interest in this book has been so persistent that the publisher has decided to reissue it after an interval of 18 years.

Good art criticism is rare in England. We have had Reynolds and Ruskin, and Bernhard Berenson and Roger Fry. There has been no real tradition in the criticism of art at once well-informed and vigorous, and restricted to its proper sphere. The result has been disastrous for the general reputation of English art, especially abroad. Ruskin was too wayward and too voluminous to make any definite impression, and his chief enthusiasm, the painting of Turner, was never supported in foreign eyes by examples of the master's work. It is only quite recently, and then largely as a result of the invasion of foreign critics, that the great significance and worth of many phases of English art have come to be universally recognised. The part played by English manuscripts in the early Gothic period, the supremacy in their craft of the English portrait-painters of the 18th century, the extraordinary genius of William Blake, the revolutionary influence of Constable's "innocent eye," and finally the imaginative grandeur of Turner —these at last are being recognised, but not as a result of the efforts of English critics.

The weakness of English art criticism has been due to two causes: to the low place which the visual arts have occupied in a puritanical scale of values,

and to an innate English inability to philosophise about an abstract quality like beauty. We have had a good deal of empirical appreciation, such as we get in Walpole's " Anecdotes " and Hazlitt's " Principal Picture Galleries in England " ; and every Smelfungus and Mundungus of the Grand Tour records his *jejune* reactions to " Guido " and the accepted masters. Reynolds based his " Discourses " on the French aestheticians of the preceding century, and on his own practice in painting. It was a sound basis and we refer to his principles far too seldom. Ruskin was a craftsman, too, and an ubiquitous traveller ; he lacked a logical mind, but he had a magnificent sensibility ; and he was patient in observation. But his criticism is too passionate and individual to be the basis of a tradition. I know of no critic of art after Ruskin who rises to the universal implications of his activity until we come to Lisle March Phillipps.

He has neither the practical craft-knowledge of Reynolds nor the sensibility of Ruskin ; but he has two qualities of the greatest value : he has an objective interest in the work of art and has experienced it visually ; and he realises that the work of art is more than an individual expression—is, indeed, a racial and temporal expression. " Art in its great creative phases is an utterance, an embodiment, of the ruling thought and prevalent conviction of an age. It is an expression of life registered at the moment when life is most capable of articulate utterance." That is his central doctrine, the guiding motive which led him to refer his visual experiences, his sensibility, to a wider background of history and literature. He knew, to take an apparently trivial example, that to put oneself at the right point of view to appreciate 18th century furniture, one must understand the life out of which it grew, and for this purpose he recommended the reading, not only of historical works by de Barthélemy, Pierre de Nolhac,

Michelet and Gauthier-Villars, but also the memoirs of the duc de Luynes, Saint-Simon, and Marmontel, and the "Portraits" of Sainte-Beuve! He saw art as an expression, not of any age, but of just those ages which attain the coherence we call a style—"the natural effect of a certain definiteness of inward thought and emotion." "Art is always an expression of life, but it is in proportion as it gathers into the unity of a style that it becomes expressive of collective and social attributes in contradistinction to the petty interests of an art subject to individual caprices." He estimates "the unity of a style" and there is no higher mode of art criticism. This leads, I think, to a certain impatience with fantasy, as we see in his criticism of Arab architecture. He demanded of art "an intellectual self-respect," which only shows that he had not finally exorcised one of the fatal limitations of English art criticism—the puritanical bias I have already mentioned. There is in the best Arab fantasy, in the Alhambra, for example, a distinct unity of style; everything is coherent and consistent, the natural effect of a certain definiteness of emotion if not definiteness of thought. To demand dignity in such a style is like demanding veracity in the "Thousand and One Nights." But though this prejudice may blind the critic in one spot, it does not interfere with his general vision. The originality of his views on Egyptian art is an admirable instance of his integrity. He was, as far as I know, the first critic to question the æsthetic presumptions of the Egyptologists. (He has since been ably seconded by Professor Wilhelm Worringer, who did not, of course, have any knowledge of Phillipps' essay.) He found in Egyptian art "a perpetuation of the primitive," and arrived at the remarkable conclusion that Egyptian art stopped dead because Egyptian intellect stopped dead. I call it a remarkable conclusion, because March Phillipps compels us to admit a correlation between art, which is a sensuous activity,

and the intellect. But intellect in this sense is the faculty that determines life itself: without intellect life stagnates, and without this dynamism of life there can be no art. This idea he illustrated in a more positive light in his essay on Greek art, and perhaps he lingers here with most sympathy. Here was an art founded on the appropriate sense—on sight as an independent faculty. But what was conceived æsthetically was interpreted ethically. The harmony revealed by the eye was taken as the embodiment of spiritual harmony; the beauty of the mind and the beauty of the body acted as mutual stimuli, and so established the most enduring of æsthetic traditions. But this preference did not blind March Phillipps to the qualities of a style so different as the gothic; because here his realisation that all styles must be judged in relation to the civilisation they express came to his aid, and he willingly admitted the perfect fitness of Gothic architecture as the expression of medieval life and its spiritual emotions. The same theory carries him triumphantly through the art of the Renaissance, which in all its mutations, lasting down to our own day, follows the restless fluctuations of the human intellect. Not the least merit of this remarkable book is its consistency; it is the work of a man who had thought out first principles before indulging in particular criticism.

I would like in conclusion to draw attention to the fine quality of the prose style of Lisle March Phillipps. It has not, of course, the impassioned grandeur of Ruskin, nor the classical dignity of Reynolds, but it is clear, nervous, and at times eloquent. There are perhaps no purple passages to which attention need be drawn, but the general clarity is shot with brilliant phrases and vivid epithets. For these virtues alone the book deserves to be rescued from the oblivion which in this over-printed age too easily overwhelms a work of distinction.

HERBERT READ.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE following chapters contain nothing but the curtest and most summary outline of the subjects they deal with. I would remind the reader that, in such a survey, detail is out of place, and that to dwell on minute qualifications or partial exceptions to the broad rule followed would merely tend to confusion of thought. Everything depends, in such a bird's-eye view as is here attempted, on whether the main characteristic features have been truly appreciated. I have, for example, signalised immobility and uniformity as the characteristics of Egyptian art among the arts of the world. If in that I am right, then it appears to me I must be right also in endeavouring to bring out these positive and salient facts with all available force, and in declining to waste time over partial and temporary exceptions which do but confuse the main issue. To act thus is not necessarily to be uninstructed. I am sufficiently familiar with the works of Sir G. Maspero and others during recent years to be aware of some of the slight divergences which from time to time occur in Egyptian art, and of the differences which, as some urge, faintly distinguish the schools of Memphis, Hermopolis, Thebes and the Eastern Delta. But had these trifling inflections and diversities been dwelt upon

in the two chapters given to Egyptian art what would have been the consequence? The chief and really significant attributes of that art, its immobility and uniformity as compared with other arts, would have been lost sight of, and the meaning of those attributes and the light they cast on Egyptian character and civilisation never could have been extracted. If what has been stated is true; if it is true that Egyptian art is unintellectual, and that in this respect it is a perfect image of Egyptian life, then it seems to me that these facts are of sufficient importance as to justify precise statement, while to entangle oneself in insignificant distinctions would render such statement impossible.

The reader will, I hope, bear this consideration in mind. It applies more or less to all the following chapters, to those especially dealing, besides Egyptian art, with Greek, Arab, Roman and Gothic; for in each of these it has been my endeavour to seize in the art the racial trait, the gift or characteristic contributed by that people, and which embodies their own racial temperament, and this has to be done, not by frittering away the reader's attention over meaningless and purposeless details, but by going straight to the positive, main attribute, and sticking to that, and wringing the sense out of that.

One chapter I ought, perhaps, to have rewritten; I mean the chapter dealing with Greek refinements in architecture. Since it was published there has appeared a book by Mr. Goodyear which throws new light on the subject. Mr. Goodyear shows, by illustration and argument, that the explanation of

these refinements as corrections of optical illusions is not invariably applicable, and cannot be advanced as a final solution. I am not sure that one portion of his reasoning is quite sound. It is scarcely correct to say that Penrose's view was that these inflections were designed as corrections "of optical effects of irregularity," and thence to argue that a strict mechanical regularity must be indicated as the ideal aimed at. What we have to decide when we find, for instance, the Greeks correcting a disagreeable effect of sagging, is whether they are correcting it because it was an appearance of sagging or because it was disagreeable. If the former, if they thought merely of the apparent divergence from regularity and wished to correct that, then strict apparent regularity must, in their eyes, have been a recommendation. But if the latter, if they corrected the sag because it was disagreeable to look at, then the end in view is not regularity but the pleasing of the sense of sight.

To this latter view I believe we shall more and more come in dealing with Greek art. Meantime, I have allowed my own chapter on this subject to stand for the present, since as yet the whole matter is more or less in a state of flux and uncertainty. In that chapter I accept as a working hypothesis the theory that the Greek refinements were corrections of optical illusions. Many were so, no doubt, but whether that was their aim and object is another question. Most optical illusions have a weakening, deforming effect which is offensive to the eye, and if they were corrected on this account it would be

quite misleading to say that the Greeks had any animus against optical illusions as such. What the Greeks were after in all cases, I believe, was the form and outline most pleasing to the eye. In the case, for instance, of the entasis, or swelling of the shaft, they were not content to add such a convexity as would correct the apparent caving in of a straight-sided column, but to that convexity they give such a contour as would but express vigour and strength, and be therefore most pleasing as a study of form. This, no doubt, was their object from the first. It remains true, of course, that, whether we make the correction of illusion or the search for perfect form the object in view, a unique sensitiveness of vision is equally the indispensable instrument. The reader should make himself acquainted with Mr. Goodyear's works on the subject.

L. MARCH PHILLIPPS

SATWELL,
HENLEY-ON-THAMES

INTRODUCTION

THE aim of the present book is easily explained. I have made no attempt to treat art from the æsthetic standpoint, as a realisation of the beautiful, and as controlled by principles which have that realisation for their object. My desire has been to confine myself to the consideration of art as an expression of human life and character. Selecting some of the great periods, or creative epochs, in the art of the world, I have endeavoured to deduce from them the distinguishing qualities, limitations, and point of view of the races which produced them.

The note of style which characterises such epochs, and which declares itself in the coherence and uniformity of all the aspects and details of their art, is, as we all know, the natural effect of a certain definiteness of inward thought and emotion. Just as coherent speech can only result from coherent and articulate thought, so too coherent art, which is in itself a kind of speech, can only result from a similar mental coherence. The more strongly this coherence, or note of style as we call it, is felt in art, the more will the life of that period be dominated by

an equivalent order of ideas. Art is always an expression of life, but it is in proportion as it gathers into the unity of a style that it becomes expressive of collective and social attributes in contradistinction to the petty interests of an art subject to individual caprices.

These moments then, the moment when art is harmonised into definite styles, are the moments when it is most charged and saturated with human significance. It is at these moments that it incarnates the spirit of its age, and it is, therefore, at such times that we ourselves may hope to extract most meaning from it. Not often are the minds of men so agreed as to admit of such a unity of expression, but when the agreement takes place and the great styles arise, then there can be found, as it seems to me, no other sort of evidence, or literary or other record, which can for a moment compare in vividness with the testimony of art. Not only are the positive qualities and what is definite and determined in racial character saliently depicted, but, by contrast with what is given, what is not given also—that is to say, the limitations and deficiencies of such character—are just as clearly suggested.

The interest I seek being of this human kind, I have been led to deal in the following chapters chiefly with architecture, for architecture, being the most broadly human of all the arts, is the richest in

human character. In its coming and going across the world-stage each race—Egyptian or Greek, Roman or Goth or Arab—is represented by its own style of building, and these styles are so patently the personification of racial characteristics that they themselves, in their antagonisms or alliances, seem to possess a living individuality, and to act over again, in a sort of stony Dumb Crambo, the history of their time. Even of the issues of such struggles, and of the degrees in which each human element survived and influenced the rest, the record is faithfully kept by succeeding architecture in the blending of the structural traits proper to each race.

If to the study of such subjects we would bring nothing of our own; if, standing within the temple or the mosque or the minster, we would so give ourselves to the forms around us that these should seem to utter us as completely as they once uttered their builders, then we should have attained to the point of view of those vanished generations and should see and know them as they are.

I do not say this can be done. I am sure that I have not succeeded in doing it. The following attempted interpretations are sure to be full of defects, and, as is the way of criticism, probably most clearly reveal their author's limitations when they insist on the limitations of others. Nevertheless

INTRODUCTION

I cannot help feeling sure that art really possesses this power of instilling into us the spirit of a past time and people. The treasure sought is there, and if these scratchings fail to reveal the extent of it, they may perhaps show others where to dig deeper and with more success.

Most of the material of this book has appeared in articles in the *Edinburgh* and *Contemporary Reviews*, and I desire to express my sincere thanks to the editors of those periodicals for their kindness in allowing me to make the present use of it.

It is difficult, I may add, when applying the same theory to various circumstances, entirely to avoid repetition. I have done my best in this direction, but where clearness of treatment seemed to demand it, I have thought it better to repeat myself than risk obscurity.

L. MARCH PHILLIPPS

SATWELL,
HENLEY-ON-THAMES

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RESULTS of two very different kinds may be obtained from the study of art. Either we may obtain an insight into the laws and principles of art itself, or we may obtain an insight into the lives and characters of those by whom the art was evolved. Unity, symmetry, proportion, the subordination of the parts to the whole are among the ideas associated with the former, the æsthetic point of view, while the relations of man to his Maker, his mental development, and the occupations and pursuits of his daily life are among the ideas belonging to the latter, or human point of view. The two sets of ideas are quite distinct. It is not every school of art which possesses any definite æsthetic significance at all. Not many races have seriously considered the problems of unity, symmetry and

proportion, and in the works of not many races are the answers to such problems embodied. On the other hand, be the æsthetic value of any kind of art what it may, its human interest is an assured factor. This is always present: nor, perhaps, will it be found that there ever survives to later generations a more graphic and convincing record of the life of past races and ages than is contained in the characteristic art through which that life was uttered.

We may go even a step farther. Not only are these rival interests in art often disjoined and opposed to each other, but it happens frequently that what we must admit, from the æsthetic standpoint, to be the defects and blemishes of a style will be actually the chief source of its human interest and significance. No one, for example, would, I suppose, deny that the restless and fantastic impulses of Arab architecture, rendered as they are in bad brickwork or crumbling masonry, are, æsthetically speaking, a defect and a blemish; but, at the same time, no one can consider the style as an embodiment of the Arab character and temperament without being led to perceive that all that is most lifelike and convincing in its interpretation consists in those very qualities which are an æsthetic disfigurement. This being so, it is evidently the first condition of sane criticism to distinguish clearly between methods of analysis which yield such totally different results. We must know in what sense we are to understand the critic's language, and whether the return yielded by the art in question is in the nature of æsthetic pleasure or human interest. Yet this necessary condition of

sane criticism is, as a matter of fact, very rarely attended to. I could point out to the reader at least fifty books on Gothic architecture the greater number of which, so far from attempting to discriminate between the interest of the style as a record of mediæval life and its value as an embodiment of æsthetic laws and principles, mix, involve, and transpose the two kinds of criticism in such a way that the merits of one kind often come out, by a sort of jugglery, as the merits of the other. The result of this confusion usually is, that not only is æsthetic language more than ever obscured but that the especial merit and use of the art dealt with, as a vigorous representation of life, is also hidden from us. To praise a thing for what it has not got is the surest way of hiding from us what it has got. Led off on a false scent we lose sight of what the subject really has to offer, and by the time we have discovered that its æsthetic pretensions are more or less of a myth, we have forgotten that it ever had any other claim to our notice.

In a collection of lectures recently published by Mr. Blomfield, under the title of "The Mistress Art," there occurs an analysis of Egyptian architecture which, as it seems to me, is prone to fall into this error of praising on the wrong grounds. Mr. Blomfield is well known as one who writes, not only with technical knowledge but thoughtfully and suggestively, on architectural matters. There is the less need, therefore, to say that the essays forming the present volume are, in general, full of ideas which will repay a careful study. This being premised, I may pass at once to the point I desire to

examine. Mr. Blomfield treats Egyptian architecture as a style of first-rate æsthetic excellence and power. Nothing is said of any other interest it may possess; but it is, we are given clearly to understand, in what it attains to as an expression of æsthetic laws and principles that its main value for us consists. It seems to me that this process of reasoning should be reversed. It appears very doubtful whether Egyptian architecture, or Egyptian art in general, was based on any clear knowledge of æsthetic principles, and whether, consequently, it has any æsthetic teaching to communicate to us. On the other hand, if the Egyptian temples have little æsthetic value, they have another merit of almost equal consequence. They shed an extraordinarily vivid light not only on the daily lives and habits of the Egyptians but on their characters and on their mental attributes and limitations. They enable us in some degree to realise what we may call the Egyptian point of view, and perhaps even to allocate to the Nile civilisation its approximate place among the civilisations of the world. This interpretative interest Egyptian art, and more particularly Egyptian architecture, possesses, and this interest Mr. Blomfield's æsthetic treatment of the subject tends inevitably to obscure.

Let us, to begin with, see what it is exactly that Mr. Blomfield finds in Egyptian architecture. He treats the subject in a chapter entitled "The Grand Manner," and in this chapter the Nile temples are coupled and equalled with the Doric temple of the Greeks in the degree and kind of æsthetic insight they exhibit. We know what the qualities are which

the champions of the grand manner have always claimed for it; they are the great classic qualities of unity, proportion and the subordination of the parts to the whole design. These are the merits Mr. Blomfield finds in the Egyptian style. He praises it for "the lessons it teaches of finely considered mass, and of the effect to be got by the simplest form of construction properly handled." He alludes to a "central idea" which "is never sacrificed to detail, but serenely maintains its sway, undisputed and irresistible." It is here that he finds the analogy between the Egyptian and Greek styles, "this architectonic quality, this perfect instinct for organic design," being the attribute common to both. The same profound intellectual insight, according to Mr. Blomfield, directs the Egyptian artists in their elaboration of detail and application of ornament. "The carving is of admirable low relief, firm in outline and consummate in drawing, but reduced to the most abstract expression in modelling." He adds, what would seem a natural conclusion, that "such skill was only possible to artists steeped in an immemorial tradition of art, and intent on the expression of a great monumental theme." Finally, he concludes with the tribute, the highest attainable by the most intellectualised of the arts, that "not the least remarkable characteristic of Egyptian art is the stringent logic that governed it in every detail."

This is high praise, higher praise, so far as I know, than has ever yet been vouchsafed to the buildings of Egypt. At the same time it is definite praise. Mr. Blomfield does not admire Egyptian

architecture for those vague picturesque effects which are common in the massive and archaic structures of primitive races, and which, as we feel, however striking in their way, are accidental rather than consciously thought out. The grandeur of Karnak to Mr. Blomfield is not a bit the grandeur of Stonehenge. The Egyptian genius is made out to be as essentially intellectual as the Greek. Such phrases as "finely considered," a "central idea," forms "properly handled," a faculty for "organic design," a sense of "stringent logic," and so on, conclusively prove—indeed it is the drift of the whole lecture—that in the author's estimation Egyptian artists grasped their purpose and foresaw results with clear, intellectual vision. Karnak is instanced as the Egyptian Parthenon. To the present writer, reflecting on Mr. Blomfield's praises of the building for clear-thoughted articulation and knowledge of the effect to be produced, there cannot but recur the recollection of repeated visits once paid to this colossal shrine, visits which served to confirm a slow-grown suspicion that Egyptian art contained in truth nothing intellectual, that its massiveness was a triumph of matter over mind, and its power the power of blind routine. In place, however, of my own opinion let me quote on this point a remark or two from the criticism of a recognised and high authority. Mr. Blomfield extols Karnak's grandiose simplicity, its carefully considered scheme and the cumulative effect of its halls and colonnades. He represents to our imagination—it belongs to his intellectual estimate of the style—a master intellect brooding over the whole design

and directing it all to the embodiment of a single idea. Herr Erman, on the contrary, observes that "the fact that the plans of the temples seem to us most complicated arises from the circumstance that they were not built from one design. Temples such as Luxor, or more particularly Karnak, owe the development of their plan to the many hands which have worked at them. Each king, fired with ambition to build, designed some new addition to the temple of the Theban Amon; he wished his plan if possible to surpass any previous project, but it was granted to few to complete the work they had designed. Thothmes I. erected his pylon at Karnak and thought thus to have completed the façade for ever; he also began, but never finished, those splendid buildings intended to meet this façade, and to unite the great temple with the temple of Mut. Amenhotep III. spoilt this plan by adding another pylon in front, and the kings of the nineteenth dynasty went so far as to place their gigantic hypostyle hall before this latter pylon, so that the façade of the eighteenth dynasty was left in the very centre of the temple; a new pylon (the fourth), greater than any other, formed the entrance. Incredible as it may appear, the temple was not yet complete; when Rameses III. built his little temple to the Theban gods, he placed it, in part, close in front of the façade of the great temple. Afterwards the Libyan princes felt it their duty to build an immense hall of pillars in front again, which, curiously enough, happened exactly to cross the temple of Rameses III. If we consider that at the same time similar additions were made to the back

of the temple and to the interior, we gain a slight idea of the extreme confusion of the whole."

It is difficult to see how any ordered and cumulative effect can result from such a chaos as this. Where there is no unity of intention there can be no unity of result.

Like all intensely materialistic races, the Egyptians were immensely impressed by mere bulk and extent. It was in the knowledge how to animate that bulk with an intellectual expression that they failed, and in this respect the most characteristic of all their productions is, no doubt, the pyramids. It would probably not be possible to find on the earth's surface buildings so vast yet so vacant of expression of any kind. They do not even express their own size, for the pyramidal or triangular outline carries the eye to its apex with such instant rapidity that the passage thereto seems no distance at all; and so, though we tell ourselves that the Great Pyramid covers thirteen acres and is taller than the dome of St. Peter's, though we walk round it and painfully climb up it, and impress by all means its bulk upon our minds, yet as an object of sight the building does not remain in the memory as of any considerable size. The idea of the pyramid suggests not greatness but a point, and is adequately represented by its image on a post card. If it leave a further impression on the mind, it must be one of wonder at the dullness, amounting, it would seem, to the atrophy of the intellectual faculties, which it indicates as characteristic of its builders. A uniform, solid triangle of masonry, mechanically accurate and utterly expressionless in its dead monotony, without

any intelligible purpose, as is now admitted, save the stupid and ignoble one of hiding a wretched corpse within its bowels—that, I believe, is an architectural phenomenon absolutely without a parallel. It is true that the fine cutting and fitting of the masonry indicate qualities which have always been the basis, as it were, of great structural effects. But they have been a foundation only. Perfect masonry represents a skill of the hand which must be directed by thought to great designs, but which in the present case is not so directed.

It is important to remember, when we are considering Egyptian art, that there is a primitive simplicity as well as an intellectual simplicity. The pyramids are simple, more simple even than the temples; but theirs is not the Greek simplicity. It does not arise from a keen perception of the significance of a structural principle and a resolve to extract from it its full emphasis and power, but merely denotes a mind barren of ideas and content with its barrenness. The Greeks discarded irrelevancies and conflicting theories, and reduced construction to its simplest law, because they realised that the great æsthetic effects of unity, symmetry and proportion depend, in the last resort, on singleness of structural idea. They selected the column and lintel as their structural idea, and worked out from it results in the way of unity, symmetry and proportion which they expressed with an intellectual subtlety and refinement never before or since equalled. But it is, of course, quite possible that the column-and-lintel principle should be adopted and persisted in for

centuries, not from any perception of its æsthetic possibilities, but merely because it happens to be the most obvious of all means of construction. It was thus Egypt used it. The Egyptian builders remained faithful to their principle, but it never was, for them, a source of inspiration and thought; nor did it ever occur to them apparently to develop the æsthetic possibilities latent within it. The distended and bloated-looking columns, the squat and stunted architraves of the Egyptian temples, are related by no law of proportion. They are forms which have not reached the state of development at which æsthetic expression becomes possible. The old sense of a fixed limitation, of an art held for ever in leading-strings, recurs again. The fine qualities Mr. Blomfield discerns in Egyptian architecture ought, indeed, to be there, for they are the proper fruit of the simple law of construction on which the style is based; but, unfortunately, the capacity necessary to draw them out was lacking. The Egyptian simplicity is really not of the intellectual but of the primitive order. It is the effect not of clear thought but of absence of thought. If the Egyptians were well content to go on loading their bulky shafts with bulky architraves, it was not because they derived from the practice any kind of intellectual satisfaction, but because they were quite content to go without any such satisfaction. Under the dominion of an inflexible routine, incapable of initiation because incapable of thought, the Egyptian architects perpetuated for thousands of years a style which testifies convincingly to the low stage of intellectual development attained by the race.

These, however, are general arguments, and as such they yield indefinite results. I must approach closer to the subject and lay hold of it by a concrete fact if I am to carry the reader with me in my interpretation of Egyptian art. This can be done. It is a convenient characteristic of trabeated architecture that the column, being of such an overwhelming importance in it and attracting careful treatment proportionate to its conspicuousness, should become, as it were, the touchstone of the style it appears in, and should sufficiently sum up its general character and level of attainment. There could be no more convincing testimony to the intellectual character of Greek architecture than the form and contour of a Doric shaft; and if Egyptian architecture were the intellectual product Mr. Blomfield supposes, the fact is sure to be revealed in the form given to the chief supporting members of that architecture.

To the Egyptian column, then, we will have recourse; but before doing so let me remind the reader of the simple law which, in so far as architectural forms are intelligible to us at all, directs their development. This law is to the effect that structural forms must be the expression of the structural purpose they fulfil. Whatever the purpose may be, whether it be to support, to span, to vault, to withstand pressure, or what not, the resulting forms of column, architrave, arch, buttress, and so on must be that purpose embodied. Form, in a word, is function, and in Western art, at least, no other law of origin is admitted. If we find in primitive structures forms which have the clumsy and uncouth

aspect which are the marks of such an epoch, such rudeness of form is but the measure of their builders' rudeness of thought. It is proof that in the mind of the architect there existed no clear intellectual perception of the nature of the forces which were his instruments. The direction and amount of his vault-thrusts, the bearing capacity of his columns, and all the various means of exertion and adjustment which were to raise and knit together his structure are comprehended only vaguely and indefinitely. It is this vagueness and indefiniteness of intellectual comprehension which, communicating itself to the forms employed, results in that clumsiness which we associate with primitive buildings. By degrees, with practice and the comparison of many experiments, architects attain a greater exactitude of knowledge. The range and limits of the invisible forces manipulated are more clearly revealed, and it is in proportion as they are understood as ideas that they approach towards purity and exactitude of form. Thus it is that architecture is recognised in the West as the most intellectual of the arts; for whereas painting and sculpture are more concerned with representation than with the evolution of original forms, architecture, if it cannot be said precisely to invent the forms it employs, yet does invest with bodily substance forms which pre-existed only as ideas. It is true that, in the sphere of decorative detail, a certain licence is claimed; but there is no more certain sign of the decadence of a style than when the natural or other forms imitated, instead of being severely subdued to structural requirements, are permitted to assert their own character too freely.

In the purest of all styles—namely, the Doric—the intellectual idea of function reigns absolutely, even the capitals, so often selected for special treatment and carved with the likeness of foliage and animals, being abstact studies of appropriate form and nothing else. But though not invariably enforced with the Doric thoroughness, the rule holds good in the main through all Western architecture. The structural features of Western architecture are intellectual creations, in the sense that their form is the intellectually rea'ised embodiment of the function they fulfil.

Against one objection indeed it may be well to guard ourselves. The æsthetic element in architecture must not be overlooked. It is, or ought to be, the aim of structural forms not only to be but to appear to the eye to be perfectly adapted to their function. To appearance something is conceded. The flutes of a Doric column, or the slight and invisible swell which modifies its outline, do not perhaps add to the actual strength of the column, but they add to its apparent strength. Function is still the inspiration, but now from an intellectual it becomes an æsthetic motive. It is not enough that the column be perfectly adapted to its use; it must also, in expression and bearing, exhibit its own knowledge of, and delight in, the service it performs. If this involves separate treatment, the same principles continue to inspire that treatment. Thus it will be seen that the objection raised is really a confirmation of our rule that architectural forms are to be determined by what they have to do. Conceived intellectually, the rule is carried out æsthetically, and having first

defined form it then proceeds to endow it with beauty.

Such is the rule in the West; but it applies to the West only. The non-intellectual character of Oriental architecture is shown in nothing more clearly than in its use of eccentric and fantastic forms of which the origin is non-functional and does not lie within the art of architecture. The Egyptian column is a feature of this kind. The most characteristic example, which for many centuries dominated the architecture of the Nile and is its natural and sufficient representative, is wrought into a rude imitation of the lotus plant. The thick stalk swells bulb-like out of a calyx or sheath of pointed leaves, and terminates in a ponderous bud by way of capital. The shape thus given to the column is approximately the shape of a gigantic sausage—that is to say, it is of great bulk throughout, except at the base, where it suddenly and violently contracts. Now, the base of a column is precisely the point where its strength should be greatest; for, since it is evident that no part of the column can exceed the strength of the base, any weakness there cripples inevitably the whole body. Not by such means is support afforded, nor could the idea of affording support ever have called such a shape into being. Mr. Blomfield does indeed profess to derive even from such forms as these certain genuine intellectual impressions. "Eternal strength," he says, "gigantic strength," is the idea they convey to him. Strength is a column's chief endowment, and a form which perfectly expressed strength would, according to all

Western notions, be an admirable form for a column. But Mr. Blomfield will scarcely suggest that bulk and strength are the same thing. He will not affirm that bulk which is obviously redundant and can be pared away to almost any extent is strength. But if he will not affirm this, he cannot affirm that Egyptian columns express strength, for it is palpably the case that a vast amount of their substance is mere adipose tissue, and is not and cannot be turned to account as strength at all. Indeed, it is not enough to say that these columns do not express strength, they do not express even the natural hardness of the stone they are built of. It is actually the fact, and no more curious instance of the influence of form on material could perhaps be cited, that Egyptian columns, owing to their bulging shape, convey to the spectator an impression of softness. Resting on their diminished bases, their swollen masses have the distended and, so to speak, dropsical aspect of matter divorced from energy. Such forms as these strike the European mind as abortions because they were not evolved by and do not express the function they perform. The giant shapes of the columns of Luxor and Karnak convey no idea of a definite power exercised or a definite duty fulfilled. Their bloated proportions, in the dim obscurity of the place, suggest nothing more structural than a crop of extravagant fungi, in growth commensurate to the damp depths of Nile soil and the forcing capacity of an Egyptian sun, but not calculated in obedience to any architectural purpose.

According, then, to Western ideas, these Egyptian columns are not columns at all—that is to say, they

have not the form of columns. To find the form of the columns in these masses of matter we should have to dig for it. Somewhere concealed within the imitation of the lotus lie the proportions which correspond with the column's function of support, and which constitute its intellectual form, but they are not apparent.

And now will the reader ask himself by what means such features as I have described can co-operate in any general scheme based on the inter-relation of its various parts? Interrelation of parts is expressed in the law of proportion, and trabeated architecture is chiefly effective in this, that in the sharp distinction drawn between burden and support, or horizontal and upright, it offers the eye an opportunity of gauging, with great exactness, the proportion of the one to the other. But how can this be done with a supporting member which does not express its own strength—nay, which disguises and conceals its strength? What is the burden that shall exactly fit a force which evades definition? Is it not evident that unless the upright first clearly expresses its own capacity the horizontal cannot possibly be brought into a proportionate relationship with it? How can you proportion weight to support if you do not know what the support amounts to? How are you to aim at a mark that has no existence? The truth is that proportion in connection with Egyptian columns and entablatures is a word without a meaning. You may increase or decrease the entablature's size indefinitely, but you never will touch the point where it seems to correspond with the columns, for this point it is for

the columns themselves to determine, and they have not done so. The obvious conclusion is that the law of proportion—and the same holds good of unity, symmetry, and the like, for they are all interdependent—will not work at all save with those forms which obey the primary rule of expressing function. Proportion, unity, symmetry are architectural principles, and can and will operate only with architectural forms; but only those forms are architectural which express function. In short, to press the case against Egyptian architecture to its logical conclusion, we shall have to argue, not that that architecture is indifferent or bad architecture, but that it is not architecture at all; and, indeed, a suspicion of this seems once or twice to have visited Mr. Blomfield himself; at least we find him, in spite of Greek parallels and the grand manner, declaring that, after all, "in criticising this architecture it is useless to apply the canons of northern art," a phrase which, if it does not mean that architecture in itself has no fixed laws, can only mean, I suppose, that Egyptian buildings are not architecture.

Now it seems to me that to exalt a style of this stamp to the intellectual level of the Greek standard of art is entirely to misapprehend its true character. In general plan, as in the shape of its individual features, the intellectual note is equally lacking. There is no such thing in Egyptian architecture as proportion, as unity, as the subordination of the parts to the whole, any more than there is any such thing in it as right relation between its component members and the function they perform. Egyptian

structural features are no more combined intellectually than they are conceived intellectually. Such a style has nothing whatever to teach us in the way of art, and we shall certainly only obscure the meaning of the laws of art by endeavouring to trace their presence in works of such a totally different origin.

But if we shift our point of view—if, instead of asking what Egyptian architecture has to teach us about the fixed laws of art, we inquire what it has to teach us about the life of the Nile valley—it is possible we may arrive at more satisfactory results. To these questions its very defects and limitations are part of its answer, indicating as they do corresponding defects or limitations in the life out of which they proceeded. At the same time, in instituting a comparison between art and life there is no reason to confine our survey of art strictly to architecture. The characteristics we have been noticing of Egyptian architecture hold good of Egyptian art generally. The chief of those characteristics, as regards the architecture, and that which contrasts it with all Western style, was, we saw, its non-intellectual nature as indicated by the fact that for thousands of years it remains content with structural forms which are not realised as structural features at all. Now, if we turn to the Egyptian bas-reliefs of which the temple walls are such opulent museums, we shall draw from sculpture the same evidence that we lately obtained from architecture. The reader knows the general character of this temple sculpture too well for me to need to describe it. Its main feature is an iron formalism

which usurps the place of intelligent observation. The figures and groups of warrior kings and animal-headed gods are composed in obedience to certain fixed and invariable rules, which rules are themselves a defiance of the laws of nature. No figure is realised in its entirety, but each limb and member of it is separately finished in that aspect which most easily suggests itself to the memory, and the fragments are then pieced together to form the entire man. Thus a face is carved in profile, but the eye is the full eye; the shoulders are turned square to the front, while the legs and feet revert to the exact profile once more. It is inevitable that such an arbitrary and unnatural arrangement should preclude any attempt at realism in detail, since the whole must live if the parts are to live. Hands, feet, eyes, ears, noses, hair, arms and legs are all carved in Egyptian art, not imitatively, not as by one who realises the meaning and nature of that which he depicts, but in accordance with certain childish precedents early established, and never, at least to any appreciable extent, altered. The work as it stands is often delicate and always precise, the outlines are firmly and exactly drawn, the finish of the surface exhibits considerable manual dexterity, but there is in these figures and faces no mind or thought of any kind. They are mere mechanical reiterations of certain cut-and-dried precepts which demand for their production skill of hand, but no mental co-operation of any sort or kind.

And yet, just as Mr. Blomfield has invested the Nile temples with æsthetic meaning, or as Mr. Piazzi Smith has divined certain profound scientific

purposes in the pyramids, so there have been others who have extracted an infinite significance from the blank masks of Egyptian sculpture. Mr. Hichens, and still more M. Loti, have distilled from the Sphinx by moonlight emotions to which I cannot here attempt to do justice. But how much of their emotion is found and how much brought? Sentimental and imaginative people will always incline probably to see in the vacancy of the Sphinx's expression a reflex of the *vide et néant* which lies on the other side of knowledge. But the difference between knowing that there is nothing to know and knowing nothing may easily be lost sight of. There is a *vide et néant* on this side of knowledge as well as on the other. Has the Sphinx finished thinking, or has it, perhaps, not begun to think? If the reader will compare the countenance of the Sphinx with the precisely similar and equally vacant countenances carved on the innumerable sarcophagi which have found their way into European museums he will easily answer the question. The emptiness of the Sphinx's face is a prevailing trait in all Egyptian sculpture. All Egyptian faces stare before them with the same blank regard which can be made to mean anything precisely because it means nothing. It is natural that we, with the idea in our heads that sculpture must interpret thought and feeling, should strain our eyes to discover in these passionless lineaments some hidden mystery. But in truth we waste our ingenuity; for not only are these faces too consistently and uniformly blank, and blank in a too stereotyped and monotonous fashion, to be chargeable with any depths or subtleties of thought, but

also the more we examine Egyptian art the more clearly we perceive that to credit it with the wish to interpret profound ideas and emotions is to credit it with views which in fact it never possessed. Art in Egypt is not used for any such purpose. The Sphinx faces are not emptier of expression than the groups of combatants and chariots on the temple walls are destitute of inherent purpose and passion. Kings, gods, prisoners, the smiting champion and the transfixed victim are all equally expressionless. Clearly the idea that art can be charged with, and visibly body forth, the emotions and ideas of the human mind was never grasped by Egyptian sculptors; and when battle-scenes are destitute of the most obvious expression of energy and emotion, why should we go out of our way to suppose that a profound significance is to be attributed to equally mechanical reiterations of the human countenance?

The truth is, Egyptian sculpture is a sculpture barren of intellectual insight and intellectual interest. A few years ago Professor Loewy published a very interesting work on archaic art, in which he dwelt on the influence of memory upon drawing.

"Not all images of objects [he points out], even of those frequently seen, are equally retained by the memory, which prefers rather to make a selection. We have seen numberless times a leaf, a wheel, an ear, an eye, an outstretched hand, and so on, from their every point of view, but nevertheless so often as we thoughtlessly picture to ourselves a leaf, a wheel, &c., there appears in our mind only one image of each."

After explaining that the unpractised memory is limited and embraces only the simplest forms, Professor Loewy adds that "most objects, being more or less complex, leave behind them only an indistinct image of their general appearance." We then come to a particularly interesting observation: "To make this image clearer, the imagination," Professor Loewy supposes, "proceeds as follows: It brings the component parts one by one into consciousness, and with these familiar elements builds up the image which it cannot picture to itself as a whole," the result being that "in the mental process the organic whole of the natural object is resolved in a succession of images of its parts, each part independent of the other." That we have here a plausible analysis of the limitations of Egyptian art any one who recalls its unvarying repetition of limbs and features, each dealt with separately in its easiest and most memorable aspect, and afterwards fitted forcibly together to form a whole, will acknowledge. Each feature seized by Egyptian art, the profile face and feet, the full fronting shoulders, is the feature at its simplest, the feature as a child would naturally try to represent it. The further stage of advance, which consists in combining the parts into a whole animated by a common purpose and in due relation and harmony with each other, is never attained to. Egyptian art, in short, remains placidly and permanently fixed in the archaic stage of development. No impulse of curiosity or more intimate insight into the nature of things ever carries it beyond the boundary. Its simple memory-pictures become,

by long usage, formed with exquisite deftness, but they grow only the more strictly and hopelessly conventionalised with the lapse of time.

There have been two great creative movements in the history of Western art, the Greek and the Renaissance movements; the movement that centred in Athens and the movement that centred in Florence. And in both these cases the mental circumstances and characteristics of the hour, and the nature and general character of the art which resulted, are strictly similar. On the one hand, Athens and Florence live in history as the communities which originated or revived the idea of what we may call an intellectual civilisation, that is to say, a civilisation directed and controlled by rational motives. Across a gap of twenty centuries the two states are drawn together by their mutual confidence in the intellectual faculty and their mutual unbounded delight in its free use and exercise. Against the Egyptian background of routine the Greek epoch stands out with the sparkle and animation of sudden life. We know not what those grey figures are that move in the dimness of the Egyptian twilight, but these warm and supple Greek figures we know. Their attitudes and features, their thoughts and emotions, are ours. We can identify ourselves with them still. We can be thrilled by their art and melted by their poetry; for in the main their point of view is ours. The intellectual estimate of life which they proposed and inaugurated is that which we still hold by. In every department of life and thought, in literature, in art, in science and knowledge of the universe, in

government and philosophy, the effects of the new motive, of the determination to place life under control of the rational faculty, are felt and seen.

And so, too, with what we rightly call the age of "intellectual awakening"—the age of the Renaissance. It is a modern age. Against the dark background of mediæval semi-barbarism it lives and moves with what seems to us a suddenly natural life. We understand its motives and its speech, and all its ways are familiar to us. It, too, has accepted the rational estimate. Not to live a life of habit, not to accept explanations passively and blindly submit itself to the laws and forces of nature, but to probe and question, to examine into reasons and explanations, and analyse the composition and the laws of nature, in a word, to assert in all directions the authority of thought, is the ideal once more of human existence.

These two epochs, then, stand out in history as pre-eminently epochs of intellectual vitality. But they were also pre-eminently epochs of artistic vitality, and their artistic vitality was of one and the same kind. What primarily and above all distinguishes Attic and Florentine art is their resolve, similar in both cases, to arrive at natural or realistic representation, and their slow struggle towards, and final achievement of that end. Greek intellectualism acting on art turns inanimate convention into vital forms: it discovers ease and grace of feature and pose and how to make the human figure expressive of the thoughts and emotions which inspire human nature. Renaissance intel-

lectualism acting on art achieves precisely the same results: it turns the stiff conventionalism of the old Byzantine forms into animated and living figures, and in all other branches of art it sets itself to the discovery of the scientific methods and laws which result in realistic representation. The consequence is that these two epochs, so remarkable for sudden intellectual initiative, are just as remarkable, in the sphere of art, for a suddenly aroused and forcibly expressed sense of naturalism. So strikingly obvious, indeed, is the combination—working out as it does by equal steps, intellectual development and activity on the one side keeping pace with artistic freedom and realism on the other—that no one can think for a moment of Greek art as the expression of Greek life, and Renaissance art as the expression of Renaissance life without coming to regard naturalism in art—or the capacity to render things realistically and as we see them—as the counterpart of intellectualism in life.

The identification of the two, I may add, has a natural appropriateness and inevitability. For when we think of what intellectual vitality means, when we think of intellect's delight in examining and analysing and giving an exact and realistically true account of all it handles and deals with, it is inevitable that we should see in a correctly drawn, modelled, proportioned and foreshortened group or landscape a work conceived with the aid of intellectual perception.

On the other hand, when we see groups and landscapes misdrawn and presented to us in such

attitudes and perspectives as cause them to look altogether misshapen and unreal, it is difficult for us to avoid the conviction that we are dealing with a race which was intellectually defective. For, we think, if intellect which so delights in reality and exactitude of definition were active among this people, it would have taught them how to model, draw, and foreshorten so as to produce the appearance of reality.

In our own minds, therefore, we feel, what Athens and Florence assure us of, that intellectual vitality and the capacity for real representation in art are inseparably linked together; the latter being, in fact, the visible sign or expression of the presence of the former. But if this is a true conclusion, what will the application of it to Egyptian art and Egyptian life mean? Egyptian art is the most stereotyped, the most unreal and untrue to nature that we know of, and the conclusion would naturally follow that Egyptian life was intellectually defective. But this Mr. Blomfield will not allow for a moment. "The Egyptians," he assures us, "were a people of great intelligence and highly developed civilisation." Mr. Blomfield advances nothing in support of this assertion, yet it is a vitally important one. The appeal for each of us is to the people, to what we know of their literature and science and the fragments of their thoughts that have come down to us. It is only by this appeal that our arguments can be satisfactorily verified. Asserting the intellectual character of the art, Mr. Blomfield assumes as a matter of course the intellectual character of the civilisation it sprang

from. Asserting the non-intellectual character of the art, I on my side must prove, if I can, the non-intellectual character of the civilisation.

Nor is this quite so difficult a task as it may appear, for if, overcoming the awe we feel for things of great antiquity, we look frankly at any aspect of Egyptian life, it is impossible not to be struck by the archaic quality in it, a quality which we soon learn to connect with a tendency towards irrational or non-intellectual views. Religion is, of course, always the most significant test in matters like these. I will not enter into the complicated relationships of the innumerable Egyptian gods and godlets. They are mostly of local origin and influence, but are exposed to competition with each other as the country achieves a more or less conscious unity. Some die out, some extend their sway, many come to be thought of as additional or alternative names for a more fashionable god whose fame happens to be spreading, many again are described as an attribute or quality of such a god. They combine, unite, separate, dissolve into each other, disappear and reappear with a motion which it is impossible to follow, and to which no definite and progressive purpose can be assigned. Professor Petrie divides the Egyptian gods into several categories, animal, cosmic, human, and abstract, but the distinctions are hard to maintain, and the most degraded ideas and comparatively elevated ones are constantly intermixed. Of all traits, however, the persistence of animal worship is the most noticeable in the religion of Egypt, the motives, if correctly gauged by Professor Petrie,

being the same as usually appeal to man in the animal stage of enlightenment.

"The baboon was regarded as the emblem of Tahuti, the god of wisdom ; the serious expression and human ways of the large baboon are an obvious cause for their being regarded as the wisest of animals. Tahuti is represented as a baboon from the first dynasty down to late times, and four baboons were sacred in his temple at Hermopolis. These four baboons were often portrayed as adoring the sun ; this idea is due to their habit of chattering at sunrise."

Moreover, primitive animal worship not only maintained itself but tended to drag down all religious conceptions to its own level. In the Apis bull of Memphis Ptah was said to be incarnate, in the bull of Heliopolis Ra was incarnate, while Baku, the bull of Hermonthis, was the incarnation of Mentu. The cow was identified with Hathor, the ram with Osiris, with Amon, with Khnumu, the creator ; the hippopotamus was the goddess Ta-urt, the jackal was Anubis, the god of departing souls. The hawk was identified with Horus and Ra, the sun-god ; the vulture impersonated Mut, the goddess of maternity at Thebes ; the crocodile was especially sacred throughout the Fayum, where it was identified with Osiris. It is to be observed that in each case, though a god was supposed to be incarnated in the animal, it was the animal, not the god, that was recognised by the nation ; in other words, it was an animal-worship of the idea of deity which alone was generally appreciated. From the

dawn of Egyptian history it would appear that animal-worship in the Nile Valley received state sanction. As far back as the second Thinite Dynasty the worship of the bull Apis at Memphis, Mnevis of Heliopolis, and the ram of Mendes was legalised :

"and though [as Professor Sayce points out] the official explanation was that these animals were but incarnations of Ptah and Ra, to whom the worship was really addressed, it was an explanation about which the people neither knew nor cared. The divine honours they paid to the bull and ram were paid to the animals themselves, and not to the gods of the priestly cult."

This primitive form of belief, which appears to have been indigenous to the country, remained always the essential attribute of its religion. St. Clement of Alexandria describes the sumptuous adornment of the Egyptian temples of his day, the approach to the shrine, the drawing aside of the gold-embroidered curtain and the involuntary laugh of derision which ensued : "for no god is found therein, but a cat, or a crocodile, or a serpent sprung from the soil, or some such brute animal, and the Egyptian deity is revealed as a beast that rolls itself on a purple coverlet." Not man's spiritual instinct only, but his rational nature, as developed under classical training, revolted at such a spectacle. Roman and Greek expressed equal disgust for the beast-worship which flourished with such strange persistence in the valley of the Nile. Minds which had absorbed the idea of a life directed and

controlled by the dictates of reason, and which regarded the gods as the incarnation of all things humanly desirable and beautiful, could not but consider the menagerie of the Egyptian Pantheon with as much scorn as astonishment. I am speaking, of course, of the popular and generally accepted views on religion in Egypt rather than of those speculations of the priestly profession which, though they attained to nothing extraordinary in the way of thought, though they were essentially incoherent and often mutually contradictory, yet contained hints of a more adequate and spiritual conception of divine ideas. Applying their own reasoning processes to these scattered hints and guesses, the Greeks were able to employ them as material in a coherent philosophical system. In so doing they were but applying to Egyptian philosophy the treatment they had applied to Egyptian art. The intellectual insight which had evolved the Doric column out of the Egyptian lotus, and living figures out of Egyptian bas-reliefs, might wring something intelligible out of the inconsequent guesses of Egyptian theology. But though something might be made of these suggestions by bringing the missing faculty to bear upon them, nothing was ever made out of them in Egypt itself. Not only was the Egyptian religion destitute of any philosophical system, but the co-existence of the inconsistencies it contained points to an absence of ordinary intellectual capacity. It is impossible that beliefs so haphazard and self-contradictory should have subsisted among a people of what we should call average reasoning powers. It is the case, as

Professor Sayce observes, that even in highly organised religions we find a combination of heterogeneous elements. But, in proportion as the races concerned are possessed of mental lucidity and insight, these heterogeneous elements are fused and harmonised into a consistent whole. If the Egyptian made no such endeavour, it was because he lacked the faculty to which disorder is an offence. Of the "loosely connected agglomeration of beliefs and practices" which made up the Egyptian religion, Professor Sayce points out that

"no attempt was ever made to form them into a coherent and homogeneous whole, or to find a philosophic basis upon which they might all rest. Such an idea, indeed, never occurred to the Egyptian. He was quite content to take his religion as it had been handed down to him, or as it was prescribed by the State ; he had none of that inner retrospection which distinguishes the Hindu, none of that desire to know the causes of things which characterised the Greek. The contradictions which we find in the articles of his creed never troubled him ; he never perceived them, or if he did they were ignored."

And this, be it noted, is the case with Egyptian religion even among the so-called learned classes. Even among these, religion was totally lacking in the principle of unity, symmetry and harmony; principles recognisably intellectual, since they are the outcome of consistent and coherent thought. It is impossible to turn over the jumble of odds and ends that make up Egyptian theology without perceiving

that what is lacking to them is the intellect's capacity for distinguishing, selecting, fitting like to like and evolving an order and a harmony out of the existing chaos. But the main body of Egyptian religion never even reached to the level where the application of intellectual thought was possible. The idea usually accepted is that the beast-worship of the Nile Valley was the product of the aboriginal population, while the more advanced conceptions of anthropomorphic or abstract deities were importations, most probably from Assyria or Arabia. Be this as it may, the fact remains that a form of belief peculiar to the primitive stage of human development remained dominant in Egyptian religion down to the period of its total extinction. Persisting with the terrible tenacity so characteristic of all Nilotic ideas and institutions, it would no more let go of life than the similar primitive limitations would let go of art. We see in both a perpetuation of the archaic phase, a perpetuation which depends on one and the same startling deficiency in Egyptian character, its incapacity for intellectual development. There are religions of three kinds, animal, rational, and spiritual, and it has belonged to man's progress to embrace each in turn. It is not only, nor so much even, the spiritual consciousness in us which rejects the idea of worshipping crocodiles and jackals as the intellectual consciousness. The especial note of degradation of such an act, of less than manhood, is due to its lack of reason. Why have we no such feeling of repulsion when we study classical myths and beliefs? Because, though these may appear spiritually inadequate, they teach or sanction a

human ideal approved by intellect, and they are not therefore humanly degrading. From the human point of view at least, Apollo is no mean figure; but from the human or divine point of view jackal-headed Anubis falls short of the requisite standard by all the difference which separates beast and man, and that difference consists in the beast's lack of intellect.

If we had space to glance at the learning, literature, education, and government of ancient Egypt we should find in each the same attribute wanting that was wanting to religion. Egyptian learning has nothing whatever in common, as Herr Erman long ago pointed out, with "the pure pleasure which we of the modern world feel at the recognition of truth." Its object is not to divine the meaning of phenomena, not to follow thought disinterestedly and assimilate ideas for their own sake, but simply to obtain for its professors access to official employment. Scholarship in Egypt was the passport from a life of toil and drudgery to the official life of the overseer and exciseman. As scholarship, however, it is the most sterile example of its kind I have ever met with. It consists largely of wearisome "elucidations" of ancient prayers and hymns, and is marked by nothing but a perfectly barren talent for inventing hidden meanings where none exist, and adding to the difficulties of the text by supplying a number of explanations which leave the subject ten times more perplexed than they found it. The Egyptian unintelligibility is due, not to depth of thought, but to verbal quibbles and superficial irrelevancies. Evidently the scribes, desirous of impressing the ignorant

multitude by the exhibition of superior wisdom, had made the discovery that the simplest way of doing so lay in the cultivation of verbal obscurities. It is an art which can only deceive the unthinking, and any one who has a feeling for genuine mental initiative will be conscious of the lack of it in these displays of pompous and aimless ingenuity.

"If," observes Herr Erman, as he concludes his survey of the Egyptian commentators, "the Egyptian contributions to learning were of such little value on a subject which appeared to them of such great importance, it is natural to suppose that on subjects of wider scope they have not rendered much service to science." History, the branch of literature which traces the sequence of events and depicts men as they were and things as they happened, is in a particular degree the intellectual department of literature. In Egypt it is practically non-existent. Some fantastical and extravagant rhapsodies on the victories of kings and other similar events have come down to us, but nothing deserving the name of history. Nor is this, we may feel pretty confident, due to destructive causes. The historical language, of which the style is formed by contact with reality, is unknown in Egyptian literature. Similarly it will be found that, while all the merit of Egyptian poetry is monopolised by the slight and, as they must have seemed in the eyes of the Egyptians themselves, fugitive forms of verse dealing with popular topics and incidents of daily life, the more considerable efforts which require the aid of intellect to support them are destitute of any traces of vitality. Some of the songs addressed to the Nile and to the flowers

and fruits which were its gifts are, as Herr Erman says, "pleasant enough in the barren desert of Egyptian literature, where most of the vegetation dries up even as it buds." But, if we turn from what is produced spontaneously and from direct observation to those epic narratives which derive support from intellectual thought and study, there is a complete breakdown. The odes describing the great deeds of conquering kings, though holding the first place in public estimation, are insufferably dull and wearisome, consisting as they do of eulogies and compliments so gross and extravagant, yet so hackneyed by use, that the monotonously reiterated sentences almost cease to convey any meaning whatever.

The reader will have no difficulty in amassing further evidence. Let him bear the main outline of the argument in mind. We find, clinging to Egyptian art throughout its long history, qualities which the history of art itself teaches us to be incompatible with intellectual initiative, qualities which it is the especial function of intellectual initiative to dissipate. From this we argue a corresponding deficiency in Egyptian life. Egyptian life, we say, like the art which mirrored it, will exhibit progress up to a certain point. All that long experience under unvarying conditions can teach it, it will know. The reiteration of identical practices for hundreds of generations must conduce to a certain accuracy, precision and finish. This we find in the art, for it is the peculiarity of that art that, abiding in the archaic, it perfects it, so that the rudeness we usually associate with this phase of art is replaced

by smoothness and finish. This, therefore, we expect to find in life, and we do find it. In all the operations, expedients and employments of Egyptian life, the perfection of the primitive is the common attribute. But what if we look beyond this rule-of-thumb procedure for any indication of a real love of thinking ? Does not life stop short where art stops short ? We have glanced at religion. Its predominating characteristic is the tenacity with which it cleaves to what is primitive and its inability to rise to the height of an intellectual ideal. We have glanced at literature. Its primitively simple examples have a kind of merit, but its attempts at any work requiring intellectual aid excite nothing but pity.

On these grounds let the reader continue to investigate. Let him glance, for example, at mathematics.

> "Their knowledge of the science at this time [at the time of the Hyksos invasion, that is] was not very great, and we doubt whether they carried their studies much further even under the new Empire, for more than a century and a half later we find in the agricultural lists of the temple of Edfou the same primitive ideas of geometry which are contained in our old book. Mathematics, as medicine, seems to have remained stationary at the same stage that it had reached under the old Empire."

Here once more we have it—the perpetuation of the primitive. How certain eatables were to be divided as payments of wages ; how in the exchange of bread for beer the respective value was to be determined

when converted into a quantity of corn, and so on. Such are the limits of arithmetic among the Egyptians. The conclusion is that "there is little to be said for their theoretic knowledge of this science, but their practical knowledge sufficed very well for the simple requirements of daily life." The science, in short, stopped at the archaic stage and never reached the intellectual stage. So again with medicine and surgery ; the same rudimentary knowledge, the same ignorance of theory prevail from the beginning. Thought never enters into the subject; its place is taken by that influence which is itself the strongest proof of intellectual inactivity, and which soaks and penetrates Egyptian life in all directions, the influence of witchcraft and magic. Apart from the irrational and revolting usages prescribed by witchcraft and magic, Egyptian medicine and surgery remain fixed and content in the little groove of knowledge worn, as it were, by daily experience. So once more, with all the processes and instruments of agriculture on which the life of the country depended, a perfected routine is the hall-mark of all of them. They are very simple and, as far as they go, very effective, but they imply not a jot of that power of independent thought which, in so many ingenious and wonderful ways, can add the power and speed of mechanism to man's unaided way of doing things. Egyptian pumps and ploughs never vary from the dawn of history. They indicate, in common with all other agricultural usages, an inherited instinct, such as animals in large measure possess also, for perfecting the obvious by endless reiteration, but with one

accord, as at a word of command, they stop short at the point where intellect and thought advance to the aid of routine.

It will be seen, then, that the grasp in which Egyptian art is held—the iron grasp of an immemorial usage—is a grasp which also controls Egyptian life in all its activities. It is a strange and weird spectacle, this spectacle of a perpetualised childhood, of the primitive, pot-hook stage, not developing but everlastingly repeating itself. It demands, if we would understand it, an effort of comprehension on our part which it is extremely difficult for us to make. How can we realise and put ourselves in the place of such a race amid such surroundings? It is here that art comes to our aid. As I began by saying, apart altogether from its æsthetic value or non-value, art has its human interest, the interest attaching to it as an expression of life and character. Addressed, as it is, directly to sight, it is more convincing than any other evidence. So striking, so living, is the image it offers us of racial character that, having once accepted it in this sense, we are drawn out of ourselves in our realisation of its significance and feel ourselves groping towards a true understanding of a race of different mental gifts to ours. Only accept it in this sense, as a mirror of life, we must if we wish for such results.

Here, then, let the reader take his choice. He has two courses open to him. He may, if he chooses, acclaim Egyptian art for its æsthetic attainments. He may persuade himself that he finds in the sausage-shaped columns and squat entablatures of its temples, and in the impossible

conventions that do duty for human figures, all the lofty and noble ideas which are bodied forth in Greek architecture and sculpture. He may celebrate the great principles of harmony, unity, symmetry, so difficult to attain to, and which are, as it were, the very fruit of intellect and its gifts to art, which, he will tell us, he detects in the forms and proportions of Egyptian columns. But having begun thus he will have to keep it up. Art is a standard of life and will insist in applying itself. Whatever interpretation he gives it he will be forced into expecting the equivalent from life. Inevitably, if he starts by talking about the harmony and unity of Egyptian architecture, he will be led on into applauding the intellectual achievements and exalted civilisation of a race which worshipped monkeys and snakes and never got beyond two in the multiplication table. Inevitably his æsthetic estimate will pledge him to the assertion that Egyptian civilisation was equal in intellectual elements to the civilisation of the Greeks. But can any one in his senses, any one who takes the trouble to inform himself what Egyptian civilisation contained and did not contain, acquiesce in that? Where are the great Egyptian poets, historians, philosophers, whom we are to place on a level with Sophocles, Thucydides, Plato? Is it not palpable that the level attained by Greek art was the level attained by Greek life as a whole? In what single particular does Egyptian life approach that level? Thus caught between two false estimates, one expedient only, the last and deadliest of all, lies open to him. He must relax the meaning of his

words. An enlightened civilisation must mean whatever Egyptian life will let it mean, and the principles of art whatever Egyptian art will let them mean. In this way the mischief will be transferred from things to standards, and his idea of what constitutes civilisation and what constitutes art will be alike permanently vitiated.

Or he may take the alternative course. Refusing to be intimidated by the mere duration of Egyptian history and the mere bulk of Egyptian monuments; remembering that, after all, time is only of value for the things done in it, and bulk only of value for the thought poured into it, he may set himself to judge Egyptian art by those principles which have made art the interpreter of the best that is in human nature. If under such a scrutiny the art of Egypt collapses, if he finds that that art stops short always at the point where intellect should animate and inspire it, he will indeed surrender the idea of deriving any æsthetic instruction or delight from it, and he will give up talking of the principles of art in connection with it. But its value will be far from lost. Now that he has gauged its character rightly, Egyptian art has become a touchstone with which to test the civilisation out of which it sprang. He proceeds to apply it to life, and immediately he does this he finds that his estimate of art turns of its own accord into a reliable estimate of life. What is it, he will ask himself, that limits Egyptian civilisation, that heads it off and checks it at every turn? The whole of that civilisation is held from first to last in the bondage of a strict routine. It deals only with what is obvious. Its expedients are

the expedients of primitive man perfected by endless repetition. In every department of life the advance up to the limits of the obvious is sure; but in every department the halt at these limits is sure too. Whence, then, this limitation? It is that in every line of progress—religion, science, literature, agriculture, what you will—at the stage where the help of intellect should be forthcoming, that help is withheld.

Faithful as a mirror, Egyptian art reflects the life that bore it. The mental stagnation is there, and there, too, is the narrow proficiency of perpetual iteration. Is it so easy for us to reconstruct in our imagination the picture of life in the Nile valley in those old ages that we should slight such a clue as this? To reason, to think, to argue is a slow and doubtful process. To see, to contemplate in its visible proportions and limitations the thought that inspired an ancient civilisation is to attain to an intimacy of understanding open to us by no other means.

CHAPTER II

THE TYRANNY OF THE NILE

The river's part in Egypt : The art and civilisation of Egypt cast in the same mould as the country : Dependence of Egypt on the Nile : Character of that dependence : Nile fertilisation and Nile rule : All occupations, all hopes and fears dominated by the Nile : The labours of the Egyptians regulated by its movements from month to month : It turns life into the repetition of a perpetual formula : Compare the rival river-civilisation of Assyria : The similarity in circumstances and routine of life : Similarity also in art : Limitations of Assyrian and Egyptian art identical : Each stops at the point where intellect should exert its informing power : It is so, too, in life and character : The influences which dominate Egypt focussed in her temples

IN the last chapter I endeavoured to show that the limitations apparent in the art of Egypt were limitations also in the life and thought of Egypt. Egyptian art is archaic in conception, but at the same time it is perfect in execution. The combination is unusual. Rudeness of execution and rudeness of conception generally go together, for people who get beyond the rudimentary stage in execution—who attain, that is, to delicacy and refinement of execution—have, as a rule, got beyond the rudimentary stage in conception also. By the time they have attained perfect manual skill and dexterity they have attained also to some knowledge in the art of representation. So, when we are confronted with a group obviously archaic in conception, made up of childishly impossible figures,

attitudes and features, we instinctively look for and expect a corresponding deficiency in the executive department. But although in the matter of conception Egyptian art remains fixed and immovable in the archaic stage, there is nothing archaic in its actual execution. This is perfect. It is not the hand that is out. The practice of centuries in doing the same thing over and over again has trained this to complete ductility. It is the mind, the guiding intelligence, which should lead the way, and which among all progressive races does lead the way out of the archaic stage of development, which is at fault. This refuses to lead, and so, for Egyptian art, no advance is possible. From this strange combination of intellectual apathy with consummate craftsmanship there ensues the changelessness we know of. Unled by thought, Egyptian art can never escape the archaic rut. It is unable to develop, but on the other hand it is not subject to decay, for it cannot attain the phase of ripeness which makes decay a natural process. Perfect yet primitive, young yet very old, its hoary infancy defies time. It is the image of routine, of the deadly monotony of an unthinking iteration.

But having got thus far it is difficult to stop. It is difficult to realise the curt and definite character of these limitations of Egyptian art and life without being led to wonder at and inquire into their possible cause. Why did the Egyptian mind move for ever in the same narrow round? Why did it never for a moment shake off the ancient tyranny of custom and routine which kept it pinned to the archaic? Such questions must occur to all of us who give our

attention to the subject, but they will occur with particular force to those of us who have studied Egyptian art and history in Egypt itself. For those who have so studied have had an opportunity of noticing a similarity not easily ignored. They have examined the figures of Egyptian sculpture petrified for ever in attitudes of naive and childish simplicity, and then, looking round them, they have seen the same strange simplicity echoed by Nature herself and governing the very construction of the country. Running all through the compositions of Egyptian art they have noticed the authority of a perpetual routine. Running through the land of Egypt before their very eyes is a power which, ever since the country was created, has held in a similar routine the lives of its inhabitants. The art and civilisation of Egypt seem cast in the same mould as the country itself. It may be possible to exaggerate the significance of such a similarity; it may be difficult exactly to define its meaning and influence; but that it exists, that it has significance and that it is worth some thought and attention, I think no one will deny.

There is in Egypt, studded along the river banks, a kind of pump, called the "shayduf," which is entirely in keeping in its simplicity with Egyptian traditions, for it consists merely of a tall, tapering pole working on a pivot and with a bucket dangling by a long rope from the tip of it. Unseen in the shadow of the bank the peasant hauls upon the rope till the lofty pole is bent low over the river and the bucket is plunged into its current, when, releasing his hold, the point soars up of its own

accord, lifting the full bucket to the top of the bank. As the simple mechanism works and the tall points rhythmically prostrate and erect themselves, they emit a thin, whining note, the genuine whine of Oriental supplication which runs all through the East; and this bowing and whining are, to the traveller on the river, a perpetual accompaniment. Long before the last tall point has disappeared in the distance, the next, with its perpetual bowing motion, heaves in sight, and long before the last plaintive cry dies into silence the note is taken up and repeated. And so the sacred chorus and the low salaaming are carried on, while to that motion and refrain the precious water is ladled out to the thirsty crops.

But these shaydufs are more than a curious feature of Nile scenery. They may be said to utter, adequately enough, a sentiment in which the whole country is steeped. Their adoring motion is latent in every plant and tree, and, in their song of supplication,

> "They join their vocal worship to the choir
> Of creatures wanting voice."

The sentiment thus expressed is the sentiment which a stranger in the country, if he is not always to remain a stranger, has need to understand. It is so easy to call a thing by a name and dismiss it, to state a fact and imagine we have extracted its contents! Egypt, said Herodotus, is "the gift of the river." That hits it, and that seems sufficient. Certainly the fact is obvious enough. Egyptian geography was made for children. Its

distinct arrangement, amid the jumble of the earth's surface, attracts instinctive attention. All are aware of the winding valley, so narrow yet so green and succulent, a mere ribbon of verdure, with the tall mountain chains flanking it to left and right, and beyond these the endless expanse of yellow desert. All are aware that this strip of fertility is of the Nile's creating, that the great turbid river has brought each ounce of the thirty-foot-deep black soil which constitutes Egypt from mountain sides and summits far distant to deposit it here in its place. Every one is aware, too, that the Nile watches solicitously over its offspring, and in its annual inundations fertilises and refreshes the land of its creation. What have we to add to such a summary? Is there any mystery to explain? Are any of the facts difficult to understand? Have we left anything out of account? No, there is no mystery and nothing to add. The Nile is Egypt's sole architect. It was the Nile, unassisted, which laid deep and dark the foundations of the old Egyptian civilisation. The circumstances, indeed, seem all to have been arranged and thought out as if to test the river's capacity. The necessary material was placed at its disposal, the necessary area marked off for its action. All risk of interference was strictly provided against, and rain, snow, frost, thaw, volcanic eruptions, streams and torrents—all the natural agents and elemental powers which spread, distribute, crack up and intermix the ingredients of continents—were rigorously excluded and fenced off from the narrow domain consecrated to the river's experiment.

That the result of such a construction should be

of striking, almost ludicrous simplicity, that it can be grasped, as a fact, by any one who gives a moment's attention to the matter, and that it is, as a fact, covered and explained by our old formula, the "gift of the river," we admit. But there is all the difference in the world between stating the Nile's action as a fact and realising it in its influence and consequences. The most obvious facts are precisely those which in their consequences are most important. It is the subtle and the complex that are easily exhausted. In the simplicity of the Nile valley lies its claim to our patient attention.

Let me then urge the reader, who, because Egyptian geography is as plain as a pikestaff, would dismiss it from his mind, to dwell on it a moment longer. It is because it is as plain as a pikestaff that it is worth dwelling on, for it is because it is plain that it is powerful. What he sees at a glance others have seen at a glance too. The millions who have lived in this valley, whose civilisation, as we say, was the oldest on the globe, and the vestiges of whose immense architecture still attract our wonder and curiosity, they saw it at a glance. The dominion of the Nile over Egypt was a fact which stared each one of them in the face. Every unit in those teeming millions lived out his whole life under the shadow of that great fact. Not only did he himself never escape the consciousness of the Nile's supremacy, but he had probably no notion that it ever could by any possibility be escaped. The life of the Nile valley was extraordinarily self-contained. The desert precluded all communication east and west, and, though the junction of the river with the

sea might hold out an invitation to foreign enterprise, the invitation was neglected. The Egyptians were no mariners. Their attention was concentrated in their valley, and its bounds became the natural confines of their thought. Generation after generation might pass and no whisper from the outer world, no hint that existence was possible save on the bounty of the river need ever reach the dwellers by the Nile. The reader who considers the obvious and easily dismissed fact of the Nile's function in Egypt in this sense, who considers it, that is to say, in its relation to the Egyptian people and to Egyptian history, will see that the more attentively he so considers it the deeper is the significance it acquires. To understand in some slight degree the old race of temple and pyramid builders, to attain to their point of view, and, if it were possible, to see life for a moment as they saw it, must be the wish at times of every traveller in Egypt. May it not be that one way of achieving that end may be to lay aside for a little while the studies and researches of Egyptology and submit ourselves to the conditions and influences which made the Egyptians what they were? After all, the Nile is the greatest Egyptologist of all. It alone is master of its subject. Suppose we sit down on its bank by the side of the shaydufs and consider for a moment its methods and ideas.

Just opposite to us, in a bend of the river, showing plainly on the pale pebbly background, are traced a few level streaks of black earth, much like the dark level streaks of one of De Wint's water-colours. These were laid down during the last inundation.

A hundred yards lower down, where the current is slacker, is another little deposit, more solid, and crops are sprouting already in the dark earth. Such signs as these along the Nile banks are frequent, and in some places where the river, repenting its generosity, threatens to wash away the soil it has deposited, rough stone jetties are thrust out from the bank in the hope of protecting it. Rude as they are, considerable toil must have gone to their construction, nor do they shield more than a few yards of shore, and that precariously. But the prize is worth the pains. There is no soil in the world to compare with the black Nile mud. It tends, indeed, rather to quantity than quality of produce, but how imposing, and in its way grandiose, is the mere affluence and bulk of the threefold crops with which it is perennially loaded. Whatever one may have seen in the way of fertility—to the writer recurs by way of samples the memory of the vineyards of Algeria, the rice-fields of the Ceylon low country, the Constantia fruit gardens under Table Mountain, the rich, small, concentrated Sahara oases—still there must always remain something unique in Egypt's brimming cornucopia-like abundance. Here, where germination and growth are so rapid, and harvests succeed each other so quickly, Nature seems always giving. Not by long processes of reclaiming and improving has she to be wrought up to the pitch of one doubtful harvest in the year. She is in the bounteous mood. There are no difficulties or delays. The rich, moist mould and the hot sun act like a sort of magic. The husbandman sows his seed and runs home to whet his scythe.

Egypt's lap is always full. Her fat acres are burdened, almost uninterruptedly, with harvests more succulent and of a freer, larger growth than the harvests of other climates.

Does the reader remember the country about Asiut or in the neighbourhood of Luxor? Does he remember the wheat, how tall and solid it grew, how dark and rich the gold wave of its level surface, how beautifully, by contrast, the little tufted islands of dark green palms stood up in it? And the tall brakes of sugar-cane where the harvesting was going on, each great stalk, ringed like bamboos, rising nine or ten feet high, making a glowing impenetrable thicket, their long narrow leaves, light green or baked to yellow by the sun, and the lower ones, white and dry and long since dead, hanging about the stems thickening the rich jungle. Men and children, bronzed to copper-colour, worked among the golden canes, and camels squatted on their haunches browsing and waiting for their loads. The power of sun and soil shone in the picture, in the sugar-stored canes, in the tawny, yellow foliage, in the Arabs' smooth limbs and blackened faces. Here was something more than immediate and visible plenty. Here in the glowing light, the rich mould, the ample vegetation, was the habit of ripeness, the signs of nothing hardening and annealing in Nature, but of lavish abundance and almost effortless increase.

Such scenes have an influence of their own, and human nature still responds to their appeal. Divorced as it is from religious sanction and disowned by the spiritual faculty, we can still per-

ceive what there must have been comforting and sustaining in the old pagan love of Nature and blind, childlike trust in her generosity. Not lacking in certain healthy consequences was man's identification of his own instincts with the natural processes around him, and the sanction he found in Nature for impulses which since those days have undergone the severest discipline. The very rankness of those early faiths, a rankness as the reader will find who turns over the pages of M. Palanque's book on Nile work, peculiarly characteristic of Egypt, disguises a certain insight and truth. Nature's scheme embraces man. Our tissues share with the tissues of plant and tree. Here in the jungle of rich vegetation, lying on the hot, dark earth, with the sensation of increase and fruition rife in all we see, impregnating the atmosphere, inspiring every branch and leaf and flexible tall stem with an almost conscious vitality, here where Nature is so strong and the call to human flesh of encircling earth so eloquent, it is easy to appreciate the alluring power of the old natural forms of faith. Man has always taken refuge in Nature before he learnt to take refuge in God. But the upward step from Nature to God, does it not imply a certain dissatisfaction with Nature, a realisation of the inadequacy of her philosophy? It must have been difficult for any such dissatisfaction, any such feeling of inadequacy, to originate amid these scenes of abundance. It must have been very difficult to escape the embrace of Nature when that embrace was as warm and close and comforting as it is here.

Bearing in mind, then, the capacity and effects of

the sediment with which the Nile is freighted, it is small wonder that those who live along its banks should be on the look-out for a share in it, and be quick to grab and guard it as soon as it comes within reach. Nevertheless, the thought I had in my mind when I drew the reader's attention to the light streaks of earth along the opposite shore was less of that earth's value and preciousness than of the Nile as a power, still in this day active, still carrying on the old work in the old way. This is a point which those who are strangers to the country or who only visit it cursorily are apt to overlook, yet which is bound to influence most strongly those who dwell in the river's presence and profit by its bounty. To the dwellers in the Nile valley the Nile is less the architect of their country than the fertiliser of this year's crops. They do not think of Egypt as the gift of the Nile: they think of these onions or these grapes as the gift of the Nile. They realise the river as a force actively exerting its energy at the present moment. No doubt the periodical exertions of the inundation is the event which most vividly illustrates this present energy; indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a phenomenon more striking and extraordinary, whether it be considered in its practical effects or as a kind of spectacular display. Totally at variance with all our notions of floods and their disastrous consequences, the Nile overflows its banks only to bless and fertilise. The river is never quiescent and at rest. It is always either preparing for or recovering from its periodical exertions. During the later summer months it begins to feel the effects of the spring rains among the

Abyssinian uplands, and its current, swelling by degrees, is charged with dark red sediment. By October it attains its maximum, and rising above its containing banks, which are raised by deposits of the heavier sediment rather above the inland, it inundates the low-lying plains, replenishing the dried canals and leaving behind it on its retirement the precious cargo it was charged with in the shape of a thin coating of glossy mud spread over the surface of the land. Then, its task performed, it gradually recedes, and its current grows slowly clearer and shallower and weaker until the time comes when the old impulse from afar once more admonishes it to another effort.

Thus in year-long respirations the river's body expands and contracts, while up and down the country a busy peasantry utilises and exhausts the last donation and eagerly expect the next. What stranger can sympathise with or fully comprehend so strict a dependence on the river's bounty? The Nile is the only active and visible factor in Egypt's prosperity, the only factor that seems endowed with intelligence and initiative. Changes of weather vary only from a little hotter to a little less hot. The husbandman can trust securely in the long succession of blue, unclouded days. The conditions of his labour are fixed and steadfast. Only the Nile, in its coming and going, varies sufficiently to concentrate attention and anxiety on its movements. Two or three feet more or less in the normal rise of the river means dams burst and irrigation works destroyed, or great tracts of land left dry and unfertilised. Hence the villagers and peasantry of the

valley never pray for a good harvest but for a "good Nile." Granted this, the harvest follows with mechanical infallibility. There is no anxiety on that score. It is on the operations of the river that all eyes are fixed, and round which the hopes and fears, the expectations and anxieties of the Egyptian people circulate.

I know not how to convey a sense of the contrast always in view of the traveller on the Nile, between the luxuriant vegetation of the valley and the hard mineral-white sterility of the limestone ranges which enclose it. The breadth of the fertile tract varies in places considerably. Sometimes the mountains stand well back from the river's course, framing in their tall bare walls, which, with well-marked tiers of strata, often have the look of amphitheatres of regular masonry, ample plains of verdure and palm groves, and small clustering villages. Sometimes the great bluffs project toward the current as if they would threaten to bar its course, and slanting cataracts of rock and stone shelve down almost to the river's brink. But the aspect of the hills themselves never varies in its dazzling and lifeless brilliance. They have their own beauty. When the flush of sunrise or sunset resting upon them warms their cold hue to a rosy pink, and in the pure air the blue shadows of their defiles are inlaid with the exactitude of fragments of lapis lazuli set in an old ivory carving, or when the icy moonlight, which turns night in Egypt into a colourless day, lends them the wan and spectral aspect peculiar to that hour,—then, at such times, they gleam with a weird, uncanny loveliness which

often rivets the eye on them with a kind of wonder. But still the loveliness is one that seems altogether removed from human life and sympathy, and from the human lot. It is a deathlike beauty, significant, in a way, of the part played by those mountains in Egyptian history. For all through that history the rule that the valley was for the living, the hill for the dead, held good. Here among these white precipices and defiles are the cities and habitations of the departed, who dwell here much as they dwelt in life, in greater or less state; princes in noble halls, all carved and painted with their deeds of prowess, and peasants in mere holes in the sand appropriate to their insignificant lot in the world. Seldom has the writer spent a stranger day than one passed among the mountain cemeteries in the neighbourhood of the ancient Lycopolis. Perhaps a few words copied from a diary kept at the time may help the reader who has not visited the country to realise one of its more curious aspects.

"The western range of hills here, near Asiut, projects in a shoulder or big bluff, which is perforated in all directions with old tombs. The ground-surface of loose stone and dust is divided at intervals by cliffs of limestone rock in which the tombs are bored and tunnelled. Wherever fresh blasting and landslips have laid bare the rock more borings of the same kind are exposed. The hill is honeycombed with them. Bones, skulls and ribs litter the ground so thickly that it seems in many places to consist of little else. Shreds and patches of

mummy-cloth lie about in all directions, sometimes still tightly twined round shrivelled arms and shoulders. It is a Golgotha, where the dead congregate as thickly as the living in the valley. And for their use it is exclusively preserved. No leaf or blade of grass grows here. Nothing living intrudes to question death's absolute supremacy."

In later centuries, it is true, the living made their abode among these ranges, and the tombs of the ancient Egyptians became the tenements of Christian hermits. Yet these later lodgers were scarcely an exception to the old rule, since at the least it was appropriate that those who made it their aim to die to the things of this world should turn to those gaunt hills which from time immemorial had been the abode of death.

The journal quoted from goes on to describe the view from that place of skulls, and how the writer, perched on the white crest of the hill with his feet in bone-dust, looked down on a scene of fertility, rich even for Egypt:

"Far to north and south, level as water except where small mud-hut villages in their groves of feather-headed palms are dotted in relief upon its surface, stretches the long band of luscious green through which the Nile rolls, and in which seems gathered and compressed all the fertility which should have been scattered over the surrounding hills and desert. The valley for the living, the hill for the dead. The distinction of function is sharp and is as sharply marked in Nature. As far, to a yard, as the Nile reaches in its annual floods, the

fertile soil extends. You can stand with one foot in perennial crops and the other in desert sand. There is no gainsaying evidence like this. No peasant who watches the water flow and ebb but knows, beyond the shadow of a doubt, from what beneficent power all that makes life possible proceeds."

Every way we look at it we are brought back to the thought of the Nile as a living, ever-active power, a power unmistakably exerting its influence from day to day and year to year over the life and fortunes of every dweller in the valley. This must always have been, and must always be, the Egyptian point of view. The fact that the river has brought Egypt grain by grain out of the heart of Africa, to lay it down ripe for cultivation in this sequestered corner of the continent, however interesting to a student, is not likely to command the attention of the average populace of the country. These ancient geological events are easily forgotten. We are not concerned about such stale and antique favours, but about those we receive to-day or expect to-morrow. What seized the attention of the inhabitants of this valley, what profoundly attracted their imagination, and in the course of ages came to exert a distinct influence, perhaps, on their character and the development of their civilisation, was not the thought of what the Nile had done, but what the Nile was doing. It was such everyday and common sights as we have been describing, it was the sight of the new-laid ribs of mould along the river's course, that had to be cherished and preserved, the sight of the

contrast ever in their eyes between the deathlike sterility of mountain and desert and the luxuriant productiveness of the fertilised valley; it was the realisation of the inexhaustible fecundity of the rich soil brought and given to them by the river; it was sights and thoughts like these which must have been continually impressing and influencing the minds and imaginations of the Egyptians. Above all it must have been the spectacle of the eagerly awaited annual inundation, which must most effectively have driven into their consciousness the Nile's constant energy and consistent purpose. "Blessed," begins the old Nile hymn—

"Blessed be the good God,
The heaven-loving Nile,
The Father of the Gods of the holy Nine
Dwelling on the waters,
The plenty, wealth, and food of Egypt.
He maketh everybody live by himself,
Riches are in his path,
And plenteousness is in his fingers;
The pious are rejoiced at his coming.
Thou art alone and self-created,
One knoweth not whence thou art.
But on the day thou comest forth and openest thyself
Everybody is rejoicing.
Thou art a lord of many fish and gifts,
And thou bestowest plenteousness in Egypt.
The cycle of the holy Nine knoweth not whence thou art,
Thou art their life.

For when thou comest their offerings are redoubled
And their altars filled,
And they are shouting when thou appearest."

The second stanza of the hymn opens with the lines :

" He giveth light on his coming from darkness ;
In the pastures of his cattle
His might produceth all :
What was not his moisture bringeth to light" ;

and concludes with the acclamation :

" Shine forth, shine forth, O Nile ! shine forth !
Giving life to his oxen by the pastures !
Shine forth in glory, O Nile !"

Such were the thoughts of the Egyptians, such their attitude of mind in presence of the great river, ever active, ever creative, in whose hands were food and riches, and at whose coming the pious were rejoiced. A traveller in the country, if he be susceptible at least to natural influences, cannot remain long in the land without in some degree sympathising with those thoughts and feelings. On him, too, as he observes on all sides the evidences of the Nile's creative and renovating influence, is cast, tentatively yet perceptibly, the old Egyptian spell. Conscious of its power it is inevitable that he should look back into Egyptian history for symptoms of its effect. Such an influence, an influence so potent, so clearly defined, so strictly limited, could not, as he instinctively feels, fail to leave recognisable traces on the race subjected to it.

And when with this thought in his mind he dips into history, almost immediately, as the main characteristics of Egyptian life pass in review, there appears something in their aspect—a huge grotesque simplicity, a dreadful yet imposing monotony, as though life were the repetition of an endless formula which strikes him as somehow a rude reflection of the natural conditions he sees around him. In vain he dismisses the idea as an illusion. The longer he stays in the country the more his imagination is impressed by the weird regularity of its arrangement. By degrees he comes to realise the completeness of the river's dominion, the dependence of all life upon its rise and fall, and how, by that monotonous action, life is held rigorously to the reiteration of the same processes and expedients. On the other hand, he gives himself to the study of Egyptian civilisation, so strangely characterised by its acquiescence in primitive routine; and the more he thus occupies himself the more difficult he will find it to evade the sense of likeness between the Egypt he sees, or Nature's Egypt, and the Egypt he reads of, which, in its various manifestations of art, literature and science, and so on, we think of as man's Egypt. Man's Egypt persists in mimicking Nature's, and in the mechanical routine which controls Egyptian civilisation the effect of surrounding conditions of life seems only too clearly apparent.

And why should this not be so? How often has it been observed that regularity of occupation leaves its traces on the character, that, for example, men who are constantly occupied in tending machinery,

whose movements are dictated, without need of volition or conscious thought on their side, by the movements of the mechanism they serve—how often has it been observed that such people take on the nature of the mechanism itself, that they are, as it were, assimilated by it, that they become perfect and dexterous within their own groove, but incapable of breaking away from that groove. As day by day and year by year their attention is governed by the revolution of a cylinder or the rise and fall of a crank, do they not grow, as we significantly put it, *absorbed* in their occupation, and does not all capacity for independent thought desert them? Certainly of all countries in the world Egypt is that in which Nature approaches most nearly to mechanical regularity and mechanical reiteration. The mathematical arrangement of the country, the absence of all cross-purposes and conflicting elements, the clock-like punctuality of the annual floods, are natural facts and conditions which not only have always controlled and dominated Egyptian life, but which seem to have impressed on life itself their own rule of unprogressive, unvarying repetition.

To several writers this idea of Egypt's mechanical influence and of the natural effects of such an influence seems to have occurred. Life on the banks of the Nile, as Professor Sayce tells us, is a life of steady but curiously regular toil. The peasant is timed by the river. What he does must fit in with what the river does. The consequence is his work is "monotonously regular" to a degree very difficult for us to realise. "There are no unexpected breaks in it; no moments when a sudden demand is made

for exceptional labour. The farmer's year is all mapped out for him beforehand; what his forefathers have done for unnumbered centuries before him, he, too, has to do almost to a day." To such causes may have been due, perhaps, Professor Sayce thinks, that "incapacity for abstract thought" which he distinguishes as characteristic of Egyptian civilisation. It is strange that Professor Sayce did not push home the idea. He throws it out as a hint in the early pages of his book, but does not recur to it. Yet evidently, if there is anything in it, it is of vital consequence. We find again, in Mr. Hogarth's thoughtful and learned work on the Nearer East, a passage of much the same purport: "Life is full of labour where is no sky-sent rain, but only irrigation from a river which will not do its part unless canals and drains be cleared annually with infinite toil of man and beast, and water be raised by hand through a twelve-hour day." But this labour is all prearranged and unvarying.

"The Nile, crawling year by year over the flats, now a little higher, now a little lower, giving all the possibility of existence that there is, and admitting of no variety in the annual work of preparation for its coming, or of utilising what it leaves on going, makes life monotonous to a degree hard to realise in a zone of quick-changing skies."

And what was the result? Mr. Hogarth's conclusion is that of Professor Sayce: such a life was bound to affect mental and spiritual development, and did affect it.

"Despite all his physical energy, the Nilot is bound

not only to lack enterprise but to direct all his spiritual, as his physical, vision to earth. He takes no thought of the sky, nor of any God therein. The cult of the Sun in old Egypt was an exotic above the Delta; nor anywhere does it seem to have had the usual characteristics, imagery or consequences of a sky-worship. The real gods were on the earth or under it, clothed with bestial or human forms, worshipped with myriad superstitious observances, but without reference to religious or social ideals."

From such passages as these the reader will understand my desire to link what was said in the last chapter, concerning the correspondence between Egyptian art and life and the low state of intellectual development which that art reveals—to link this with my recollections of the country itself, and the curious conditions of life which have always prevailed in it. Through life and art we traced the same unvarying round, the same mechanical repetition of the archaic and the childish, deducing from it the people's lack of intellectual initiative and spiritual enlightenment. Here, in Nature and the physical arrangement of the country, we are struck by the same order of phenomena, the same iteration of circumstances, making of life itself a lesson learnt by rote; and now we have Professor Sayce and Mr. Hogarth inferring from these outward circumstances just what we inferred from Egyptian art—namely, the limitation of the Egyptian's "spiritual and physical vision to earth," and his inveterate "incapacity for abstract thought." The two are

counterparts. The narrow valley with its fixed boundaries, secluded and cut off from the world; the Nile, regular as a chronometer, controlling the life of the valley with punctual ebb and flow; that life itself lived to order and strictly under its great taskmaster's eye, reiterating monotonously the same round of simple tasks—what are these but a set of circumstances in themselves archaic? Think of such a life in terms of form, and you evolve the stereotyped yet childish conventions of an Egyptian bas-relief. The grasp in which Egyptian art and life are held, is it not, after all, the grasp of the Nile?

I cannot help turning aside here for a moment to remind the reader, by way of corroboration, of another instance of river influence corresponding in many ways to that which we have been speaking of. The twin civilisation to the Egyptian was the Assyrian, and in several striking particulars the resemblance between the two is obvious. The influence of the same kind of routine as that which dominated Egyptian life is unmistakably present in the Euphrates valley. All that we know of the life of that valley points to the existence of the same conditions, the same inexhaustible fertility of soil, and the same unvarying monotony of daily work which characterised the life of Egypt. In her religion and art, those two most eloquent witnesses to all that in a race is fundamental, the primitive influence in Assyria remains indelible. Whoever is familiar with the obstinate survival of beast-worship on the Nile, typified by the jackal and vulture-headed gods of the Egyptian Pantheon, will be

struck, though in lesser degree, by the same survival on the Euphrates.

"Behind the human figures of the Semitic gods the primitively pictorial character of the cuneiform signs enables us to discern the lineaments of figures that belong to a wholly different sphere of religious thought. They are the figures not of men but of brute beasts. The name of En-lil was denoted by a composite sign which represented the word *elim*, 'a ram'; that of Ea by the ideograph which stood for *dara*, 'the antelope.' En-lil, accordingly, was once a ram; Ea, an antelope."

It is true the idea of beast-worship was relegated in Babylonia to the secondary order of divinities, but it remained the conception of the mass of the people. "Whereas in Egypt it was the gods themselves who joined the head of the beast to the body of the man, in Babylonia it was only the semi-divine spirits and monsters of the *popular creed* who were there partly bestial and partly human." I italicise the two words "popular creed," for the point I wish to emphasise is that in the Euphrates valley, as in the Nile valley, though to a less extent, the archaic conception of religion retained its hold upon the life of the nation. This view Professor Sayce expressly endorses.

"The Semite, though he moulded the later religion of Babylonia, could not transform it altogether. The Sumerian element in the population was never extirpated, and it is probable that if we knew more of the religion of the people as opposed to the

official theology, we should find that it remained comparatively little affected by Semitic influence."

An obstinate survival of the archaic, that is the striking feature in the religion of the Euphrates. And the same is true of its art. That art, represented by the palaces and sculptures of Assyria, itself an offshoot of the older Babylonian empire and soaked with the Babylonian influence, is indeed quite different in form and type from Egyptian; but in idea and limitations it is strikingly similar. In architecture structural forms are evolved without regard to the function they fulfil; in sculpture the human figure is represented with a cast-iron convention which seems wholly oblivious of any notion of progress or development. The visitor to the British Museum will be struck by the identity in these respects between the art of the Euphrates and the Nile. The figures of Assyrian sculpture, the huge man-headed, winged bulls, for example, so characteristic of that art, remain always in idea and conception obstinately archaic. They are entirely lacking in naturalness, flexibility, variety, life. The body, limbs and head are not so united, or conceived in such relation to each other, as to form a real figure. Intellectually the work is of the childish or primitive epoch. Yet, like the Egyptian, it is work not of a childish epoch through which the nation was passing but of a childish epoch in which the nation was permanently abiding. Mark the strong, firm, precise handling of those impossible legs and feet and arms, the trenchant exactitude of the outlines; the tight curls of hair and beard, each curl a

little formula endlessly repeated, primitive yet invariable; the eye and eyelid, the curl of the nostril, the formal articulation of sinew and muscle—these are all indeed archaic in conception, but they are not archaic in execution. They are carved with that strength, assurance and absolute uniformity which only centuries of constant repetition can engender. As in Egyptian art, so here there is something strange and at variance with usual experience in this weird conjunction of firm and perfect handling with immature, stunted thought. There is, quite obviously, no hope of development in an art of this nature. It will multiply replicas of itself without end. It has worn a groove in which it will revolve for ever.

The persistence of the primitive, the childish, the archaic, that is the main characteristic of the religion and art of the Euphrates as it is of the religion and art of the Nile. Such resemblances—resemblances so striking and fundamental—prepare us for, and lead us to expect, a corresponding resemblance in the life-conditions of the two countries; and this further resemblance is, of course, forthcoming. Both these ancient, immovable civilisations were the gift of rivers. The waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates were distributed over the Mesopotamian valley by a system of irrigation the most complete and grandiose in scale ever perhaps attempted. Travellers to this day describe the remains of the long regular canals built at intervals across the plain which carried the main supplies of water and which were tapped by the lesser conduits which nourished each farm and garden. With the decline

of a central governing power capable of working and maintaining these great engineering works the whole system has fallen to ruin. Dams, sluices, embankments, locks, have crumbled and decayed; canals have dried up or burst their banks, and for many centuries agriculture has declined until the whole country has been overlaid with desert sand interspersed with a few stagnant marshes. Cities, the richest of the ancient world, have become so totally obliterated that their very sites are ignored or are marked only by shapeless mounds. Yet vestiges and historical records in sufficient quantity remain to prove the almost unexampled agricultural wealth of a region identified with the fabled Garden of Eden, and the possible revival of that ancient fertility remains one of the most alluring problems presented to modern enterprise and science.

Here, then, in the Tigris-Euphrates valley, we have another ancient civilisation presented to our notice comparable in all its main aspects to the civilisation of the Nile; comparable to it in the immovable and fixedly archaic character of its religion and its art, and comparable to it, too, in the conditions of life out of which the religion and the art grew. In both cases these conditions of life were based upon an unwonted and perennial fertility of soil, which fertility again was not only due to but was constantly regulated and maintained by the overflow of the great rivers which ran through the land. Thus in both countries the note of unvarying routine which distinguished their civilisation is struck originally in their physical formation and in the mode of life dictated by it. The Tigris

and Euphrates had the same hold on life in Mesopotamia as the Nile had on life in Egypt.

I must confess that I offer these considerations to the reader with a certain diffidence. I am aware that the theory of the "influence of environment," as it has been called, is somewhat out of fashion. Time was when it was supposed to explain everything. Now, as a consequence of those exaggerated pretensions, it is permitted to explain nothing. Such is our method of reasoning. We take up a theory—evolution, environment, or what not—and fall in love with it; we cast on it the onus of "explaining" the universe; by-and-by we discover its inadequacy for such a task, and forthwith we discard it altogether and take up with a new solution. Were we to admit the idea of many contributory causes, of many influences, sometimes blending and sometimes conflicting, yet all more or less operative, our advance in knowledge would possibly be smoother and more consistent. It is easy to overdo the environment theory, to make it explain too much and too exactly; on the other hand, it is absurd to ignore it altogether. Who can associate for a day with a desert-bred Bedouin; who, for the matter of that, can reflect for a moment on the characters of sailors or Scotch Highlanders, or on the difference between town and country-bred people, and not perceive that this influence is indeed a very powerful formative cause? Naturally, where the physical conditions are most simple, strongly marked, and continuous, there their effects on character will be most apparent. They may not originate racial characteristics, but they may in such

cases control their development or dictate their limitations. Granting them a certain influence, it seems inevitable that conditions which call for varied efforts, constant adaptability, and an intelligent appreciation of all kinds of natural influences, will be the conditions which, as they exercise the faculties most variously, will most favour mental development. If this is so, it would be difficult to imagine any life less favourable to intellectual advance than the life of passive routine of the Nile valley—a life self-centred, shut off from the world, intensely monotonous, and from year to year and generation to generation entirely dominated and controlled by the river's automatic action. Without wishing to press the point unduly, I cannot help feeling that to realise intimately, by an effort of the imagination based on knowledge of the country, the conditions of life under which the Egyptians lived, is to recognise, between those conditions and the art, religion, literature and science which ensued, points of resemblance which it is impossible to ignore or explain away.

Along the banks of the Nile stand at intervals, like confessionals, the great temples in which Egypt has embodied its most secret thoughts and aspirations. Let us enter one for a last moment. The influence of the river pervades the building. Throngs of ponderous columns bulge upward out of lotus calyxes to terminate in the heavy buds and blossoms of the sacred river flower. Again and again the same buds or open blossoms appear. They are held in the hands of sculptured figures and nod over the foreheads of gods and goddesses.

Friezes are formed of their stalks and heads, and bands of ornament composed of lotuses enrich the walls. But most of all it is the groves of huge shafts, distended, ill-proportioned, outraging every rational law of the evolution of structural form—most of all it is these imposing representations of the Nile's emblem which are responsible for the character of the whole interior. These huge obese features may be offensive to all our notions of structural propriety, but they were never invented to express a structural purpose. They were invented to express the ruling sentiment of Egypt—adoration of the Nile. It is difficult to convey to one who has not felt their presence the influence of the river which exudes from these dense-growing groves of bulbs—for they are more bulbs than shafts. All the feeling we associate with swamps and marshes, with sleepy, lapping water, with the succulent, rank growth of reeds and sedges, inhabits these dim interiors. The influence which dominates Egypt is, in the Egyptian temple, focussed and concentrated. All other considerations, all the ideals pertaining to a structural art, are discarded that the presence and the power of the river may receive complete embodiment. We may not approve the motive, but we cannot deny the force of its effect. The Greeks, in their architecture, eliminated all local influences for the sake of purely artistic considerations. With equal disinterestedness the Egyptians eliminated all artistic considerations in order that a local influence might exercise over their art the dominion it already exercised over their lives.

What might be the limits of such an influence?

We Europeans, who boast our intellectual independence, if we lived on the bounty of a river in a river-created country, knowing of no resources but what the river brought, our hopes and fears centred upon it, the habits of our daily life regulated by it, our traditions and literature and religion saturated by the slow infiltration of ages with the river's influence—should we have fared as the Egyptians fared? Should we have accepted our river's beneficent tyranny, and would that tyranny have extended its sway from our outward lives to our inward habits of thought? Would the power to express rational purposes in artistic forms have been denied us, and for five thousand years should we have been content to build our temple columns in the likeness of river bulbs? To feel that it might have been so, and under what compulsion it would have become so, is to get in touch, perhaps, with the life of ancient Egypt.

So strong is the influence of Nile architecture that sometimes it has seemed to the present writer as if, during hours spent in the dim colonnades of the old temples, he had unconsciously imbibed some of the nature and ideas of the ancient worshippers in these places. It seemed that their life had become his life and their thoughts his thoughts; that the ebb and flow of the river rocked his existence as it had rocked theirs, and that the rows of the white, dead hills bounded the universe for him as for them. Nothing, it seemed, could ever intrude here to break the reigning routine or disturb the unvarying iteration of the months.

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time."

Hard by, the Nile itself rolls its majestic flood, surveying its crops and lands and people with a great landlord's benignant pride. "I made this Egypt," it seems to murmur to itself, "and I made the Egyptians. It was I also who built those temples, and by-and-by, when my people live once more undisturbed under my rule, I shall, perhaps, build others like them. What does it matter if there is a break in the series: after all, has not that often happened before?"

CHAPTER III

ENTER THE GREEK

The new factor at work : The movement in Greek archaic art an intellectual movement : The Greek point of view : Intellectual bias of the Greek mind : In what respects sculpture is calculated to express that bias : The Greek instinct for definition : Its restrictions and limitations : Greek religion : The Greek idea of death : Gods and tombs : Greek poetry : Analogy between Myron and Æschylus, Phidias and Sophocles : What Greek art cannot give

VERY likely the practice, which has become universal in these specialising days, of treating art as if it could be disjoined from the life out of which it grew, may have its conveniences, but it is responsible none the less for the loss of much of the interest of the subject. We lose, by so treating it, a part of the contents of art. Out of the current criticisms of Florentine, Venetian, Sienese, and other schools of Italian painting, how much do we gather of the inward intellectual and emotional life which found these modes of utterance, and which, through these several yet converging currents, went to make up the Italian Renaissance? From the many books written by architects on architecture, treating, as they do, that great subject from the technical point of view, as a matter of material and structural law, what do we divine of the national spirit which in the great building eras moulded our cathedrals and abbeys in its own likeness? Art has a human and

dramatic quality. It is the most vivid, the most convincing and eloquent expression of the life of its own age which the past has handed down to us; and more especially is this true of the great periods of art, the creative epochs as they may be called; for it is the art of such epochs which is fullest of life, and which has the greatest collective impulse of conviction to back it. This, indeed, it is which gives to such epochs the aspect of agreement and uniformity which we donote by the word "style." They have this note of uniformity, of style, precisely because they are supported in life by a solid body of conviction. When a style reigns, no other but that language is possible. All men are clear as to what they have to say. At such epochs art sums up and presents to us in visible form the spirit of its age; and to neglect this message in order to emphasise the merely æsthetic importance of the subject is, it seems to me, deliberately to jettison the best part of its cargo.

An example of this apparent waste I have in view. There has recently appeared a thoughtful and scholarly work on Greek sculpture by Professor Ernest Gardner. It bears the title "Six Greek Sculptors," and the bulk of it consists of an interesting analysis of the six most famous of the Greek sculptors, from Myron to Lysippus. The first and last chapters, however, are concerned with the rise and decline of the art—that is, with its Archaic and Hellenistic periods—and it is these two chapters which best illustrate the point I wish to examine.

The subject of the first chapter is the gradual

transition from the old stereotyped and unnatural figures of Egyptian sculpture to the warm and living forms of Greek art. The progress of this transition is at first by little steps. The antique figures are, to begin with, imitated in all their conventional stiffness. Yet even in these earliest adaptations a careful scrutiny will detect signs of dissatisfaction with the old style and of a hesitating and tentative advance in the direction of the new. They contain a promise, and "if we try to analyse more closely wherein exactly this promise lies, we shall find that almost every archaic statue in Greece bears a trace in some part or other of direct study and observation of Nature." It is in this sentence, perhaps, that Professor Gardner comes closest to explaining the change of outlook which inaugurated the change of style in art. But he does not press the point. A few words are added. It is pointed out that an indication of this love of direct personal investigation may be found in ever so slight revelations, "in the treatment of hand or knee-joints or toes, or in the fold of skin at the elbow; but it is rarely, if ever, absent; and it shows that the artist, while content to repeat the conventional type, tried to make it his own, to give it some individual stamp, by adding to it something, however insignificant, of his own direct observation."

It would seem as if, in that repeated phrase, "direct observation," Professor Gardner had touched the inward intellectual incentive that was pushing the sculptor forward on the path of progress, and we expect that he will proceed to explain the nature of that motive and link it to its effect on

art. This, however, he does not do. The purely artistic side of the question, the degrees by which sculpture advances from mechanism to life, are treated with due knowledge and lucidity; but the corresponding mental change and process of development out of which the artistic movement proceeded and of which it was the measure and the inevitable result, are practically ignored. The consequence is that the subject of sculpture itself is left, so to speak, hanging in the air, and, not being related to life, is not really explained at all. Let us endeavour, if we can, to gain a rough idea of the kind of interest which is thus lost sight of.

What is the difference on the intellectual side between the civilisations of Egypt and Greece? The Egyptian civilisation, as has been already pointed out, was an affair of routine. Its proficiency was the proficiency not of thought but practice. All that practice, all that endless repetition, perpetuated under unvarying conditions of life, and itself reflecting the deadly monotony of those conditions, could achieve, Egypt achieved. But, as all records and vestiges conspire to prove, she laboured from the beginning under an unshakable apathy as regards intellectual curiosity and initiative. Five thousand years pass in Egypt like a watch in the night. The childish usages and childish thoughts which greet us as the curtain rises hold the stage still as it falls. Routine has reached here, you would say, its final phase of absolute petrifaction. There is nowhere a trace of that movement, that development, that growth which we associate with the inward activity of the

mind. It would seem that, under its load of precedent, intellectual initiative had ceased to operate and had sunk into a state of mental inertia.

And in all these traits the art of the country was but a replica of the life it emanated from. Could anything be more entirely childlike and primitive than those conventional figures which decorate the walls of the Nile temples, drawn just as children draw, with face in profile, shoulders to the front, and feet in profile once more? Doubtless in execution they are perfectly skilful; a lesson learnt by rote and repeated for fifty centuries is apt to be well learnt. But if the hand is forward, how backward is the brain! An Egyptian sculptor, as we surmise, could almost have carved one of his stereotyped forms in his sleep, so uninformed by any trait gathered from direct observation are they, so utterly mindless, so purely a matter of mere mechanical iteration. It would be difficult to conceive a more significant summary of a civilisation, curiously lacking in all its aspects in intellectual vitality, than these pathetically inanimate figures, repeated with parrot-like monotony through successive dynasties. Here is an art which is a faithful facsimile indeed of the life it was begotten of. Here is the load of precedent with a vengeance, and here the mental inertia.

We pass on into the Greek epoch, and no sooner do we enter it than we are aware of a subtle, significant change. The sculpture begins to move, to strive as with fetters. Backed by the authority of immemorial usage, the Egyptian conventions impose themselves on the budding art of Greece.

But from the first their authority is questioned. Unwillingly, with a profound reluctance and discontent, the Greek repeats the old impossible features and attitudes. " It is not so, it is not so," he mutters to himself, and by-and-by he essays his keener perception on some minor point, and a hand, a foot, a knee-joint, is carved with some attempt at natural representation. Thus, under the stimulus, as Professor Gardner tells us, "of direct study and observation of Nature," sculpture in Greek hands develops flexibility and expressiveness. But what does this direct study and observation imply? Are we to suppose that it is a purely artistic process, that it begins and ends in art, or is it rather itself of mental origin, arguing a changed attitude of mind, an impulse of curiosity and a desire to realise the truth about things such as had never quickened Egyptian thought? Will the reader place himself in the position of one who, having been long accustomed to make a certain conventional and oft-repeated diagram do duty for the human figure, suddenly awakens to the perception that the diagram bears in fact no real resemblance to a figure. What is the nature of that sudden awakening? It is not optical. The sense of sight conveys the image of the diagram to the brain, and it is there, in the brain, that the conception of its inadequacy and unlikeness to the original takes place, as also it is from there that the succeeding efforts and experiments in the direction of real resemblance emanate.

In short, the awakening which we see in Greek archaic art is the reflection of a mental awakening.

Any one who has learnt to think of art as the expression of life, looking at this art of the Greeks alone, and noting its striving after truthful representation and its determination from the beginning to see and depict things as they are, will know that he is in the presence of a transition not less important intellectually than artistically. Through the long Egyptian night intellect, the faculty which reasons, compares, analyses and defines, has slept. Now it wakens. I say that an intelligent critic, surveying the progress of art only, and thinking of art only, would lay his finger on the quick-coming realism of early Greek art, and observe that we had here marks of a sudden intellectual vitality such as history until then exhibits no trace of.

And he would have been right. The coming to life of the old archaic forms of sculpture was but one sign among many of a revolution in thought which has profoundly affected the character of all subsequent civilisation. The movement in art synchronises with a corresponding movement in literature, in science, in politics, in philosophy. Professor Gardner's half-dozen sculptors cover the wonderful two centuries in which the Greek intellect blossomed, fruited, faded. But, though one sign among many only, Greek sculpture is perhaps the most thoroughly characteristic and adequate presentment of the new movement of the mind which exists. It is so because between the nature of the art of sculpture and the nature of the intellectualism it grew out of, there is a profound affinity.

It is usually the case that when the mind takes a certain ply, when it opens up a new line of inquiry

or fruitful speculation, and devotes itself, as it generally does, to the new research with an ardour which seems commensurate with the stores of ore latent in the hitherto unexplored reef—it is usually the case that this very ardour, though productive of great results, yet being directed to one end and exercising but one side of the mind, has the effect of leaving another side and other faculties unused and undeveloped. Intellect's awakening had this effect upon Greek culture. Fascinated by the novel experience of thinking, Greek culture, despite its versatility, came to be dominated by an intellectual order of ideas and precepts. The Greek versatility was essentially an intellectual versatility. Moreover, following its chief activity, the Greek mind developed within strictly intellectual limitations. The most striking consequences of this intellectual bias and the limitations it imposed are to be found in the Greek love of the definite and in the Greek passion for definition. All that is clear-cut and articulate the Greek mind adores; all that is in the least vague and indeterminate it detests. It could not but be so. The operations of intellect being confined to the sphere of the natural and the intelligible, it can only act where facts of a finite nature give it foothold. Accordingly the tendency of an exclusive cultivation of the intellectual faculty will be to restrict human ideas within the bounds of the intelligible and the definable.

Most emphatically was this the case with the Greeks. They, for the first time, exploited the idea of intellectual definition, and it soon followed that they would admit no thought which would not

submit itself to definition. Now there is a whole order of ideas which, spiritual in their nature, refuse to submit themselves to definition, but with these ideas, even, the Greeks so dealt as to bring them within range, as it were, of their favourite faculty.

In considering these matters, what is significant is not a people's use and common knowledge of such phrases as "the divine," "the supernatural," "the godlike" and so on, nor even its faith in such existences, but its interpretation of them and the meaning it assigns to them. A people may possess the liveliest faith in its divinity or divinities, and yet its conception of divinity may have in it little of a divine or spiritual nature. For as it is possible to lift all material phenomena into the spiritual sphere, so is it possible to lower spiritual ideas to the material sphere. Between the material and the spiritual there is no fixed gulf. The mind that lays itself open to spiritual promptings and inspirations will find all its observations of Nature and its earthly surroundings quite altered and transformed. It will find that Nature herself becomes endued with an infinite significance, and that, as part and parcel of that infinitude, she herself becomes shrouded in a kind of mystery, and the thoughts and feelings she suggests do not admit of articulation and refuse to be exactly defined. Thus is it when the spiritual sense is developed; its meaning, and with its meaning its mystery and vagueness, encroach upon the territory of intellect, and forthwith, before its melting touch, things begin to lose their finite exactitude and precision of form. This happens when the spirit invades the dominions of intellect.

But something quite different happens when, as in the case of the Greeks, intellect invades the spiritual domain. It is not then the finite which becomes infinite, but the infinite which becomes finite. Spiritual conceptions are treated intellectually. They lose much of their indefinable nature, and become endowed with intelligible attributes and distinct forms. The thoughts of a people on matters of faith and religion are always its most characteristic thoughts, and nothing gives one a stronger perception of the humane and rootedly intellectual cast of the Greek mind than its notions of divinity. The Greek gods are mortals because no thought is entertained of them which transcends clear expression. Up to the human limits, up to the measure of human understanding, they are realised and represented; but no attempt is ever made to follow them into the spiritual sphere and, by the soul's act of contemplation, see them as they are. Such aspirations were irrational. In short, the anthropomorphic instinct of the Greek mind was the natural result of its intellectual bias.

But what was, and what was bound to be, the effect upon art of this mental bias? All races turn to the art which best expresses their own character. A people in love with definition, and who are sworn to entertain only such ideas or aspects of ideas as admit of definition, will turn to the art which can best and most vigorously define. But without doubt that art is sculpture. Sculpture *is* definition. The sculptor undertakes to express his ideas in a hard material, in curt, distinct lines, in concrete and exactly articulated forms. In other words, he

undertakes to *define* his ideas. The Greeks, who wanted all things defined and had no use for anything beyond its definable stage, threw themselves with a sort of avidity on the art of sculpture and made it peculiarly their own. It filled a quite different place in their lives to such arts as, from time to time, are practised by, and more or less restricted to, a select group of men of genius. It is clear that, for generations before the art attained to any pitch of excellence, it was used among the Greeks popularly as a kind of rough native dialect. The multitude of votive offerings which filled the local shrines of Greece, Cyprus or Rhodes, and for the most part took the form of statues and statuettes, in which, rude as they are, Professor Gardner already remarks the characteristic Greek tendency towards anthropomorphism, attest by their numbers the popularity of the art in its primitive stage of development. In the same way the apparently universal custom of carving scenes in memory of dead friends and relatives and setting them up by the wayside of the old "Streets of Tombs," where they still serve in some cases the purpose of national galleries of sculpture, prove how perfectly the art had assimilated itself to the national temperament. Sculpture from the first, in short, was a Greek vernacular, and as such it was instinctively understood. In the tomb scenes, for example, the limitations natural to the art are instinctively respected. Dealing as they do with the awful mystery of death, they contrive to make no mystery of it at all, for they treat only so much of the subject as is intelligible and can be put into exact form. A steady, farewell look, a woman

veiling herself, the lingering handshake of one who starts on a long journey—such are the moments, such the aspects of the subject chosen. Separation, loneliness, sorrow, resignation, fortitude, are the suggestions, mortal in kind, rather than any immortal suggestions of spiritual hope and a life beyond the horizon-line of this, which the idea of death awakened in the Greek mind. They were finely and adequately treated, in the noblest spirit of reason. There is no weakness or despair, or vain complaint, in these farewells; nothing but dignity and a grave composure. But if human weakness is absent, so, too, is spiritual confidence. All that side of the subject is rigorously shut off. "Stick to what you know, stick to what reason and intellect vouch for"; such seem the instructions under which all these artists work. "That we must part, that separation is bitter, that it is to be borne with fortitude—this reason and intellect affirm, and this only; thus much therefore carve, but carve no more."

What I wish to point out to the reader is the very strong resemblance which exists between Greek ways of thinking and feeling on the one hand, and the art of sculpture itself on the other. It will be evident to any one who endeavours to represent a group or figure in terms of sculpture—that is to say, in terms of form—that the first indispensable preliminary is that the mind's conception of what it wishes to produce should be perfectly definite and distinct. This is not the case with painting, which can deal as much as it pleases in the mystery of light and shade and in vague

emotional suggestion ; nor is it the case, of course, with poetry. But in the case of sculpture, though sculpture can convey thoughts of the greatest subtlety, yet the condition is always present that such thoughts must submit to exactitude of definition. He who wishes to present a subject in the precisely articulated terms of chiselled marble must carry in his mind an image of corresponding precision. But these images of precision were, as I have endeavoured to point out, the very order of ideas which the Greeks affected. Their strong rational bias led them to accept nothing beyond the stage at which it could give a clear account of itself—beyond the stage, that is to say, in which the art of sculpture could deal with it. In other words, the Greek mind, intellectually disposed as it always was, was constantly and instinctively at work preparing subjects for the sculptor and preventing those subjects from getting beyond his control. I have spoken of Greek religious ideas and of the tendency in the Greek world to reduce all such ideas to finite, comprehensible terms. But is it not evident that in thus bringing divine ideas within range of definition the Greeks were also bringing them within the range of sculpture ? The Greek gods and goddesses, if creatures so mortal can bear the name, wrought by Greek chisels in firm marble contours, calm and self-possessed, unvexed by any tumult of soul, unperplexed by any effort of the artist to reach up to more than he could express—to what do they owe their perfection as examples of sculpture ? They owe it to the fact that the whole process of Greek thought had prepared them for

sculpture's handling. The conception which the Greek mind had formed of divinity was itself a sculptor's conception. In discarding the mysterious and obscure and concentrating itself on the comprehensible and the definable, it was evolving a mental image which could pass without change into terms of sculpture. To His chosen people God was a voice that spoke in thunder and lightning out of the clouds that shrouded Sinai. To the Greek imagination He was in His various manifestations only a little more than humanly perfect. You might put the first conception into rolling Biblical verse such as the Jews were masters of, but it would scarcely go into sculpture; nor have I ever heard that the Jews could carve. But the second conception, the Greek conception, would not only go into sculpture, but in a sense is sculpture ready made.

And so, too, of what I was just now speaking of, the Greek ideas of death, that crowning mystery of the human lot, which has exercised the imagination of every race that has ever been, and has given birth to so many strange and monstrous and beautiful myths and fables and divinations, to so many mystical speculations and gropings in the void, is it not obvious that the bias of the Greek mind, which led it to approach the subject from the mundane standpoint, to fix its attention on its intelligible aspect, and to ignore or keep in the background its unfathomable mystery, was a bias which favoured the art of sculpture and tended to supply sculpture with appropriate subject-matter? Who can look on the Greek memorial tablets and doubt

it? The motives, the sentiments, which inspire these gravely pathetic figures are invariably of an entirely human and intelligible order, and, being human and intelligible, they are definable, and it is because they are essentially definable that the art of sculpture advances, as it were, to meet and readily expresses and embodies them.

The truth is that a race distinctively intellectual cannot but express itself through the formative arts. Intellect is the faculty which is most purely human, for it is as distinctly superior and of a higher order to animal intelligence as it is inferior and of a lower order to all that we can conceive of spiritual intelligence. Now, if we watch intellect at work, if we observe in what manner it arranges and investigates whatever matter it has to deal with, separating like from unlike and disposing its material in distinct masses or groups, we shall perceive that its whole activity depends upon its capacity for definition. Intellect cannot get to work, cannot handle and use its material without identifying and defining its constituent elements. Intellectual appreciation is a process of continued definition, each step forward, each addition of knowledge, being marked by the eradication of irrelevant matter and the identification of the true organism and proportions of the subject under consideration; each step forward, that is to say, being an approach towards a more complete definition of the subject as it really is. The Greeks, the first intellectualists and almost the discoverers, as we may say, of that faculty in human nature, were the people who first set about the task of identifying

and defining with a conscious ardour. Their whole bias and mental endeavour was towards definition. In all they did, in all they wrought, in all they said, this tendency shows itself, but it shows itself, of course, most easily and unrestrainedly in the directions most favourable to its exercise. The art of sculpture is so analagous to the action of intellect that it describes itself in the very same terms. Sculpture, too, is "a process of continual definition," and each step forward in sculpture is "marked by the eradication of irrelevant matter and the identification of the organism and proportions of its subject." The sculptor cutting his figure free of the surrounding marble is the very counterpart of the intellectualist developing the construction of his argument. It is, therefore, no wonder that the Greek genius should have found itself in sculpture and should have spoken that language with a kind of native ease and fluency.

But for us, watching its development in Greek hands, does it not add immensely to the interest and significance of the art to realise of what inward growth it was the visible symptom? What is happening as the old lifeless dummy figures of Egyptian art stir and stretch themselves and put on reality and move with animation and life? What is it we are watching? We are watching the awakening of the Greek mind. In those first tentative experiments that Professor Gardner speaks of, in the anxiety accurately to define a hand, a knee-joint, a toe, we catch the first lisping of accents which since then have become the native language of the West. Here you may at leisure examine, here you may touch with your finger, intellect's

earliest experiments, its baby pothooks and hangers. It cannot be without a thrill that we, who have lived so long under intellect's guidance and control, regard these first signs of its awakening. A few days ago I was reading in Dr. Sven Hedin's recent book an account of his discovery of the sources of the Indus among the mountain fastnesses of the Himalayas. Following up the tiny brook, that yet bore the name of Indus, the explorer came at last to where the first drops trickled one by one from a well in the hill-side. "Here I stood," he exclaims, "and saw the Indus emerge from the lap of the earth. Here I stood and saw this unpretentious brook wind down the valley, and I thought of the changes it must undergo before it passes between rocky cliffs, singing its roaring song in ever more powerful crescendo, down to the sea at Karachi where steamers load and unload." So when we watch the first feeble trickle of the intellectual current and think of the lordly stream it will grow into, and of the many plains and valleys its waters will one day fertilise—are not its first drops freighted already with the interest of the future that lies before them?

Every aspect of Greek life and every activity arising out of that life, testifying as they needs must to the clear-cut, cameo-like quality of Greek thought, illustrate the affinity between the Greek civilisation and the art of sculpture. Out of this mass of material let me choose a single parallel. Literature, as a vehicle for the expression of life, is art's twin. Let us compare for a moment the movement set on foot by Myron and continued by

Phidias with the movement set on foot by Æschylus and continued by Sophocles. For the old hard-and-fast convention of the single actor and the chorus Æschylus substituted a plurality of actors and the dialogue. The almost immediate effect of the change was to infuse into drama a strong human interest—to make it a medium for the delineation of character—in a word, to make it live. The reader need not be reminded to what extent Sophocles developed the same idea, or how, out of it, he wrought the great typical heroic characters which dominate Greek tragedy. The thought of Æschylus was to break with the old convention of chorus and single actor by which the primitive Greek drama had been completely dominated; or perhaps we should rather say his thought was to extricate the human element in the drama, which had hitherto been entirely eclipsed, and give it scope for development, and that the result of this development was more and more to thrust the conventional element, represented by the chorus, into the background. Æschylus was thinking, no doubt, more of the living human qualities he wished to depict than of the dead conventions his action was dissipating, just as the early sculptors thought more of the realities of the human form which they were striving to represent than of the stereotyped features and attitudes whose sleep of ages they were disturbing.

In any case, so exactly do the two processes correspond with each other that literature and art at this moment seem inspired by a single endeavour. Æschylus and Myron are contemporaries, the latter

some years the younger. They are facing the same problem and solving it in the same way. Both are rescuing their subjects from an old, impossible routine, and infusing into them a hitherto undreamt-of vitality; and both are effecting this by concentrating their attention upon life itself and turning their art into a means for the direct representation of life. There have been, no doubt, preceding and earlier experiments. Flickerings of half-consciousness have come and gone, and, could we study both subjects with sufficient minuteness, we might probably discover in the primitive Greek drama touches of life about equivalent to similar realistic touches in contemporary sculpture. But though both have had their heralds, to these two for the first time has come the thought, full-orbed, that poetry and art are not to be controlled by any convention, however time-honoured, but must be inspired by what Professor Gardner calls "the direct study and observation of Nature."

In some ways still more remarkable is the analogy between Phidias and Sophocles, the representatives of the Attic culmination. Born within a year or two of each other, the work of each balances that of the other. The resemblance consists not so much in the fact that both are inspired by the same lofty ideals and the same flush of national self-consciousness, as in the fact that both are in that phase of achievement when the means of expression have attained to the portrayal of what is monumental and typical while lacking still that dangerous fluency which is so apt to resort to the delicate and the complex for the exhibition of its dexterity.

Accordingly we find in the figures and characters of both a striking and wonderful similarity. They are identical in their large simplicity, in their powerful rendering of elemental characteristics, in their indifference to all that is accidental or merely subtle. The characters of Sophocles, his Ajax, his Œdipus, his Antigone, in the grandeur of their pose, in their bearing and gesture, match themselves inevitably with the Fates or the Demeter and Persephone of the Parthenon pediment.

How many moments does history yield so charged with interest as the few years which precede and follow the opening of the fifth century in Greece? Ever since then, ever since the day when the rule of reason was explicitly recognised, the tendency of Western progress has always been to advance on intellectual lines. Western science, Western literature, Western politics, Western art, have assumed, under intellect's guidance, that aspect of continuity, coherence and rational development which distinguishes them from the spasmodic, incoherent and entirely unprogressive science, literature, politics and art of the East. And, it may be said, the West has always realised that this was its mission, that the cultivation of the rational faculty and the application of the rational standard were tasks especially committed to its care. The entire classical structure might be submerged and lost to sight, and barbarism and the primitive instincts hold a carnival among the ruins of the civilisation they had laid waste; yet when those passions were laid and that tumult had subsided, the whisper that made itself heard across the ages

of riot, the whisper that said "think," came like an exhortation and a reminder. Men gave ear to it, and the pack of European nations, like hounds after a check, settled down once more to the line of rational and intellectual progress. He must possess but a weak historical sense whose interest and attention are not forcibly drawn to the moment when the new motive was first let loose; and surely every means which tends to illustrate and make clear its nature and the character of the revolution it introduced must have a high claim on our regard. Let the reader but dwell for a moment on the gulf which separates the ancient pre-intellectual civilisations of Egypt and Assyria from that in which we live. He will see that an inanimate, unyielding routine, of which the essential condition is immobility, has given place to an animated progressive movement, of which the essential condition is constant development and change. There is the immobility of death; here the mobility of life. But the self-same difference is just as apparent between these old civilisations and that of Greece. The transition from petrifaction to warm life comes at the beginning of the Greek era. It is with this moment of transition, this moment of awakening, as, in so far as the mind is concerned, it may literally be termed, that we, as we study the beginnings of Greek sculpture, are concerned. Here before our very eyes is the awakening; here are the figures of men actually struggling into reality and life as the new intellectual faculty operates upon them. It is, in all truth, a moment of birth, comparable almost to the moment, as the great Florentine has con-

ceived it, when the first of our race felt the touch of the divine finger and opened heavy eyes in which the light of intelligence and recognition for the first time was kindled.

This surely is a spectacle of some significance; yet even this is but half the interest derivable from Greek sculpture by associating it with the life it grew out of. For, if it reveals the dawn of intellect, that art reveals also the nature, the proportions, and, by-and-by, the limitations of intellect. Sculpture in Greek hands is a definition and, like all definitions, a criticism of intellectualism. In defining what intellectualism is it indicates what it is not. "Though in many respects the ancients are far above us, yet," writes Matthew Arnold, "there is something which we demand that they can never give." There it is! In spite of its quality of sculptured clearness—nay, to speak rightly, because of its quality of sculptured clearness—Greek thought has proved in the long run not adequate to human needs. Its very perfection has been its undoing. Purity of form denotes exactitude of definition, and exact definition involves the idea of limitation. The consciousness of limitation, in spite of an ever-present beauty and harmony, is, as we study Greek literature and art, never far from us. If we dwell on that sense of limitation we shall, perhaps, find that it is produced by the inherent tendency of the Greek mind to rely on one set of faculties only, on the rational and intellectual faculties, that is to say, and to ignore as much as possible that other side of the mind whose subject-matter is the spiritual, and whose mode of procedure is not analysis and

definition, but pure receptivity and the adoption of an attitude of passive contemplation. The gleams of spiritual vision thus accorded are, and are bound to be because of the order of ideas they deal with, vague and indefinite; and doubtless the exquisite lucidity of Greek thought, together with its counterpart, the purity of form of Greek sculpture, are largely due to their successful exclusion. Nevertheless, these gleams of illumination or inward vision constitute not the least precious part of our enlightenment, and the faculties which receive such promptings are not among those which we can afford permanently to ignore. This we have come to perceive more clearly than the Greeks could do. This inward spiritual prompting, with its accompanying sense of the infinite and the indefinite, is, I suppose, that "something" over and above intellectualism which we demand and which the ancients "can never give." In this sense it is that Greek sculpture yields us not the value only, but the limits to the value, of Greek ideas. Its clear-cut outlines are the boundaries of the Greek intelligence.

I hope in a later chapter to follow up these remarks on the rise of Greek sculpture with some observations on its decline during what is known as the Hellenistic period, and on the later revival of the art at the time of the Renaissance. In both these periods there are to be found signs of conflict and struggle in the sculpture itself, due, as it seems to me, to the influence of certain ideas which did not admit of being translated into exact forms. These signs of conflict and struggle shed a very interesting light on Greek sculpture itself, and, I

think, bear out what I have said in regard to its cause of origin and the nature of its limitations. One concluding point I would here emphasise: It was stated at the beginning of this chapter, what is common knowledge, that modern art criticism is usually conducted as a special study confined to art alone, and that, while recognising the artistic or æsthetic value of art, it very seldom takes the trouble to look for any human and historical interest which it may contain. In these pages a rough attempt has been made to regard sculpture, not as disjoined from, but as united to life, and as deriving its main interest and significance from life. The passage from cast-iron Egyptian convention to Greek warmth and mobility has been viewed as the transition from intellectual stagnation and atrophy to intellectual initiative and vitality. Will the reader, the next time he visits the British Museum, take this idea, such as it is, with him and there eke out its imperfections? If he will do this, and if, as he looks at the dissolving stiffness and slow awakening of the sculptured figures before him, he will turn back into Greek history and observe in Greek poetry the same life-giving process taking effect, and in Greek politics and science and philosophy kindred signs of a growing consciousness of the real nature of things, he will, I cannot help thinking, be inclined to agree that the representation here given by art of a great movement in the development of thought is unapproached for vividness and dramatic force. Such a representation drives into us the meaning of that movement as nothing else can. And so I say that, strip art of that interest and you strip it of a

large share of its hold upon our attention. Many books on sculpture have appeared quite recently. On my own table, besides Professor Gardner's book, I happen to have Lord Balcarres' work on the Italian sculptors, a book of short studies by Mr. Hill, a "Life of Michael Angelo" by Mr. Gerald Davies, and an important work on Florentine sculpture by Professor Bode. These books are valuable and are read by people who are interested in artistic theories and solutions, but they do not appeal to the far wider public which is interested in history and in life. Yet they might easily be made to do so. They would not, by linking art to the ideas which gave it birth, lose anything of their æsthetic significance—nay, they would probably gain in that province too; but apart from that they would appeal to numbers of readers for the sake of their interpretation of that living interest which art always in greater or less degree contains, though not often does it contain so much of it as in the case of Greek sculpture.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT ART MEANT TO THE GREEKS

Greek and Gothic art compared : Gothic architecture a picture of contemporary life : Aloofness of the Doric temple from such life : What hold had it on Greek life? : The æsthetic sense as a source of ideas : Proportion, harmony, unity at once æsthetic and ethical principles : Similarity between the eye and the mind : Hence possibility of appealing to the mind through the eye—*e.g.* an image of harmony, unity, &c., presented to the eye will stimulate a mental recognition of those principles : Use the Greeks made of this thought : Doric architecture an embodiment of the ethical conceptions which governed Greek life

IN that excellent book of his, "The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages," Mr. Taylor points out that "the Greeks reached their ethical conceptions in part through philosophical speculation . . . and in part through their sense and understanding of the beautiful; that is," as he proceeds to explain, "through the æsthetic and artistic side of their nature, which sought everywhere harmony, fitness and proportion." The first statement presents no difficulties. Philosophical speculation is just as much a way to knowledge now as it was in the days of the Greeks. But the second is much harder to understand. How are ethical conceptions, how are ideas of what is right and wrong in conduct, to be derived from the æsthetic sense and the understanding of the beautiful? The very thought of an ethical significance in the word "beauty" has almost

died out. It lasted, indeed, far on into Christian times. Early Christian philosophy, especially that which emanated from Alexandria and was nourished on Greek ideas, habitually deals with beauty as synonymous with truth. But that meaning of the word has evaporated. No one now would think of describing a search after truth as a search after the beautiful.

It is pretty safe to say, unless the reader has derived it from Greek art, that the notion of the æsthetic sense originating and being a source of ethical conceptions will scarcely have occurred to him. Other races have employed art as a vehicle to express ideas and convictions previously arrived at, and it has been in proportion as these preconceived ideas have been strongly and decidedly held that the art embodying them has assumed a definite and significant character. But to express ideas, however vigorously, is not to initiate them.

The distinction between an art which initiates and an art which expresses ideas is perfectly exemplified in the difference between Greek and Gothic architecture. A Gothic cathedral is the finest and most complete presentment remaining to us of the life and thought of the mediæval age. It is full of the exalted energy which was the master sentiment of the epoch of the Crusades, and it is full of the extraordinary democratic vigour of a time when all classes of the people, banded in their arts and guilds, were animated by a virile pride in their labour and a consciousness of the value of it. It is the keynote of mediæval life that the whole of it, down to the commonest industries and poorest

acts of toil, was inspired by a vigorous spirit of dignity and independence; and all this was poured into mediæval art. To us, of the same race and blood as its builders, this art still appeals as it did to them. It expresses us as it expressed them. If it is not strictly artistic in the academic sense, if it is not laid out and proportioned by abstract rule, it is none the worse for that. We are not going to art for a justification of what stirs our hearts so deeply. The Gothic cathedrals, Mr. Lethaby declares, "are more than art." He means that their appeal as an interpretation of life, their eloquent appeal to the racial sentiments and emotions we still share in, is of itself their justification, and is a better justification than adherence to æsthetic laws, which, he admits, were ignored by their originators.

Perhaps he is right. But, while we extol Gothic for what it gives us, let us also note the one small, and in our eyes insignificant, thing which it fails to give. Gothic art has in it no power to initiate ideas, nor was it ever used or regarded as if it possessed any such power. It was used to record ideas. For this its contemporaries loved and valued it, because it uttered their lives for them; and for this we, being of the same national stock and sympathies, love and value it still. But this was not the Greek notion of the function of art at all. So little so that there is not a single merit in Gothic which, in Greek eyes, would not have been a demerit. There is not an end striven for which, in Greek eyes, it would not have been degradation to attain. Between the two there is no question of

degree of excellence, or greater and less perfection. The question is one of the whole end and aim of art and its intended use to mankind. A Greek, reared in his own race's ideals in matters of art, would, if he were brought into the presence of Gothic, assuredly tell us, not that this style was in certain respects different and, in his own estimation, probably inferior to his own, but that it was not art at all; that it was not the creation of the artistic faculty, and did not serve the purposes which art was intended to serve. And if we were to press into his meaning, he would explain that this art was worthless for the very reason that we love it so, because it is merely a record of life. Yes, he would insist, an art which aspires only to reflect the life of its time, with all its fugitive daily interests, which is swayed by human impulses and caprices, and takes its colour from the whims and fantasies of the moment, is an art which has become life's slave. It offers no independent testimony of its own, for it does not act according to its own volition. It does not obey its own laws, for it does not even know that it has laws of its own to obey. It does what life tells it to do, and says what life tells it to say. We can imagine our visitor's growing perplexity and concern in this world of Gothic, and how at last he would break out almost incredulously: "Do you really believe, then, that the æsthetic sense was given us merely to record our own petty whims and impulses? If so, you ignore the nature of the faculty and the part it should play in human life. What is that part? It is to illumine life, not to record it; to be a guide, not an echo;

to be a witness to ethical truths, not indeed by explaining their truth, but by demonstrating their beauty."

This would be the Greek criticism, and for two reasons we should give it a hearing. In the first place, the most cursory acquaintance with the Doric style reveals in the Greek view a remarkable consistency. That which first strikes a Northern eye in regard to Doric is its lack of all interest and significance derived from contemporary life. It is true the subjects of its sculptured groups, when such existed, were mostly taken from Greek history or myth. But these representations were at the most racial, never local. Such vague legends as the wars of Centaurs or Amazons are not impressions of life in the Gothic sense. Their interest is ideal and remote, not actual and immediate. Moreover, these sculptures are independent of the structure, which is perfect without them; their appearance was optional, and in more cases than not they were dispensed with altogether. Nothing in the Gothic sense personal, nothing of local or temporary interest, finds a place in the Doric temple. It is detached. For centuries the type does not vary. Cities rise and fall, generations come and go, but this characteristic achievement of the Greek genius scarcely changes by the inflection of a line. Aloof from human life, the accidents and passions of men's lot do not touch it. Whatever may have been its attraction for the race which evolved it, it was not the Gothic attraction. It was not the attraction of an art which expresses the life of its own time and place. Doric architecture

knows nothing of the life going on round it. It utterly ignores that life.

And yet—and this is the second consideration I spoke of—the reality of the attraction exercised by the Doric style, the depth and genuineness of the love which the Greeks felt for their temples, admit of no doubt whatever. The most commanding site in or near the city was the temple's unquestioned perquisite, and no Greek settlement or colony considered itself launched and fit to live its own life until one at least, but more likely a whole group, of these stately edifices surveyed its fortunes from the neighbouring eminence. The temple, we are bound to admit it, filled quite as big a place in Greek life as the Gothic cathedral did in mediæval life. The Greeks got something out of these buildings, and something, in their eyes, of value. It was not what our forefathers got out of Gothic. What, then, was it?

The question drives us back again upon the Greek notion of the function of art, that it was to be a source of ideas not a record of them. In what way can art be a source of ideas? Whatever ideas are contained in a work of art, must they not have originated in the mind of the artist, and, in that sense, must not the work of art be a record rather than a source of ideas? If this be so the case for an artistic origination of ethical conceptions falls to the ground. On the other hand, if we still uphold that case, to what are we driven? Ideas are mental property. We know nothing of ideas other than the mind's ideas. If, therefore, a work of art contains ideas, but ideas not derived from the mind, it

must mean that those ideas were infused into it, not in the guise of ideas and not under the mind's prompting. They were infused as something other than ideas, and at the instigation of a sense or faculty other than the mind, and then, somehow or other, they hatched out into ideas, or ethical conceptions, later. This may sound a somewhat extravagant theory, nevertheless, once we entertain the claim of art to be a source of ideas, to this conclusion we are inevitably driven. We are driven to it, and when we apply it to Greek art we find its extravagance diminish. Nay, we even find it something in the nature of a solution. It is the case, when we come to examine into the matter, that a Doric temple is charged and saturated with ideas which were not put into it as ideas at all, and which were not supplied by the mind but by another faculty.

Fergusson, the sanest, after all, of our architectural critics, has the remark that the sensitiveness of vision of the Greeks was equivalent to a "new sense," the potentialities and limitations of which are to our duller perception not very apparent. The remark was occasioned by the discoveries brought to light by the elaborate measurements of the Parthenon undertaken by Penrose about sixty years ago. These measurements pointed to a state of things quite unsuspected. There could, apparently, be no more obvious and simple plan of construction than that of a Doric temple. A horizontal weight resting on vertical supports is the most primitive of architectural ideas, and the temple is really nothing else. The traveller in Greece or

Sicily, coming upon these gaunt colonnades, is inclined to wonder at the pleasing effects obtained by such simplicity, but does not question the simplicity itself. Yet this simplicity is but a mask. Beneath it lurks a subtlety to which there is nothing comparable in the art of any other people. Penrose's measurements revealed the fact that the temple in all its parts and proportions was under the influence of certain inflections which infuse a kind of mystery into the most matter-of-fact appearances, and which meet all attempts at summary description with a gentle contradiction. Nothing seems more evident, for instance, than that the peristyle, as the parallelogram of columns forming the temple's outer wall is called, is of mathematically regular construction. It is composed of so many vertical shafts, of equal size and height, standing equidistant from each other on a flat platform, and supporting a vertical-faced entablature of horizontal extension. Scientific analysis, however, negatives every one of these statements. These columns, it assures us, do not stand vertically, but imperceptibly lean inwards. They are not quite of equal height, nor of exactly the same dimensions, for the angle-shafts and their next-door neighbours are slightly thicker than the rest. They do not stand equidistant, for in each colonnade the gaps are a little reduced as the corner is approached. They do not rise out of a flat platform; the platform is in a very slight degree curved, or cushion-shaped. Neither is the entablature either upright or of horizontal extension. It leans outwards a trifle, and is therefore not

vertical; and it is slightly curved, like the platform and is therefore not horizontal.

Baffled in every way, and headed off at every turn, the spectator feels like some traveller in mid-desert, who, riding down to a blue sheet of water under an overhanging rock, finds to his astonishment the water recoil from him and his lake dissolve in air. Nothing in this strange art is what it seems to be. The most obvious facts turn out not to be facts at all. And the closer we carry our examination the more the mystery spreads and deepens. It infects the whole temple. It touches and alters cornice and frieze, architrave and abacus, capital and column. It reaches to the foundations and even to the flights of steps which form the approach to the building. There is not a single feature, nay, there is not a single stone, in the structure which is unconscious of this mystery or which is in itself the mechanically regular and rectilinear object it seems to be. In some slight and entirely unnoticeable degree the mechanical regularity of every stone is deflected, the deflection representing that particular stone's share in the curve or inclination of the feature of which it forms part.

Now I must not here dwell on these mysterious inflections. I must leave them to the reader's consideration. He must remember that we are dealing with huge structural forms, with columns thirty to forty feet high and from six to seven feet in diameter at the base, and with a masonry often composed of blocks of stone or marble twelve to fourteen feet in length. He must remember that

the inflections applied to these masses are calculated in minute fractions of inches, and are as a rule to average sight quite imperceptible; and he must also remember that an infinity of labour and skill and expense went to the carrying out of these inflections. If he allows due weight to these considerations he will agree that such alterations as these constitute a very mysterious phenomenon in the history of art, and one which challenges a closer scrutiny. How are they to be explained? After a good deal of discussion it appears that the explanation of one particular alteration is the explanation of all. It had long been observed that a long horizontal line, seen full face, though in itself perfectly straight, *appears to the eye* to sag in the middle and become slightly concave. The fact that the Doric stylobate or platform was rounded was easily apparent to any one who happened, instead of looking *at* it, to look along its edge from either angle. It was, therefore, readily conjectured that this Greek device of adding actual convexity was designed to obviate an apparent concavity. It was an extremely difficult and complicated undertaking, for the Greeks made no allowances in the jointing of their masonry, which was of an exquisite accuracy and fineness, but cut each stone as a section of a flat arch. Moreover, the difficulty was greatly increased by the necessity of fusing together the end curves and side curves of the platform, much as the curves of a vault are dovetailed together, only the present vault is confined to a rise of about three inches in a span of two hundred feet. Still the necessary labour was undertaken,

and undertaken, obviously enough, for the sake of correcting a carefully analysed optical illusion.

As closer investigation disclosed the presence of more of these delicate inflections, they, too, were found amenable to the same interpretation. It is a truth admitting of simple verification that light masses against a dark background appear larger, and dark masses against a light background smaller than they really are, light possessing a power of encroaching upon or eating away darkness. Down the greater part of the length of a Doric colonnade the columns tell as light masses against the shaded cella wall behind them. The peristyle, however, being of greater length than the cella, its corner columns stand clear, and the gaps between them are empty space. Here, then, it is the gaps, or background, that tell as light masses and the columns as dark masses. These observations gave the clue to the changes wrought in the peristyle. Greek vision had noted the illusion and calculated its extent. As soon as the gaps became the light masses they were slightly diminished, and as soon as the columns became the dark masses they were slightly increased. So with the other alterations we were speaking of: they are all directed to the same end. Probably the most far-reaching alteration effected is the inclination inwards of all the vertical lines of the temple so as to form the base of a vast pyramid, or spire, of which the base alone is visible. I must leave the reader to consider for himself what must be the difficulty, in the inclination, say, to the extent of two inches of a column thirty feet high, of working out the

necessary alteration in each separate drum of which the column is composed. He will find the addition in skill, labour and expense incalculable. If he would know why all this labour was undertaken, why a Doric temple is built in the semblance of a truncated spire, let him observe the apparent shape of any plain square-headed tower he may chance to see outlined against the sky. He will observe that the ascending lines of the structure apparently diverge as they mount, giving the tower a distinctly top-heavy effect. This, again, is a law of optics. Parallel vertical lines appear to diverge, and this illusion it is which the Greeks have combated in their pyramidal-shaped temples.

So far, then, we find the Doric temple penetrated and, so to speak, suffused with slight imperceptible inflections of line and contour, involving incalculable extra trouble and expense in the building, and we find that the object and aim of all these expedients is to adapt the outlines of the temple more perfectly and accurately to the laws of sight. The reader will observe that sight is the governing factor in the undertaking. The real shape of the thing did not matter; it was the apparent shape that mattered. Equal columns which appeared unequal would be made unequal to appear equal. A level floor which looked unlevel would be made unlevel to appear level. Vertical lines which appeared to slant would be made to slant that they might appear vertical. Among other races the eye has been called upon to adjust itself to the facts. With the Greeks the facts are, with infinite pains, adjusted to the eye. We get a notion, then, of what Fergusson meant when

he spoke of Greek sight as an added sense. It has that air. To turn from the work of other races to Greek work is to find the sense of sight placed in a position of authority it has never before or since occupied, and its most subtle predilections analysed and provided for in a way utterly incomprehensible to any other people. It is really like coming under the influence and watching the operations of a new sense.

These are facts interesting, perhaps, or at least curious, in themselves. But their chief importance is more in what they indicate than in what they are. It will occur to the reader readily enough that a gift of sight so sensitive as that which we have been studying is scarcely likely to confine its energies to the correction of optical delusions. If a man has a singularly keen appreciation of the laws of sight in one set of circumstances, it may be supposed he will have a similar appreciation of them in other circumstances. If he has made a profound study of the likes and dislikes of the eye, it is probable his knowledge will stand by him equally in his creative as in his corrective work. As a matter of fact, the whole design and detail of a Doric temple are controlled by that sense which the Greeks had wrought to such a pitch of refinement. There is, for example, nothing in art like the Greek knowledge of proportion. We talk easily but vaguely of a façade or an interior being "exquisitely proportioned," but the word in our mouths is so indefinite that we scarcely know what we mean by it. All that most architects aim at in this matter is to avoid falling into flagrant error on one side or the other. But the Greeks

aimed at a positive mark, the tiny bull's-eye of absolute perfection. We know when we hold out a book or other weight at arm's-length that the strength we exert has to be exactly proportioned to the weight supported. The slightest superfluity of strength, and up goes the book. The slightest superfluity of weight and down goes our arm. Support and burden must be adjusted in a point of absolute agreement. It was so the Greeks thought of the law of proportion. The adjustment between the great horizontal entablature and the colonnades of massive shafts is the single but tremendous structural opportunity of the Doric temple. The writer remembers still, as the result of many a month's study of the temples of Greece and Sicily, the gradual revelation to his consciousness of the possibilities of the law of proportion as exemplified in Doric architecture. The forms used are themselves expressive in the highest degree. The vast entablature, a burden for Titans, built of great blocks that stretch from centre to centre of the shafts, is, despite its colossal dimensions, invested with a certain fascinating delicacy from the sharpness of its clear-cut outlines and the incisive edges of its straight mouldings. The perfection of its definition invites the eye to study with exactitude its relation to the supporting shafts. And these, in serried range, elastic, vigorous, while they carry their burden with buoyant ease, are themselves ennobled by its magnitude and the gravity of the duty they perform. Their strength is nobly exercised, yet not taxed. Never has the profound structural idea of the relation of the means to the end received

such eloquent expression as here. Every shed-builder who lays a stick on two uprights has mastered the structural principle of a Doric temple; but the Greeks alone have comprehended the inward significance of the act. They alone have perceived how much pleasure might be called forth by perfectly defined strength exerted upon an exactly adequate burden.

Yet in this we are but observing a further application and use of that sense which the Greeks cultivated so assiduously. The same extraordinary keenness and subtlety of vision which prompted them to elaborate invisible slants and curves with so much pains enables them to strike that perfect balance in proportion which grows upon the eye with so fascinating a power. And when we further study the detailed arrangement of the building it is but to observe a still further application of the same faculty. If illustrations were permitted it would be easy to show by what means the sight of the spectator is guided down the long length of the structure; how effectively the powerful line of the cornice controls the eye's energy, bringing the entire building within easy sweep of a single glance; and yet at the same time how equally effectively, where checks are necessary, checks are imposed, and by what subtle means the eye's course is, as we approach the temple, arrested at intervals and transferred to the frieze beneath, there to be still further penned in and concentrated on the groups of the metopes by the short heavy lines of the vertical triglyphs. These, however, are expedients which require illustrating if they are to be made

clear. Let us endeavour to keep to characteristics familiar to the general reader. One such characteristic there is which belongs to the Doric temple not more than it belongs to all Greek artistic work, a characteristic which all will recognise. I mean the Greek love of simplicity and smooth surfaces, the Greek hatred of redundancy, complication and loaded ornament. It is probable that this, in almost every one's estimation, constitutes the distinguishing mark of Greek art. The word "Greek" to most people, and very rightly, stands primarily for lucidity; and this lucidity is arrived at by the rigorous lopping away of every line and particle of ornament the presence of which is not essential. I have often thought that a useful way of impressing upon children the methods pursued by the Greeks would be to teach them that Greek art is based on subtraction, and other art on addition. The instinct of most people, when they desire to beautify, is to spare neither labour nor expense, to be lavish of workmanship, to go on adding. The result is sure to be acclaimed. Surfaces loaded with decoration are said to be "enriched" with sculpture. Carving so intricate as to be indecipherable is said to be "lace-like." Those entangled and nerveless designs which the Arabs, destitute as they are of all sense for form or construction, love to plaster over their walls and ceilings, continue to impose on us owing to their very superfluity of adornment. No matter to what time or race we turn, from the little finicking incisions which cover Egyptian tombs and temples, down to the ponderous decoration of our modern Government buildings,

the same idea prevails. Every buttress must be honeycombed with niches, every spandril stuffed with figures. They have no use except for pigeons to build among. Practically they are invisible. Down the façade of the new Victoria and Albert Museum are dozens upon dozens of carved figures which no mortal eye has ever seen or ever will see. They are there not because they count for anything to the eye but because addition is the rule of our art.

To what extent it is so, a comparison with Greek work indicates. The Greeks made a curiously exact study of the value of smooth spaces and employed to the full the significance which smooth spaces alone can confer, and the resulting refinement of their work has become, as I have said, its best-known characteristic. At the same time let the reader observe that it is a characteristic arising inevitably out of a study of the laws of sight. We can easily satisfy ourselves, by all our eyes look at and avoid, that there is nothing they so dislike and shrink from as complication. They cannot abide moving along lines which are apt to become entangled and involved, nor will they rest for a moment on any surface where the ornament is messy and overcrowded. Redundancy satiates the eye and actually deprives it of its power of seeing. Hence the aim of the Greek artist being so to place his decoration that every touch will tell with full effect, he naturally employs as a background a liberal allowance of smooth surface, for smooth surface collects, so to speak, the attention, and represents the eye's power of seeing. In many everyday ways we act on the

same knowledge. We know that an object placed in a crowd is overlooked, while one standing alone is, as we call it, conspicuous. But here, again, the effectiveness of the work of the Greeks appears in the delicacy and nicety with which they apportion space to ornament. For they seem to know exactly how much attention any given space can collect, and therefore precisely the amount of ornament which is required to satisfy without fatiguing it; the result of this discrimination being that each touch of theirs shows up unencumbered, with a kind of starry distinctness, reminding one of that thought of Wordsworth's:

> "Fair as a star, when only one
> Is shining in the sky."

What, then, I would impress upon the reader with regard to a Doric temple is this, that not only are its main features and outlines subtly rounded, slanted and curved, in obedience to the eye's requirements, but that the method of its arrangement, its severe simplicity, and the strict and calculated parsimony of its ornament are appraised by the same standard. The stranger may think what he will about Doric architecture, but there is one fact about it which he cannot alter. As sure as one object on a table is more conspicuous than one among fifty, as sure as a tree upon the hill-top stands out more clearly than when nestling in the valley, as sure as horizontal lines are easier for sight to travel on than vertical ones, and left to right a more natural motion for it than right to left: in short, as surely as sight has laws of its own over which we have no control and

which guide its every movement, so certain is it that Doric architecture, having alone subscribed to those laws and placed itself entirely under their jurisdiction, is alone in the pleasure it affords to the faculty of sight.

Here, then, we find such a source as we are in search of. We said, to start with, that a Doric temple is saturated with ideas which were not put into it as ideas at all, and which were furnished by a faculty other than the mind. That other faculty is the faculty of sight, and the motives it suggests, it suggests not as ideas but as adaptations of form and surface to the requirements of the eye. But though not put in as ideas, these motives can be taken out as ideas. It is, indeed, difficult to speak for a moment of Doric construction without being led insensibly into the language of ethics, for the suggestions of the eye, which that construction everywhere obeys, turn of their own accord into ethical ideas directly they take shape in stone. Certain words and phrases, as we know, have the same tendency. Design, proportion, harmony, the subordination of the parts to the whole, are such words and phrases. They apply to art and ethics both, and are equally used of things relating to the eye and the mind. It only, therefore, needs that these principles should, in the artistic sphere, be enforced to the point at which we become *sensuously* conscious of their influence, and we shall at the same time become *mentally* conscious of it also. Let proportion, let design be carried to a point of perfection before our eyes, and the same act of consciousness which reveals the apparent and visual

significance of the principle reveals also and carries deep into our minds and hearts its intellectual and ethical significance. A moment ago, in speaking of Doric proportions, we slipped unconsciously into the ethical view of the matter, and spoke of the ennobling effect of their duties and a strength adequately exercised yet not taxed. For all who have laid themselves open to the influence of Doric it will be impossible to separate this view from the purely æsthetic. Visual perception passes into ethical conception. The two are fused together. We think with the eye and see with the mind. A new certitude suffuses our being. What was only thought to be true is now seen to be true.

Let me emphasise what is the crux of the whole matter. It is the general supposition, I believe, that the eye moves along as evenly and indifferently as the shadows and sunbeams which chase each other across a landscape, accepting as impartially all that comes in its way; and that, when it rests, it rests as easily on one thing as another. Nothing could be further from the truth. The movement of the eye is not uniform and even; it consists of a series of leaps from one thing to another, and in proportion to the speed of the sweep of the glance is the lightning swiftness of the short leaps which compose it. Yet every single leap is taken by the eye for certain reasons of its own. Like a goat, it picks its path as it goes, selecting this, avoiding that, now hesitating, now turning aside, now springing boldly forward. Its course is a zigzag one, but for each turn it has motives; and if we were to go into the matter carefully, taking our eyes slowly backwards

and forwards over the same line of country, we should find that not only would they repeat their leaps and turns with the most perfect regularity, but that the eyes of all other people whom we might choose to consult would behave in exactly the same manner. Similarly, in regard to resting-places, we should find that our eyes had likes and dislikes which are quite outside our own control; that they are particular upon what they lodge, and will not remain more than a moment at rest if surrounding objects either disquiet them or attract them in some other direction. In this respect, too, there will be the same uniformity, and the eyes of all men will be influenced in a similar way.

But these laws of sight, being fixed, must also be definable, and if the reader will attempt the task of defining his own eyes' likes and dislikes, he will find himself using such words as harmony, articulation, proportion, lucidity, simplicity, decision, and so on, to describe their likes, and such words as superfluity, redundancy, weakness, vacillation, to describe their dislikes He will find himself, that is to say, using ethical language to describe those laws which are inherent in the sight of all creatures, even to some extent in animals, which see at all. Of course of all this interpretative work sight knows nothing. It has no knowledge. It sees or it does not see; it seeks or shuns certain objects or surfaces, and there its business ends. It is the mind which, noting the eyes' movements, supplies the ethical interpretation. Still the eye provides the matter to be interpreted, and if in any given work the laws of sight are embodied fully and

perfectly, the ethical interpretation becomes inevitable.

Hence it follows that the more perfect an æsthetic arrangement, the more inevitable will be its ethical effect. The reason that "proportion" in architecture suggests to us now nothing ethical is, that with us the principle is so inadequately carried out on the æsthetic side that it does not reach the point of ethical consciousness. In the same way the reason we never now connect artistic "design" with any ethical meaning is because our æsthetic design is not æsthetic to the required pitch. The pleasure it gives to the eye, when it gives any, is of so slight and accidental a kind that it has no chance of awakening kindred ideas in the mind. It is not æsthetic enough to be ethical.

But the Doric temple is æsthetic enough to be ethical. In the Doric temple design, proportion, harmony, unity, and so on, are carried to such perfection, purely in relation to sight, that through the eye they enter into possession of the mind. Does the reader imagine that such an influence must be slight or negligible? I venture to say that no one, puzzled by all that is obscure in life and baffled by the eager nothings that crowd our transient days, could desire a more effectual restorative than the contemplation of Doric architecture. Resist, says philosophy, the importunities of the passing hours; he who is diverted from his purpose by fugitive impulses will accomplish nothing; proportion your ends to your means, and, instead of frittering away energy in a thousand caprices, direct it to the purposes of some worthy design.

Philosophers have much to say in this vein, but for my part, no words of theirs have ever appealed to me with half the force of those mute stones which owe all the power their delicate lines are charged with to their enforcement of these and similar maxims. Remote as we are, of another race, another creed, another age, still it is impossible even for us, sitting among the olives and the asphodel under those clear-cut architraves, not to feel, as the Greeks felt, their persuasive advocacy of all that makes life sane and noble.

It was thus this architecture acted on the Greeks. There is a power of persuasion in the sense of sight that surpasses even the power of reason. It is one thing to be told that purpose implies simplicity, and another to absorb through sight a consciousness of simplicity in its visible effect. It is one thing to be told that selflessness is the cement of society and selfishness its solvent, and another to be impressed by the influence of a structural composition which achieves unity through the willing self-surrender of all its component parts. Arguments addressed to the mind are strong, but a spectacle addressed to the eye is stronger. Or, even if it be denied that it is stronger, it is at least an independent testimony. Though ethical in its interpretation it was not ethical but purely æsthetic in its conception. By following the eye's prompting the Greeks were led to these results. There has always existed a consciousness that the act of inward preception by the mind is one with the outward act of seeing. Mystics, poets, and all who realise inward things vividly, speak of the eye of the mind and of spiritual sight, and we have

the common expression "I see" for "I understand." There exists a relationship between the laws of sight and ethical laws, and so it was natural enough that the Greeks, following the eye's dictates, should have been led to an independent testimony to the value of ethical truths. Thus considered, the æsthetic faculty is no slave, but a splendid ally of the mind. It brings troops of its own into the field, and supports, with all that the eye holds beautiful, all that the mind holds true.

This great thought of the Greeks, that sight is an independent faculty, with laws of its own, lasted, as I have said, both as a philosophical idea and an æsthetic tradition, far into the Christian era. Through Byzantine art it acted on the art of Europe. It lingered to the twelfth century, and then Gothic killed it. Gothic killed it by promulgating the theory that art exists to chronicle the life of its age. The discovery produced a sensation, and mediæval life proceeded with enthusiasm to embody itself in mediæval art. We have it still with us, that incomparably vigorous rendering of the life of a period, and we are, no doubt, rightly proud of it. But we have paid a price for it. We have given up for it the Greek idea of sight as an independent witness. The idea that the mind can receive impressions of truth through the eye has been lost. Milton laments that, in his blindness, he drags on his life with

> "Wisdom at one entrance quite shut out."

Such has been our lot since the Gothic revolution. We are still active in art. We register in it our

ideas and theories, our whims and caprices. But we can no longer draw from it that succour which the Greeks drew when they looked up at their temples, raised on rocky pedestals for clearer view, and read there, in visible form depicted, the beauty and pleasantness of noble conduct.

CHAPTER V

THE LAST WORD IN CLASSIC ARCHITECTURE

Santa Sophia : In what the building is unique : Its vindication of the idea of arch construction : Romans had misused that principle : The Roman jumble of arcuated and trabeated construction : The Greeks deliver the arch from this confusion and proceed to develop its intrinsic possibilities : Santa Sophia is the result : It is rather to be looked upon as the last word on classic building than as the inauguration of a new style : Though commonly regarded as the type of Byzantine it does not pursue the Byzantine ideal : It is not an architecture of colour nor in agreement with other Byzantine buildings in its mode of exhibiting colour : It is animated rather by the old imperial spirit of amplitude and order, but it expresses its idea with a new logic and power : All that Roman architecture tried to be and could not is attained in Santa Sophia : As a summing up of the classical era it is a signal illustration of the part which the Greek genius had played in that era

"SANTA SOPHIA," says Mr. Van Milligan in a book on Constantinople, which was given to the present writer the other day to review, "is the finest monument of what is styled Byzantine art." Elsewhere in the same work it is affirmed that "Santa Sophia has never been repeated." I do not know if Mr. Van Milligan is an authority on Byzantine architecture, but certainly, so far as the judgment of critics goes, he has ample warrant for both these statements. Fergusson, the Gibbon of architectural history, having accepted Santa Sophia as "the grandest and most perfect creation of the old school

of Byzantine art," declares also that there was no building "erected during the ten centuries which elapsed from the transference of the capital to Byzantium till the building of the great mediæval cathedrals (that is to say, during the entire Byzantine period) which can be compared with it"; and again after describing the plan of the structure he tells us that "in these arrangements Santa Sophia seems to stand alone." Even Mr. Lethaby, certainly one of the foremost authorities at the present time on the subject, while he entirely accepts Justinian's church as the central type of the style, yet adds, agreeing with Fergusson, that in plan it is "alone among churches." If the reader cares to turn over some of the many books dealing with the subject he will find these more or less conflicting views very common. He will find the church, invariably and as a matter of course, treated as the representative type of the Byzantine style, but he will also find it every now and then, and as though unconsciously, treated as something singular and unique. It is unnecessary to point out that these two kinds of statements are incompatible, since it is impossible for a building to be the type of a style and at the same time to "stand alone."

These two propositions are contradictions in terms, but yet, as applied to Santa Sophia, they have perhaps a certain significance, even a certain appropriateness. For while in some respects, and these very striking and obvious ones, the building may be said to belong to a group and represent a style, in others, and these possibly of even deeper significance, it is original and strikes out a line of

its own. Struck by the immediate similarities, by the use of certain forms common to the Byzantine group, such as the apse, the dome, the vault, and by various decorative methods, as the use of marble panelling and mosaics—the first impulse of the critic is to accept the church as a specimen of Byzantine art, and since it is unapproached of its kind in size and richness and magnificence it is natural, once accepted, that it should be promoted to the place ot leader and most honoured representative of that style. And yet there by-and-by arise doubts, for as soon as the critic begins to deal with the actual composition of the building, the development of the domical theory right through its structure, the rise of curve out of curve to the final triumph of the great dome, and the unity achieved by the dominance of a single structural principle, he finds that he has to do with qualities which exist in no other structure, and accordingly he changes his note and instead of a representative building we have one that "stands alone."

It seems pretty clear that in dealing with a question like this—as to the extent to which a building belongs to a certain style and the degree to which it is separable from it—the point to be considered is whether it belongs to the style by what is essential, or by what is accidental. There are traits in architecture which are vital, and in which the architectural character, or style, of the building resides. There are others which are more or less superficial and perhaps more or less interchangeable between several styles. The question, therefore, we have to put is, does Santa Sophia represent the

Byzantine style by traits which are essential in its own structure, or are these essential traits those in which it stands alone, and does it represent the style rather in accidents and details? On the answer to such a question the place of the Church in the history of architecture must depend.

The main characteristics of the Greek genius—namely, its strict adherence to logical principles and its assiduity in lopping away all such superfluities and inconsistencies as might hamper the expression of such principles—this characteristic, so obvious in its effects all through Greek literature and Greek art, is particularly obvious in Greek architecture. The supreme achievement of this architecture, to the perfecting of which centuries of careful thought and calculation had been devoted, was the Doric temple, and the Doric temple was an exemplification of the resources of a single primary structural principle, the principle of the post and lintel, or upright pillars supporting transverse blocks. This is the simplest, the oldest and the most universal of all building principles, but yet the latent logic in it had never been developed into full expression prior to the evolution of the Doric style. As has already been pointed out, far from exhibiting this principle to advantage, the sausage-shaped columns and squat, ponderous entablatures of the Nile temples do but hamper and conceal it, for it is impossible to form the least idea of the carrying power of such columns as these, columns which terminate in a suddenly reduced and rounded base at one end, and in an immense. corpulent bud or flower-shaped

capital at the other ; nor is it possible to conjecture the proportionate dimensions of the weight the columns carry disguised under the coarse and shapeless forms which compose the entablature. Thousands of years of practice and repetition had left the lintel principle entirely inarticulate in Egyptian hands. It lay hid somewhere under a redundant mass of superfluous stone, which it was essential to remove if the principle itself were to be brought to light.

This operation was undertaken by the Greeks. Exactly defined, every outline as sharp as if cut out of crystal, every ounce of superfluous material pared away, every form in the structure expressly adapted to its proper function, the Greek temple exhibits the greatest of all structural principles to the utmost possible advantage. The sense of relative proportion between support and burden which is veiled in the Egyptian temple under the gross and inappropriate shapes of the forms employed, is developed in the Greek with exquisite refinement. The column, with sharp-edged flutes and elastic outline, is the very embodiment of the idea of easy and powerful support, while the crisply defined entablature is so proportioned as to employ and justify all the strength of the column without for a moment oppressing it. It is quite evident that the Greeks have here grasped the principle they are dealing with, not as a fact merely, but as an idea. They do not, I mean, stick, where the Egyptians stuck, at the mere convenience of a certain means of support, but go on to exhibit the effectiveness and the logical sufficiency of this means of support, dwelling on it for its own

sake and drawing out all the expressiveness latent in it. In this way they have made themselves the spokesmen of a natural idea and are at the head of a main body of architectural work that goes back through the ages. All that made the action of the builders of Stonehenge right and reasonable when they crossed their huge monoliths, all that makes the action of any farm-hand to-day right and reasonable when he knocks up a cowshed in the corner of a field—in short, all there is eternally logical in the post and lintel principle of construction the Doric temple utters once for all with supreme felicity.

Such was the characteristically logical action of the Greeks in the sphere of trabeated or lintel architecture. Let us come down now to the next age and to the introduction of a new principle, new at least in the dominating position assigned to it in the architecture it appeared in. A people of drains, of bridges, of aqueducts, the arch suited admirably the utilitarian instincts of the Romans. But yet, though they made this feature their own and spread it through the Empire, the Romans never developed its full possibilities or appreciated it as a principle at all. The large and harmonious results and consequent æsthetic significance which a great structural motive, loyally adhered to and permitted to develop its own nature, might achieve, were never grasped by them or understood. For the purposes of construction they for the most part used the arch, but they used it without freedom and without completeness; while for the addition of æsthetic significance they had recourse, without in the least

comprehending its real value, to that earlier and simpler principle of which the Greek treatment had so enormously enhanced the prestige. But these two principles, the arch and the lintel, are, as it is scarcely necessary to point out, incompatible with and destructive of each other. They do their work in different ways, the one by diffusing and spreading the pressure of the superincumbent weight, the other by meeting it direct; and no combination between them is therefore possible. None the less, in Roman work they are constantly combined, or rather they are constantly employed in the same buildings to each other's mutual discomfiture. The arch and vault usually do the real supporting, and columns and entablatures are lacquered over the façade as an afterthought to supply the artistic finish.

The effect of this unnatural coalition was to turn lintel construction into a mere unmeaning decorative detail, and to stunt and thwart the development of arched construction altogether. It is with the second of these effects that we are here concerned. It is not, perhaps, sufficiently realised by the large number of people who conceive of Roman architecture as the great opportunity of arched construction, how essentially second rate all Roman arched construction is. Roman architecture daunts us by sheer size and strength, by the endurance of its iron concrete and the insolent display of its brilliant and showy decoration; and seeing that it stands for Rome's might, majesty and dominion, we are apt to forget that it stands no less incontestably for Rome's lack of lucidity and logic, for Rome's dullness of

inward vision and vulgarity of soul. The truth is, of all this tremendous architectural accumulation there is not a building extant which can be called a genuine architectural success; for by a genuine architectural success we imply, I suppose, the working out of some great structural motive or principle in such a way, so completely and freely and disinterestedly, that so long as the principle itself applies to the affairs of men, this building in which its properties are exhibited to such advantage shall, for its idea's sake, be welcome and acceptable also. Rome had a great principle to go on, but to express it freely and disinterestedly was beyond her. The heavy Roman vaults and domes, wrought in solid masses of concrete stuck on like the lid of a saucepan, offer no illustration of the capabilities of the arch principle. That principle was indeed used by the Romans exactly as the lintel principle had been used by the Egyptians. It was used, I mean, in a purely utilitarian sense, as a convenience in building, but nothing more. The Roman arch is a useful enough method of support. The Roman vault and dome are convenient enough ways of roofing a passage here or a hall there. But their application is always local and finite, nor was it ever suspected by the Roman genius that the play of forces contained in the arch could be driven through an entire structure, controlling, animating and harmonising the whole of it.

Nevertheless upon her own limited interpretation of the principle Rome insisted. Obstinate, callous, implacable, she set a fashion by sheer physical weight. The centre and driving-wheel of the whole

vast political machine, every provincial town to the uttermost limits of the Empire turned submissive eyes to Rome. The great Roman roads, architectural works themselves of the first importance, driven from town to town, composed the meshes of a net which held the whole empire in a state of political thraldom. But the thraldom was more than political. The subordinate and distant towns, as they derived all authority and importance, all their ideas of government and of justice, their governors and officials, their hopes of privileges and preferments from the metropolis, so, with an equal meekness, they adopted those fashions in art and especially in architecture which, if they expressed nothing else, expressed at least Rome's ponderous ascendancy. The theatres and amphitheatre, the villas and palaces, the triumphal arches and great public baths which profusely decorated the capital, decorated also, if more sparingly, the provinces. They were all formed on Roman models and accepted the limitations of Roman taste. It is true indeed, and it is curious and interesting to notice it, that throughout the towns of the eastern part of the Empire, among the population of which were scattered, it will be remembered, a fair sprinkling of Greek inhabitants, there was early evinced a disposition to distinguish between and disentangle the structural principles which Rome had forced into conjunction. The properties of the arch were not developed, but there was a tendency to clear away the relics of lintel construction which had so long obstructed it, and thus to lay the foundations of a more free and reasonable design. These signs were,

however, slight and without decisive result. So long as Rome's undisputed sway held, the style of building she had imposed, though subjected to various modifications, held too.

Nor, indeed, did the division of the Empire and the founding of a new capital on the shores of the Bosphorus produce any immediate change. Constantine's great city, magnificent and luxurious as it was, was magnificent and luxurious in the Roman way. The slopes of what is now Seraglio Point were studded with palaces, beyond which rose the Acropolis with its Forum Augusteum, the royal palace facing the sea, and west of this the Hippodrome. The baths and theatres, the porticoes and terraces of marble steps reproduced the luxury and the fashions of Rome. It must be remembered, further, that the Emperor's change of faith implied no violent breach with ancient usage. "Constantine's city," as Mr. Lethaby points out, "does not appear to have been so completely Christian as the ecclesiastical writers would have us suppose," and in justification of this surmise he quotes the report of Zosimus that Constantine erected a shrine to the Dioscuri in the Hippodrome, and that various other temples dedicated to pagan divinities existed.

"A whole population of bronze and marble statues was brought together from Greece, Asia Minor and Sicily. The baths of Zeuxippus alone are said to have had more than sixty bronze statues; a still greater number were assembled in the Augusteum and other squares, and in the Hippodrome, where, according to Zosimus, Constantine placed the

Pythian tripod which had been the central object in the Temple of Apollo at Delphi."

Classic associations and traditions were, in short, transplanted in full vigour to the new capital. Justinian himself was a typical Imperial ruler, with all the Imperial passion for pomp and display. His own colossal statue in bronze graced the Hippodrome ; the baths he had given to the city were among its most splendid adornments, and every city in his dominion was enriched during his reign with important architectural additions. A second Augustus, intensely proud of his office and conscious of its transmitted majesty, nothing could have been more utterly removed from his thoughts than the idea of a breach of any kind with the spirit of classic Imperialism. Nor was there in popular life any tendency to such a breach. Thanks to the essentially tolerant nature of paganism, the new religion came in, on the whole, quietly and amicably. It entered forthwith into an inheritance of artistic and architectural remains, as vast in extent as they were doubtful in quality, which it proceeded to turn to its own uses and requirements, nor, on the part of the people any more than on that of the Emperor, was there any desire to repudiate the ideas and arts of their forefathers.

Bearing these facts in mind, we shall the better understand the problem set before the architects of Santa Sophia by the Emperor. There was no question of disowning the past or breaking violently with an ancient tradition. Rome's example was still held in affection and respect. And yet that

example could not have quite the same weight on the shores of the Euxine that it had on the banks of the Tiber. Not only was the new capital remote from the centre of the Roman Classical influence, but it was situated in the midst of the Hellenistic influence, in a part of the Empire where Greek ideas were dominant. It has been pointed out already that in the Near East, and especially was this the case in Syria, Greek taste had acted on Roman principles of construction in such a way as, tentatively at least, to purify and simplify them. In Constantinople, built on the site of a Greek colony and itself mainly Greek in thought and culture, the Greek genius for the first time was in a position to give these tentative suggestions free utterance. An opportunity was thus offered for a formal criticism, never till now possible, by the Greek genius upon Roman architecture.

Whether there had been earlier indications what that criticism was to be, whether and to what extent Santa Sophia had its heralds, is a point on which critics still dispute. They have, in any case, almost entirely disappeared, and Santa Sophia, the greatest architectural effort of its age, the work of Greek architects in a Greek city, is the first example of an emancipated, freely spoken Greek judgment on the structural ideas of the Roman era. Standing at the close of that era it sums up the problem Rome has been dealing with and propounds its own solution.

What that solution was a glance at the great church itself is sufficient to indicate. The plan of Santa Sophia is approximately a square of 250 feet by 225,

of which the central portion, 106 feet by 200, is open from the floor to the roof. The noble sense of spaciousness, which is the prevailing impression here present, is, however, attained not merely by the amplitude of the proportions but by the rhythmical sequence and evolution of the great unfolding curves of the vaulting. These rise in degrees of small supporting domes, semi-domes and segments of domes, until they culminate in the "deep-bosomed" central dome, as Procopius calls it, of 107 feet span, which sweeps with incomparable boldness and freedom across the central area of the building. All who have ever visited the church have been struck by the majesty and harmony of these mounting curves, and have echoed Procopius's own account of their appearance. "From the lightness of the building, the dome does not appear to rest upon a solid foundation, but to cover the place beneath as though it were suspended from heaven by the fabled golden chain." And he adds, with reference to the general structure: "All these parts, surprisingly joined to one another in the air, suspended one from another, and resting only on that which is next to them, form the work into one admirably harmonious whole." Such, indeed, is the aspect of the place. Many years have passed since I stood myself under those clustering cavities, but yet their appearance is as present to my eye now as at that moment; so clear and unmistakable, so unhampered by irrelevancies and unobscured by conflicting elements, is the structural principle they enforce.

That structural principle, I need hardly say, is

the principle of the arch, including under that definition the vault and dome, which are merely logical developments of the arch principle. Of the completeness and mathematical precision with which that motive is carried out through every part of the building it would be impossible without diagrams to give an adequate idea. M. Choisy, in his already authoritative work, "l'Art de Batir chez les Byzantins," has devoted a volume to the subject, with results which will surprise no one who has learnt to appreciate the entire devotion of the Greeks to the idea they are enforcing. One expedient of primary importance in domical construction, and now for the first time fully developed, may be instanced as illustrative of the building's character. It will easily be understood that a circle superimposed upon a square in such a way that the rim of the circle rests upon the edge of each of the four sides of the square must leave at each of the angles a large segment of the circle unsupported. The problem how to fill in this gap, or how, in other words, to adapt a square foundation to a circular superstructure, had never hitherto been satisfactorily solved. It had, indeed, constituted a recognised difficulty and stumbling-block in that kind of construction, which had in various ways been slurred over, but had never been fairly met. The architects of Santa Sophia met it by applying segments of domical vaulting to the unsupported angles, built outwards from each corner of the square below, and expanding as they rise until their upper edge attains the lower rim of the dome. These segments not only fill in the gap and afford

a proper foundation for the dome to rest on, collecting the thrust of it at the angles immediately above the great supporting piers, but they are in themselves a perfectly logical application of the domical theory, and their expanding, mounting curves are in harmony with the scheme of the whole interior. It is probable that the name of Anthemius will always be primarily associated with the use of this mode of construction; nevertheless, as they occur in the building, these "pendentives," as they are called, so belong to the whole that they might almost be said to be the invention of the building itself.

The absorption of the whole interior of Santa Sophia in this play of curves which compose it remains its dominant characteristic, and is comparable to the system of thrust and counter-thrust which pervades the whole of a Gothic cathedral and maintains its equilibrium. There is, however, one important difference which is in favour of the older building. The Gothic theory, while it equally inspires every part and portion of the edifice, does not and cannot result in structural unity. Each member of the cathedral—the nave, the transepts, the choir, the chapels and chapter-houses and baptisteries—is structurally complete in itself and does not form part of an organic whole. The cathedral, in fact, is logically not one building but a conglomeration of many buildings, the number of which may be and often has been increased or reduced without affecting the general result. The dome in this respect has advantages denied to the pointed arch. The great concave that broods over

the centre of Santa Sophia strikes the note of unity of the whole building ; it draws together every part of the structure into its own service. The whole system of domes and semi-domes combines to uphold it. The columns and piers group themselves in obedience to its requirements. Lifted high over the building, it is to be taken as the final expression of the thought which animates every part and portion of it, a thought which every line and curve in the structure prepares the way for and unites in corroborating.

Now, if the reader will turn his attention to the Roman method of treating the arch principle, and contrast it with the method employed in Santa Sophia, he will appreciate the significance of Greek criticism. Many Roman buildings contained all the characteristic structural features of Santa Sophia. The vault was used, the apse was used, the dome was used, the arch was used. But in Roman hands each of these features is a thing distinct in itself, finite, with its own immediate purpose, but ignorant of the very existence of its fellows, and indeed more often than not ignorant of its own nature, for Roman vaults and domes are usually mere blocks of concrete, not true arched constructions at all. Naturally, as we have seen, Rome's ignorance of the nature of her own structural principle encouraged her to combine and confuse it with a principle of a conflicting character. This is the state of chaos corrected by Santa Sophia. Santa Sophia seizes upon the thought which really does lie at the bottom of all that loaded and incongruous matter, and stripping away irrelevancies and granting it for the first time

free play, brings out at last its power and beauty. The thwarted hope, the foiled career, the

> "All I could never be
> All men ignored in me"

of the Roman arch finds expression in the Greek. And what I hope the reader will remark is that, in thus drawing out the significance of this principle, the Greek architects of the new church were but acting after the manner of their race. They were but doing for the Roman arch exactly what their forefathers had done for the Egyptian lintel, stripping from it the superfluous matter which obscured the thought within, until the substance left became, as it were, the incarnation of the structural principle on which they were working.

There are traits, I began by saying, in architecture which are vital and which constitute the style of a building, and others which are more or less accidental and interchangeable and do not constitute style. It seems to me that no disinterested critic, who has submitted himself to the influence of Santa Sophia, and has considered its relations with the Roman architecture that led up to it, can be in much doubt as to what the *style* in it consists in. It does not consist in such decorative additions as the use of mosaics and marble panelling; for such decoration might all be stripped from the church, as indeed to a large extent it has been, without in the least affecting the character of the architecture. Nor does it even consist in the use of certain structural forms, as the dome and apse and vault, though these of course are more essential, for

all these, as we have seen, were used in many Roman buildings, and used even in conjunction with marble panelling and mosaics. All the features, structural and decorative, employed in Santa Sophia had already often been combined, and yet their combination had not resulted in a structure more than remotely resembling Santa Sophia in character. It is not, then, these things that compose the style of the Greek church. Enumerate every feature here present, and you are no nearer a satisfactory definition. They will every one be found in the baths of Caracalla. But if from structural features you turn to structural principles ; if, instead of saying that dome, apse and vault are here present, you say the whole building is conceived as an exposition of the arch principle, then indeed you name that which really gives character and style to the church, the essential trait in it on a participation in which any claim to a real relationship betwixt it and other buildings must be based.

But if this is indeed the essential characteristic of Santa Sophia, the question immediately arises, how are we to reconcile its position as the exponent of arcuated construction with its position as the prototype of the Byzantine style ? For Santa Sophia, of course, figures in architectural history not as the solution of the earlier Roman, but as the supreme type of the later Byzantine architecture. Between Santa Sophia and Byzantine buildings generally a most real and intimate relationship is claimed ; and yet I have never myself heard that relationship based on the ground of a common exposition of the possibilities of arcuated construction ; nor, indeed, is it

easy to see, when one recalls the general appearance, the heavy proportions and passive, inert weight of Byzantine interiors generally, how without palpable absurdity such a claim could be advanced. True, Byzantine uses all the arch forms, dome, apse and vault which Santa Sophia uses, but it does not use them to the same end. Byzantine domes and vaults are ponderous, low and solid. The interiors are obscure and darkly shadowed, and the general impression they convey, upheld as they are by huge square piers, is as of excavations dug out by miners rather than a construction of architecture. Nothing can be imagined more opposed to that lightness of structural vitality which inspires the bounding vaults of Santa Sophia than the massive solidity and heaviness of the later Byzantine structure. Moreover, what seems to make the difference the more pronounced is that these later Byzantine interiors are so alike in character that it is obvious that they, too, are working out a definite intention, though not the intention of Santa Sophia. The prevalence of low, solid curves, dimly lit and darkly shadowed, gives to all of them a kindred character and indicates a common purpose. The architectural conditions here present are certainly very ill adapted for the display of any structural principles whatever, but they are singularly well adapted for the display of an ideal of another kind. Those of my readers who remember the dim, rich twilight that suffuses the interior of Saint Mark's at Venice will scarcely require to be told what that ideal was. The deep vaulting, wrought apparently out of soft gold, the solemn figures inlaid in its surface, the deep shadows that

sometimes disclose the sheen of the gold but more often wrap it in a semi-obscurity through which it glows fitfully like the smouldering embers of a fire, all these are conditions which enforce with extraordinary power the effect of splendour of colouring. They are characteristics, moreover, in which all Byzantine buildings participate, and they constitute what is typical in the style. But does the reader imagine that there is anything whatever in common between such a building as this and Santa Sophia? There is, to be sure, this in common, that St. Mark's uses the dome and the apse and the vault, and uses also mosaics and marble panelling. These are features it has in common with Santa Sophia, just as Santa Sophia has them in common with Caracalla's baths. But if we would realise how superficial is the attempt to characterise architecture by detail instead of general intention and effect, we could scarcely do better than contrast in our minds these two buildings which possess so many features in common, yet which are so opposed in general effect. So opposed, indeed, are they that they address themselves to different faculties of the mind. Santa Sophia, developing a great structural principle in broad daylight with unexampled logic and daring, addresses itself entirely to the intellect. St. Mark's, sensuous and contemplative, with its dark splendour of colouring half seen, half guessed, in the rich obscurity of its vaults, addresses itself entirely to the emotions. It is impossible to bring two such buildings to terms with each other of any kind, and to pretend that they both belong to the same style is to deprive the word style of any comprehensible

meaning. St. Mark's, it is to be remembered, carries out its own purposes and develops its own effects with just as much consistency as Santa Sophia itself. And these purposes and effects are the purposes and effects of the Byzantine style generally. They are reproduced in countless buildings throughout Eastern Europe, and more sparingly throughout Italy and Sicily, their appearance keeping pace with the spread and prevalence of Greek immigrants. But by all that draws them together they are separated from Santa Sophia. The gulf between them is the gulf between reason and emotion in human character and between form and colour in art.

To conclude then, what I would suggest to the reader as the really significant quality in Santa Sophia is the exposition it gives of the nature of the arch as a structural principle. This is the "essential trait" in it, that which represents the intention of the architect and gives *style* to his work, and in comparison with this all other features are of superficial and negligible importance. In this, too, it seems to me, lies the building's chief source of historical and human interest, since in this respect it stands for the emergence, after long eclipse, of the Greek genius in its familiar *rôle* of expounder of the principles of art in vogue in the world. This, surely, is importance and significance sufficient for any one building. Only if we interpret it in this sense, we must relinquish its claim to be the prototype of the Byzantine style. For this is ground Byzantine cannot share with it. When Fergusson, after describing the perfect logic of the new church's domical construction, concludes that, in its own

method of construction, "Santa Sophia seems to stand alone," he makes a statement there is no qualifying or disputing at all. In its logical development of the arch principle the church certainly does stand alone, for on these lines Byzantine buildings not only do not rival but do not compete with it.

Let the reader, then, choose. If he accepts a catalogue of structural and decorative features as embodying the character or *style* of Santa Sophia, he will indeed be able to establish a relationship indifferently between it and Roman, Byzantine, or even Persian and Moorish architecture; but it will be a relationship of superficialities which will tend to obscure the real significance and human interest of architecture and reduce it to a study and comparison of mere technical details. On the other hand, if he accepts the arch principle as the keynote of Santa Sophia and reads the building as the Greek comment on Roman Imperial architecture, he will be helped to certain clear and simple definitions. Henceforth Roman architecture will appear as a prolonged struggle between two irreconcilable principles, the arch and lintel; while Santa Sophia will stand for the deliverance of the arch principle from the clutches of its enemy and the final exhibition of its full power and beauty. It will be the last word in a long controversy. For long Roman methods and the Roman Imperialism had dominated art, and under that dominion the old clear-thoughted loyalty to definite ideas and fixed principles had given place to a jumble of antagonistic statements. The Greek influence in these latter pagan centuries

seemed extinct. And yet, at the closing of that epoch, a final opportunity was granted it to which it still had power to respond. I am not sure that, coming as it does after so long a decadence, the purity of Santa Sophia and its perfect intellectual lucidity are not a higher testimony to the essential qualities of the Greek genius and temperament than even the Doric masterpieces of the race's prime. At any rate I know no better way of realising what the secret, potent Greek influence consisted in than by turning first to the stuttering and stammering of Roman architecture, and then to the same thought uttered in the clear, bell-like speech of Santa Sophia.

CHAPTER VI

THE ARAB IN ARCHITECTURE*

Arab architecture as a presentment of Arab character : Living qualities of the race : Its terrific energy combined with fickleness and instability : All Arab enterprise to this day marked by same combination : Arab war : Arab science and scholarship and civilisation generally : Their rapid but evanescent achievements : Testimony of their buildings : Their hatred of all steadfast and stable forms : Fate of the round arch in their hands : Their destructive impulse : Their inability to construct : Their tendency to the fantastic and whimsical : The structural forms of Arab buildings are the racial traits in their living image

ARAB architecture is the best presentment of Arab character that remains to us. No historical evidence can furnish forth to the understanding a likeness of the man so expressive as this architecture offers to the eye. Yet its significance is apt to be overlooked, and overlooked usually for the same reason. Between almost all the books dealing wholly or in part with Arab and Moorish art which have passed through my hands during the last year, there exists, under all differences of treatment and style, one fundamental resemblance. They almost all regard Arab architecture from the same, namely, from the romantic, standpoint. They almost all, that is to say, treat it not as a subject possessing a definite meaning, and

* I have treated this subject more fully in my book, "In the Desert."

capable of rational explanation, but as an opportunity for exercising those sentimental and poetic feelings in which it is always so pleasant to indulge. The Arab himself, more than any figure in all history, is steeped in romance and sentiment, and his curious fantastic architecture, embodying as it does the same qualities, addresses itself naturally to the sentimental faculties in each one of us. Its fascinating associations, its strange and unfamiliar aspect, its forlornness and desolation, its gardens, nightingales and orange blossoms, incite us perpetually to poetry and tears. "Ah, I forgot the city," cries Mr. Hutton on entering the Mosque at Cordova, "I forgot the desolation, I forgot the dust that seems to have crumbled from innumerable desolations as I wandered in that holy and secret place; I lost myself in a new contemplation; I kissed the old voluptuous marbles, I touched the strange precious inscriptions, and with my finger I traced the name of God."

This is the temper, romantic rather than rational, in which the examination of Arab architecture is usually conducted, and what I wish to point out is that, however effective the result may be from the literary point of view, such a treatment ignores altogether one very powerful source of interest which Arab architecture possesses; the interest, I mean, which belongs to it as an interpretation, quite literal, exact and reliable, of Arab character. In its eager inventiveness, in the capricious changes, complications and inflections of its designs, in its impulsive energy, and above all in its inherent weakness and instability, there is depicted in this style, if we would but coolly and rationally examine it, a visible repre-

sentation of the Arab as we know him in history, or as he is to be met with to-day in the flesh in those deserts to which the progress of more stable races has once again relegated him. The stamp and impress taken of him by these eccentric arches and purposeless entanglements of tracery are the stamp and impress which he gave to all his undertakings. His impetuous yet ill-sustained campaigns have this character; his so-called civilisation, so imposing yet so fugitive, has it; all his scientific and intellectual achievements, informed with vague visions and transcendental guesses, have it; above all the man himself, full of fiery, short-lived and contradictory impulses, is the incarnation of it.

Let us specify, if we can, the living characteristics of the race before we attempt to trace its likeness in stone. They should not be difficult to seize. From the moment of the Arab's first appearance on the world's stage we are conscious of a new force acting on human affairs. The old stock of warring ideals which throughout the East and West, among the attackers and defenders of classicalism, had given rise to fluctuations of regular recurrence and similar character, was with the coming of the Arab suddenly modified by the addition of a hitherto unknown ingredient, the effect of which was instantaneous. As a dash of petroleum stimulates an unwilling fire, so the Arab ardour fanned to a blaze the general conflagration which was consuming the old order of things. Destruction, the clearing of the ground for a new growth, seems to have been the main purpose of that age, and as a destructive agent the Arab was without a peer. That terrific energy of his, so

furiously rapid in its progress, so irresistible in its attack, so blasting in its effects, is comparable only to the light and glancing motions of tongues of flame. But yet, on the other hand, if the Arab energy is like fire swift and irresistible, it is like fire fickle. In all affairs of whatever kind in which the Arab has been concerned, fickleness equally with energy plays its part. One is constantly reminded, in dealing with him, or noting his behaviour in history, of the lack in him of that faculty of solid reason which lends such unmistakable coherence and continuity to the designs of the Western nations. In manners and customs, in likes and dislikes, in all he does and leaves undone, in his very mien and gait, in the glance of his eye and the tone of his voice, the fact that the Arab is governed by passion rather than by reason is unmistakably revealed. In ordinary intercourse this emotional tendency lends to his actions something incalculable and unexpected, since it is impossible to foresee what his conduct will be under any given circumstances, or what whim or sudden impulse may divert his course or hurry him in a moment from one point of view to another. Hence that agreement and co-operation which prevail among people who are guided by reason never are and never have been possible for any length of time among the Arabs, for where all action is a matter of sentimental impulse and the emotion of the moment, it is impossible to guarantee that any two men will judge alike, or indeed that any one man will judge to-day as he judged yesterday or will judge to-morrow. In short, emotion as a motive power, while it ensures tremendous energy and suddenness and swiftness of action, is sure to

result also in such action being discontinuous and spasmodic, liable to die out suddenly or change at a moment's notice to another direction. As the reader knows, every enterprise set on foot among the desert tribes is still invariably based on appeals to passion and fanaticism, rather than on any reasonable or definable policy, and the resulting outbreak is always as short-lived and ill-directed as it is violent and unexpected. Its energy and impotence alike mark it as the effect of passion rather than reason.

But the same characteristics have distinguished Arab action in all ages. Their first furious eruption was exactly similar in character to any desert rising of to-day, the apparent difference existing solely in the surroundings. The Arab of the present, less happily circumstanced than the Arab of the seventh or eighth century, has to encounter in his adversaries just that capacity for combining and co-operating which is characteristic of a civilisation founded on the rational faculty, and which he has himself always so signally lacked. Against an opposition of this kind he is powerless, he cannot operate, he cuts no figure at all; you would scarcely take him for the same man as he who, with the world a darkened stage prepared for him, displayed his peculiar talents upon it to such terrible advantage thirteen hundred years ago.

And yet, apart from circumstances, our Arab of thirteen hundred years ago was the Arab of to-day. Among the vague accounts which have come down to us of his earliest campaigns we shall look in vain for any reasoned scheme of operations, any definable strategy, even any knowledge of the

physical features and probable powers of resistance of the various countries attacked. All was guesswork. All was left to chance and the blind dictates of a vague enthusiasm. The warlike operations of the Arabs in no way resemble the tactics of regular armies. Supplies, transport, equipment, a military base, lines of communication, all these factors in a steady and organised advance are wanting in their evolutions. Composed entirely of cavalry and unencumbered with provisions and baggage, the swiftness of the Saracen advance almost baffles observation. The progress of Kaled through Syria, of Okba through Africa, of Tarik through Spain suggests the passage of a whirlwind rather than the march of armies. But the secret of this swiftness is to be sought not so much in the fact that the Arabs marched light and were all well mounted, but rather in those peculiarities of temperament which urged them to use these means of speed with such furious ardour. These extraordinary campaigns are enlivened by, or indeed made up of, incidents which constantly testify to the emotional and fiery nature of the race. Personal deeds of romantic daring take the place of strategical dispositions, and each separate Moslem appears like a missile loosed from the desert and charged with an inward momentum which irresistibly drives him on. Small wonder that armies thus composed, whether heading for the Atlantic or the frontiers of China, should always be at the full gallop.

And, second, to this furious energy which is the first trait noticeable in the Arab attack, there is discernible a haunting element of weakness and

instability. These eager cavaliers rarely drive their attack straight home, but wheel and hover round their perplexed enemy until accident or ill-discipline opens an opportunity. Formidable as their *élan* is, and terribly effective as it proved in the circumstances under which the Arab invasions were conducted, we can easily believe that Gibbon was right when he suggested that "the Empire of Trajan, or even of Constantine or Charlemagne, would have repelled the assault of the naked Saracens, and the torrent of fanaticism might have been obscurely lost in the sands of Arabia." It will be found, I think, that during the crusades and the Sicilian and Spanish campaigns, though the European forces often suffered heavily through their own rashness, or the unaccustomed conditions of climate and country, yet they seldom failed, even when heavily outnumbered, to get the best of it in fair fighting. Twenty to one, the odds allowed by Count Roger, might no doubt be an excessive disparity; but I imagine, when once the sense of nationality had developed in them, that a Frenchman, a Spaniard, or an Englishman in a hand-to-hand struggle was always worth at least four or five Saracens.

The truth is, and ultimately Arab history is a proof of it, that passion, however furious, is strong only in appearance. The qualities that make an army really formidable are in the main rational qualities. What gives confidence to every soldier of a civilised army is his certainty that, though he is ignorant of the plan of operations, yet such a plan does in fact exist and does dictate every manœuvre.

Whatever, therefore, the aspect of affairs in his own part of the field may be, his instinct is, at all hazards, to obey orders and carry out his own immediate instructions. It is this rational subordination to rational control which makes a civilised force well-nigh irresistible. Discipline, cohesion, tenacity, the power of concerted action, these are the great qualities that spring from the rule of reason. It was the lack of these qualities among the passion-tossed hosts of the Arabs which was to prove their undoing. Gradually as the Western nations emerged out of barbarism and achieved the beginnings of unity, they put on the warlike strength proper to a reasoning people ; and no sooner did they begin to develop this strength, no sooner did reason and intellect begin to show themselves in the discipline and direction of armies, than the Saracen resistance yielded before them. Decade by decade the strength of Europe increased. Science introduced a new and terrible efficiency in armament, but one which cannot logically be separated from the men who wield it, for it is indeed a part of them, a part of that power of thinking which is their racial characteristic and which manifested itself in ordered ranks and a logical plan of campaign before it went on to manifest itself in magazine rifles and quick-firing guns.

For these developments, however, the Arab did not wait. The race maintained its conquests only so long as it was opposed by feebleness and confusion. In the East it was struck down by the Turk, while in the West the slow consolidation of the Goths drove it steadily southward and the final

union of the states of Castile and Arragon rid Spain finally of its presence.

What, then, we learn to distinguish as the chief characteristics of Arab valour, from their rapid conquests and rapid decline, is, first, an intense excitability, a temperament in the highest degree nervous, passionate and fiery, expressing itself in movements of headlong speed and furious bursts of energy; and, secondly, under all this fire and fury, a perpetual weakness and lack of tenacity and endurance, due to the lack of rational cohesion in them, which so wrought that nothing done by them was ever continuous or firmly established, but that all their designs partook of the character of whims and blind impulses.

But if this is a true reading of the Arab in war it will be true of him in other things also. And so I think it is. His whole civilisation may be taken as a further illustration of it. If that civilisation rose and expanded with the rapidity of all Arab designs, its abrupt and entire disappearance was not less characteristic. Has the reader ever passed by the scene of an overnight's display of fireworks and noted the few relics—a rocket-stick or two, the core of a catharine-wheel, a burnt-out cracker—which are all that remains of so brief a glory? Such was the legacy, as such had been the brilliance, of the display given by the Arabs. It is a habit at present to magnify the importance of those odds and ends of knowledge which we have succeeded in disengaging from their motley accumulation of facts and fancies. I need not here, however, overhaul the doubtful catalogue. It is enough to point out

that whatever hints and suggestions we may have utilised or adopted, the gap between the Arab as thinker and the European as thinker has remained. Mentally and intellectually we have always been strangers ; and this estrangement has increased and become absolute since the day when the West awoke to the consciousness of its own powers and its own mission in the world. At the time of the Renaissance, Arab knowledge and scholarship, Arab art and poetry, had illumined and beautified the world for some seven centuries; yet when the awakened mind of Europe turned to its own task and sought about for such stimulus and co-operation as might be available, all this culture and knowledge were as practically ignored as though they had never existed. I do not believe that in Symond's history of the causes which led to the Renaissance the learning of the Arabs is so much as mentioned. I do not remember that in Pater's subtle analysis of the currents of thought and feeling blended in Renaissance culture, the Arab influence is even distinguished. The mind of Europe turned back to and claimed kinship with the minds of the thinkers and poets and artists of Greece and Rome. The line of descent of ideas and intellectual sympathy then recognised has ever since been adhered to, and the consequence is that the whole Arab episode has dropped out of the life of Europe in the same way that a dream or momentary hallucination drops out of personal recollection.

And if we question more closely why this total separation took place, and what there was so incompatible in essence between Arab and European

thought, the answer is easily forthcoming. What Europe awoke to at the Renaissance was the value of intellectual culture, the value of thought and reason. She went forward on these lines; and the chief characteristic of the civilisation which has ensued has been that rational quality in it which, whatever else it may have done, has secured for it coherence and durability. But every step taken in this direction was a step away from the Arabs. Their mental activity never was of this kind. It was not indeed activity of the intellect so much as activity of the fancy and imagination, and although it blossomed with incredible swiftness into many imposing results, yet these were all infected from the beginning with the instability of half-fanciful creations. "Whatever real knowledge they possessed," is the conclusion of so sympathetic a critic as Prescott, "was corrupted by their inveterate propensity for mystical and occult science. They too often exhausted both health and fortune in fruitless researches after the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone. Their medical prescriptions were regulated by the aspect of the stars. Their physics were debased by magic; their chemistry degenerated into alchemy, their astronomy into astrology."

If the reader will compare these eager but ill-sustained conquests in the realms of knowledge with those conquests in warfare which we were just now considering, he will perceive their identity of character. Both are marked by the same curious combination of energy and instability. Both, by their ostentation and the dazzling show they make, tempt the historian to eloquent panegyrics, and both leave

him in the long run puzzled and fumbling about for tangible results. Mingled together and fused into one, these attributes form the basis of the Arab temperament, and, welling out into all his actions and creations, stamp them with the same unique character. Never will the reader, when once he has learnt to recognise that feebly emphatic manner, mistake its author. Let him look for the blind emotional impulse, for the signs of furious haste and impetuosity which arise from such a motive; and at the same time let him look for the weakness and instability which result from the lack of clear thinking and reasoning; and wherever these traces appear, whether in action, in science, or in art, he may be sure the Arab has passed that way.

With this clue in our hands we shall not find it difficult to interpret Arab architecture. "The Arabs themselves," Fergusson tells us, "had no architecture properly so called," and it is true that in each country they invaded and thereafter settled in, they made of the architecture there existing a basis for their own style of building. That is to say, they proceeded by altering existing forms rather than by evolving a homogeneous and consistent style of their own. Yet these alterations of the Arabs, though diverse in effect and resulting in totally different forms in different parts of the Empire, are always curiously similar in character. From the very first, from the earliest days of Arab construction, their object, and the only thing in which they were consistent, was the breaking up and dislocation of the old-established structural features. These features, the plain and massive round arch and vault and the equally plain

and massive lintel and entablature, constituted the essentials of the two great families of arcuated and trabeated architecture then in being, and with regard to both of these the main idea they express, or perhaps I may better put it, the sensation with which they are both impregnated and which they convey to the onlooker, is the sensation of passive strength, a strength, that is to say, not energetic but full rather of quietude and a calm stability. This feeling is strongest no doubt in the lintel, but it is very strong also in the semicircular arch and vault, and it was in the latter guise that the Arabs had most to do with it.

From the outset they could not abide it; indeed, I know of no more convincing testimony to the innate significance of form than this meeting between all that was most serene in architecture and all that was most fiery and impulsive in human nature, and the instant fury of recognition which ensued. Not for a moment were the Arabs in doubt on this head. Perfectly conscious as they were of their own ignorance in matters of art and eager to adopt the knowledge of others; with a natural antipathy, moreover, to the arduous processes of architecture, and unwilling on principle to build for themselves when they could get any one else to build for them, they yet, in regard to those structural features held hitherto in universal honour, would make no terms and listen to no suggestions. Towards all established and organic forms they had the instinctive animosity of the ordained iconoclast, the appointed destroyer. The impulse to take to pieces and disintegrate, to bite upon solids like a corrosive acid, was paramount

in them. This being so, the firmly wrought vaults and arches of the Romanesque and Byzantine style were naturally repugnant to every Arab feeling, and with instantly aroused enmity they threw themselves upon these features and broke them up and dislocated them.

The result is without parallel in the history of architecture. Those solid and serene forms, in their grave march through the centuries, seem, as they enter on the Arab epoch, to be seized upon by a force of an unprecedented kind, under the attack of which they buckle and bend in all directions like a child's toys. The prestige of the Greek genius, the weight of Roman authority, went for nothing in the cataclysm. Whoever is accustomed to connect architectural and historical events can have, I imagine, little difficulty in matching this structural convulsion with its social equivalent. There is only one event in history which has this character. The new, strange force that crumpled up Greek and Roman formations, what is it but another mode of action of that frantic energy unloosed from the desert which was shattering in all directions the social fabric of the Eastern and Western Empires?

But if the Arab attack is unanimous in its object to break up the old quietness and strength, there is very little unanimity in its own suggested alternatives. A volume of illustrations would be necessary to depict the multitudinous shapes to which the arch alone was soon reduced. Stilted arches, horseshoe arches, pointed arches, ogive arches, arches curved and foliated and twisted into a thousand nameless and inexplicable designs, arches inverted and standing

on their heads, arches with voussoirs elaborately tangled and interlaced, such are a few of the varieties which occur more or less freely in all Arab buildings. The racial mark set on this feature alone is unmistakable, and every one susceptible to the meaning of form may easily interpret it. The imaginative excitability at work here is matched to a nicety in all Arab affairs and ideas. It represents the element, strongly mixed with the Arab civilisation, which differentiates it from that of the Western races. What is striking about these Arab arches is that they are not fashioned simply as structural features, as Western arches are, that is to say with regard to their structural use and purpose only, but are used primarily to exercise the fancy upon; the shapes they take being recommended by no sort of real use but being merely an outlet or safety-valve for the whims and fantasies of the builders. But this is precisely what we find in all Arab transactions, and what in all things makes the difference between the Arab and Western races. Arab science and philosophy, Arab thought and learning are permeated through and through with this same fantastical spirit. They none of them, any more than the arches, exist for their own purposes only, but are charged always with the same incorrigible tendency to imaginative eccentricity. In the same way if we compare the bare use of words by the Western races and the Arabs, we shall find that the former keep constantly in view the strict relationship between the word and the fact, a practice which gives to their mode of expression a certain simplicity and moderation; whereas the latter break away

from this connection with fact and use words as the vehicle for their own whimsical fancies. Let the reader turn up a translation of any Arab description of the beauties of Granada, and compare the vague rodomontade and fantastical exaggeration into which the language is wrought with the equally wild fancifulness of the Alhambra arcades, and he will acknowledge one of the most striking similitudes between ideas and forms that the history of architecture has to show.

But we must look more closely yet into the quality of this architecture if its value as a record of human character is to be made clear. It was a trait of all Arab action, as I just now said, that it was spasmodic, impulsive and short-lived, that its very ardour was always tinged with feebleness, and that it had no sooner accomplished something, or conquered and settled in some new country, than symptoms of decay and disintegration began to creep in, and all it had achieved began to fall to pieces. It was so, too, in building. What Fergusson says of the great works of the Moors of Spain, that they seem to have been built for a momentary enjoyment, and in accordance with a momentary caprice, is true of all Arab buildings. It scarcely needs to be pointed out that complicated forms must always make for weakness in architecture, and that those fantastic arches of which I was just now speaking are open at a hundred points to the chances of fracture, while from the irregularity of their construction they are incapable of opposing an even and steady resistance to the various thrusts and pressures to which they are subjected. Frequently

accordingly they show signs of giving way, and the ties of wood or iron which are used to counteract the lateral thrust of the arches, and the presence of which is in itself a pretty sure indication of feeble construction, are quite incapable of preserving the regularity of their shape. Traces constantly appear of a lack of uniformity and correctness of outline. Here they bulge; there they sag. This one is evidently lop-sided; that one is giving to its neighbour's pressure. Such are the common and usual mannerisms of Arab arcades, and they produce to a Western eye an immediate and painful effect of feebleness and insecurity.

Another source of weakness is to be found in the Arab instinct for appropriating the remnants of older buildings. The plentifulness of Roman ruins furnished an inexhaustible store just fitted to Arab requirements. Eager but careless, it suited them far better to steal columns and capitals from classic structures than to cut and carve them for themselves. Countless are the buildings, from the Great Pyramids to Roman baths and palaces, which the Arabs impartially rifled, and most of their mosques are in large measure, many of them entirely, constructed of such fragments. This of course involved the hasty adaptation of all sorts of structural features to positions which they had never been meant to occupy, and this process of adaptation in Arab hands is a very rough-and-ready one. Shafts are rudely broken off to shorten them, or are propped on blocks of stone to lengthen them. Again and again I have noticed, in the mosques of Egypt and North Africa, wedges of wood carelessly hammered in between

shafts and capitals to raise the latter to the right level. Sometimes the capitals, chipped and defaced as they mostly are, are set on upside down, the cracks and rents in them being patched up with coarse mortar. Evidently speed counts for more here than durability. The fact that stones, designed for the places they had to fill and accurately fitted to them, would yield a more stable kind of architecture than a lot of incongruous fragments eked out with stray chunks of wood and stone was to the Arabs of no consequence. Let the structure take shape instantly, that was the great thing. So long as it could be finished to-day, what did it matter if it fell to pieces to-morrow ?

Many more indications might be mentioned of the weakness which is inherent in all Arab structures, and in particular I am tempted to linger over their minute and complicated patterns of decorative design, patterns which in their feeble restlessness seem to embody the dreams of fevered pillows. I will content myself, however, with referring to one more, but that the most fundamental, symptom of weakness. The reader will not need to be told, if he takes any interest in the subject of architecture, that the quality of the masonry, constituting as it does the very substance of the structure and foundation of all subsequent effects, is really the most profoundly characteristic feature of the art, and, in its quality, the surest indication of its builder's architectural capacity. As for the quality of Arab masonry, it is much what the insecurity of their construction in other respects would have led one to expect. Smooth cutting and exact setting are

never even attempted. Brickwork and stonework are put loosely together, with joints so wide and irregular, and filled with mortar so weak and crumbling—moreover, they are so ill-adjusted and unsymmetrical, with surfaces so untrue and inexact—that they probably constitute the worst masonry ever used by other than downright savages. It is of a kind which seems to welcome dissolution, for it exhibits a natural inclination to crumble and fall to pieces of its own accord. The visitor to the oldest Cairo mosques will be struck by the absence from their decay of all that dignity and grandeur which so often belongs to ruins. The word dilapidation, indeed, rather than ruin, expresses their condition. A people of builders, we in the North know that strength is the essence of all good architecture, and what we admire in a ruin is the exhibition it affords of such strength. We love to see, when all the softer, ornamental and decorative qualities have long been stripped away, how the shattered buttress and broken arch retain to the last their fixed and stern rigidity. And we are right, in that strength is the structure's final justification. But it is a justification which never attended on Arab efforts. The bulging surfaces and crumbling brickwork, the mortar running in powder out of the joints and the plaster peeling from the walls, reveal, under time's patient analysis, a total absence of that great attribute which is the unfailing mark of constructive genius. The readiness of this architecture to go to bits corresponds with the haste with which it was put together. There is nothing more fundamental than this. It is here we strike the very bed rock of Arab character. Under

the painting and the carving, under the elaborate stucco ornamentation and the endless caprice of structural form, there is nothing after all but weakness and insecurity. No solidity upholds these fantastic imaginings and gives them reality and endurance. Beneath the restless energy and eager, nervous impulse we find, wrought into the very texture of wall and arch, that profound instability which never fails to attend upon all Arab undertakings.

I think now that, if the reader will gather into an intelligible portrait his impressions of the Arab as an historical personage on the one hand, and if on the other he will collect into one visual image the characteristic aspects and practice of Arab architecture, and then, if he will compare these two impressions together, the impression of the Arab as he lived and thought and acted and the impression of the Arab as he designed and constructed, I think, I say, that he will perceive between the two a likeness not to be denied. That memorable onslaught of the Arabs which swept before it the old social landmarks in a common ruin is so closely echoed by the general smash-up under his hands of established structural forms that it is impossible not to see in both processes a manifestation of one and the same force. The whimsical civilisation which accompanied the Arab dominion and broke into so wild a frenzy of necromantic and astrological speculations is paralleled with curious felicity in the odd and freakish shapes, the flamelike mounting spirals and fantastically curved and twisted arches, into which the new architecture instantly developed. Further,

when we examine more closely the texture and composition of this civilisation and this construction, when we note the former's evanescent character, its powerlessness to cohere socially, its rapid collapse and total obliteration, and then compare it with the crumbling masonry and tottering walls and columns of Arab buildings, we must acknowledge that the likeness, already remarked in outward action and appearance, extends equally to the substance and the inward nature.

Such, briefly indicated, is the interpretative value which this style of building may come to possess, if we approach it in a reasoning spirit. It is one of those styles inspired by racial instinct and an uncontrollable impulse, the use of which is to instruct us in the character of the people who evolved them. And never did a race more need such elucidation than the Arab. Traits which almost defy definition, which turn the Arab of history into a phantom and a myth, which in science, in philosophy, in poetry, still subtly elude and puzzle us, we capture at last in architecture. Here, arrested in its living image, is that force which, bred of the desert, seemed endowed with all the desert's fiery *élan* and restless inconstancy. But here it baffles us no longer. At last we can seize and handle it; and its strange mingling of frailty, fickleness and frantic energy can be examined in concrete forms, or registered by our kodaks and pasted into our albums.

CHAPTER VII

THE GOTHIC CONTRIBUTION

The energy of Gothic architecture and in what that energy consists : The side-thrust of the arch : Its unsleeping activity : The Gothic delight in this characteristic : The eagerness with which the Gothic races exhibited and enhanced by all possible means the activity of the arch principle : Loftiness of their vaults : Dangerous character of side-thrusts which they provoked and met : Buttresses and flying buttresses : The visible conflict betwixt stone and human energy : Participation of Gothic detail in the structural motive : Ribs, mouldings, &c., used to indicate the arch pressures and explain to the eye how they converge and how they are withstood : This structural activity the image of a racial activity : Part played by the Gothic race : Roman apathy : The quickening and vitalising influence of the barbarian invasions : The Gothic ideal in life : The revitalising of the old Roman system was the cardinal event in post-classic life : How it worked out and formed the basis of the national system : How having worked itself out in life it was ripe to embody itself in art : The twelfth century in England and France : The moment of triumph of the Gothic ideal : That triumph in all its completeness depicted in Gothic architecture

OF all events in the history of architecture the transition from Romanesque to Gothic is incomparably the most striking and dramatic. It is made so partly by the extraordinary contrast in character between the old style and the new, between the ponderous, solid and composed Romanesque and the eager, animated Gothic, and partly by the decisive and rapid way in which the incoming style set to work to break up and displace the old. Mr.

Jackson, in one of his lectures, has called the change a "revolution," and its violence and suddenness seem to deserve the name. Moreover, it is a revolution which evidently implies a definite meaning and purpose. Gothic is so powerful and decided a style, it seems to know its own mind so clearly, and to speak its thought with such conviction and emphasis, that we feel it needs must have some intelligible message to deliver to us if only we could get at the meaning of it.

When, however, we turn to the writers and lecturers on the subject, most of whom are professional architects, for an interpretation of this message, we often have to confess a sense of disappointment. Mr. Jackson tells us that the whole change came about owing to the fact that the builders of our Gothic cathedrals were obliged, from motives of economy, to use small stones instead of large ones. They had not the command of money or slave labour that the Romans had, and consequently were obliged to build with stones that could easily be handled. From this necessity proceeded the forms of vaulting and construction best adapted to such a material, and the towering Gothic naves and choirs were the inevitable result. Such an explanation has the merit of simplicity, but yet it is not quite what we want. It is not such a solution as any one who feels very deeply the personal influence, as it may be called, of Gothic, will be quite contented with. Nor is Mr. Russell Sturgis's solution, though he has the majority of the architects with him, much more satisfactory. According to this theory "Gothic architecture was a natural

development of the Romanesque architecture of Northern France," and its origin was "wholly constructional." That is to say it grew out of a difficulty the Romanesque builders had in roofing their naves and aisles, a difficulty which necessitated and insured the introduction of the pointed arch. As soon as this happened "the whole Gothic style, including everything from the Cathedral of Rheims to the smallest chapel, came from it as a matter of course."

I sometimes, after reading such explanations as the above, think that the poor British public is not wholly to blame for its alleged, and I dare say rightly alleged, indifference to architecture. We cannot all be architects, and unless we are architects we cannot reasonably be expected to excite ourselves very much about the structural laws governing arches and vaults, or the adaptability of masonry. If this is all, if this explains Gothic, nine out of ten of us will feel that the mistake we were under was in attaching the importance we did to the subject. In explaining away our difficulties Mr. Jackson and Mr. Russell Sturgis explain away our interest. We thought we were ignorant of something supremely worth knowing. We find we were ignorant of something which to us, not being professional architects, is of no importance. What wonder if, humbly accepting the explanations given, we incline for the future to leave architecture to the architects?

And yet—and it says a good deal for the power of Gothic that it should be so—we no sooner find ourselves inside one of our great cathedrals than all these explanations fall away from us. They are so

inadequate, or rather they are so totally disconnected with the cogent influence felt around us here, and vouched for by the power and unanimity of the architecture, that, however humbly we may have acquiesced in them in the lecture-room or the book, we quite forget them in presence of the architecture itself. Or, if we remember them at all, it is to perceive that they are not an explanation of ends but of means. They do not explain "why" Gothic architecture arose, but "how" it arose. If, we think, in presence of the strength of purpose here prevailing, the Gothic builders used small masonry, it was because small masonry suited the purpose they had in view; if they developed certain structural laws it was, again, because such laws lent themselves to the purpose in view. The purpose of Gothic architecture is a thing which, in its presence at least, we are unable to doubt, and no explanation stands a serious chance with us which does not address itself immediately to the elucidation of that purpose, or which thinks that it solves the question by an analysis of the mechanical and material means by which that purpose was carried out. A style so forcible supposes the existence of a distinct thought. It must have existed in the minds of its builders before it existed as architecture. It was an idea before it was a fact.

Thinking thus, it is needless to say that my own humble notions concerning Gothic lead me not so much to a minute examination of masonry or vaulting as to the age and people among whom Gothic had its origin. I will ask the reader by-and-by to accompany me in an excursion into past

history; but before doing so, and that we may know what we are in search of, I wish to draw attention to one characteristic trait of the style, in which, as it seems to me, its significance mainly lies.

Gothic then, let the reader observe, is the only architecture known to us, with one possible exception, which possesses the quality of energy. By energy I mean strength in action as distinguished from strength in repose. The only other style which possesses some trace of this quality is the Arab, with which I have already dealt. Apart from Arab architecture, however, Gothic is, so far as I know, its sole possessor. All other styles exhibit strength in repose only. Gothic alone exhibits strength in action.

That this may be understood we must begin by pointing out that there is available in architecture only one possible source of energy, energy being defined as strength in action as distinguished from strength in repose. There is only one structural principle which exerts an active strength, and that is the arch principle; the reason for this being that the arch is the only constructive form which diffuses a lateral pressure, and that lateral pressure cannot be directly met and set at rest.

A word of explanation will make this clear. The downward pressure of superincumbent weight acting upon the arch frame tends to drive in the head of the arch. But in order to effect this it has to force the sides of the arch apart, and this attempt to force the sides apart translates the original vertical pressure into lateral thrust. To accept the first illustration that occurs, if we were to take a child's wooden

hoop and press down upon the upper rim, the sides would, of course, expand. The vertical pressure would be translated into lateral thrust. This is precisely how the arch deals with its burden. Instead of transmitting the pressure in a direct line to the ground, it radiates it in part horizontally to left and right. This is the pressure that cannot be met, for it is not possible to intercept a force exerted *across* the line of gravity. And since it cannot be met it is persistently active, persistently alive. The Indians have an acute saying to denote this activity of the arch. "The arch," they say, "never sleeps." Place a lintel of stone across two uprights and you have an arrangement in passive architecture. The lintel sleeps. The structure will stand till the stones dissolve. But introduce arches into a fabric and you have started forces you cannot lay, forces which will go on day and night working at the disintegration of the building, because no counterforce which the wit of man can devise can be brought to meet that sideways thrust point-blank and send it to sleep. Accordingly, as this sideways pressure is the only conceivable force in architecture which remains constantly active, and as the arch is the only means by which this sideways pressure can be exerted, it is clear that the arch is the source of all activity in architecture; or, if we define energy as strength in action in contradistinction to strength in repose, of all energy.

Having grasped this important fact, let us consider what there was peculiar in the Gothic treatment of the arch. The arch had had, in the West, a disappointing career. The Greeks of the great age of

Greece detested it on principle. Its unintelligible methods seemed consonant with no clear and simple effects, with no precise intellectual definitions. Ideal beauty had no part or lot in the accursed thing. On the other hand the Romans used it freely, yet used it in a shamefaced way, hiding it as much as possible behind sham columns and architraves, and for the most part forming it of one solid lump of concrete, by which means the side-thrust was of course neutralised and the utility of the arch impaired. Whether, however, treated from the æsthetic or the utilitarian standpoint, it was always felt, all through the classic age and as long as the clear-cut Greek taste prevailed, that there was something vulgar and second-rate about the arch. Anything obscure or involved was above all things odious to the classic mind, and the arch, owing to its habit of distributing pressure sideways, is undoubtedly compared to the column and lintel, a very involved and structural feature indeed. In short the arch's lateral thrust had been its reproach, the blot upon its scutcheon, a defect which it was advisable to hide or avert attention from as much as possible.

And although, as the scrupulous Greek ideal died, the arch established itself in general use and came out from behind its classic mask and vindicated its claim to frank treatment, and although, on one occasion, in S. Sophia, it was allowed to exhibit its utmost capacity; yet still it remained for Gothic builders to actually exalt and glorify what always had been considered its main defect.* For this is what they set themselves to do. It would

* See note, page 206.

seem that in the irrepressible energy latent in the arch principle the new races recognised a quality after their own hearts. At any rate, far from concealing or fighting shy of it, they set themselves to develop to the utmost this very characteristic, and even to exaggerate and show off its waywardness and intractability as if they were the most desirable of virtues. In this dangerous vitality the new builders proceeded to deal as the subject-matter of their architectural style. They stimulated it by degrees and from small beginnings. Liking its ways they studied how to foster and increase it, and as it grew and sent forth its strength they delighted in the prowess of the only adversary they had met whose energy equalled their own. Moreover, the joy of the Gothic builders in this desperate encounter, as in the case of the loftier-vaulted structures it really came to be, is matched by their wonderful appreciation of every expedient and stratagem involved in this kind of warfare. They handle these powers of their own unloosing with an almost scornful familiarity, guiding and directing the tremendous pressures of the arches to the props and supports beneath, and as the vaults rise higher and their thrusts grow more dangerous and ungovernable, inventing expedients of unheard-of daring to counter and withstand them. They carry on the fight, too, in the full daylight, hand to hand with the stript stone, convinced that, for the spectator as for themselves, it must needs be the most fascinating of all spectacles; exhibiting every thrust and parry, every push of the tall roof and counter-buff of flying buttress springing in leaps to meet its enemy, in naked relief, and

calling upon us to share in their excitement as they "ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm" of the fierce forces they have evoked.

Gothic, in short, one is tempted to say, is less a style than a fight. When we stand to-day in a Gothic interior, with the vaults of nave and transepts meeting overhead, and the choir opening in front like some great chasm in a cliff, and look up at the tall, narrow roofs half hidden in shadow abutting against each other, it may be we seldom enough realise how strenuous and alive are the forces which are here engaged. But difficult as it is to connect the idea of activity with such rigid immobility, yet really every portion of the structure is in violent and furious action. The immense weight of the lofty roofs, flung sideways by the thrust of their vaults and threatening to burst the whole building asunder, is met and checked by the pressure of vaults setting in the opposite direction. Thrust meets thrust in full career. The aisles and side chapels push for all they are worth against the strength of nave and chancel, while the thrusts too high for them to deal with are encountered by the lofty zigzags of the flying buttresses and guided to earth.

The Gothic architects, then, delighted in the vitality of the arch principle as it had never been delighted in before. They were led on by this delight to use the arch principle in a manner, with an almost reckless daring and freedom, hitherto unknown. But the difference between Gothic and earlier arched styles is not sounded when we say that Gothic used a principle daringly which those

other styles had used timidly. Let us remember not only that every style to be genuine must be based on a distinct structural principle, but that purity of style consists in the keeping in touch, in detail as well as main feature, with that original structural principle. Style is the governing power of a single motive or idea, felt all through a building, working itself out in all kinds of manifestations, decorative as well as structural, and so producing throughout the whole a uniform sense of agreement and harmony. For perfection of intellectual statement no structural principle can approach the column and lintel, and the idea of exquisite articulation which it supplies is wrought by the Greeks through every stone of their characteristic style, and impregnates every curve and line and the cutting of every moulding throughout the whole of it. The whole of Doric is in direct relation to its own original idea, and therein consists its purity. But in the same way the whole of Gothic also is in direct relation to *its* original idea. The vital energy of the arch principle is not only developed as a structural principle but it inspires with a single impulse the whole array of lines, mouldings and tracery ribs, of piers, of arches and vaults, and turns them all into a harmonious expression of the original structural intention.

This is what is new. This is what not only reveals the pride and delight of the Gothic builders in the principle they had taken up, but gives to the resulting architecture, the uniform, homogeneous character of a *style*. Gothic has been called the linear style of architecture, and certainly the existence

and significance of the web of interior lines which seems to uphold the structure—or rather to compose the structure, for it is in these that the strength and vigour appear to reside, the walls and vaulting being no more than a stone veil or curtain drawn over these supports—is the most recognisable and salient trait of the style. These light and sinewy lines pervade the whole structure. They dart in sheaves from the floor. Passing through the slight ligature of the capitals bound about them they diverge into the mouldings of the aisle arches or shoot up the clerestory walls to support the tracery of the nave roof. Arrived at the springing of aisle and nave vaults these ribbed lines diverge and spread fanlike over the vault-surface, seeming in the elastic and vigorous framework which they compose as much to embody the function of the vaulting as to explain its purpose.

Their real mission, however, is explanatory. It is for them to emphasise, literally by *underlining*, the structural theory of the architecture and to draw attention to the forces active in it. They have to exhibit and explain to us the direction and play of these forces. They mark the sectional joints of the vault, and point out where and how the expanding pressure is guided to pier or buttress. Save in the case of certain of the vaulting ribs (and even this by some critics is held to be a fault of principle scarcely countenanced by French masters of the best period) they perform no essential structural function. The piers would serve their purpose if they were mere round pillars. The

arches would support their burden equally well cut with flat unmoulded soffits. The whole web and system of lines might be destroyed without injury to the building. Nevertheless this would destroy the style of the building, for it would destroy the means whereby the structural theory is carried out in detail and exhibited in full clearness to the eye. Behind those lines and ribs and sharp-drawn mouldings are the invisible thrusts and pressures of which we were just now speaking, which are generated by the lofty vaults and arches and penetrate and govern the whole building. As the lines on a map which mark the flow of tides when they converge to a strait carry the eye with them in their apparent motion, so do those lines which draw from all quarters to concentrate in Gothic piers and buttresses. They convey the same sense of motion, of currents of vitality in active circulation. And the currents are there. Study the zigzagging of the vaulted ribs and you are studying the structural scheme of the vaults themselves. Follow them as they collect at stated points between the clerestory windows, and you are following the direction of the weight thrown from above on to the props and supports beneath. Pick up the guiding lines of nave and aisle arches and it is the structural action of the arches themselves which is being explained to you. In short the whole Gothic scheme of ribs and mouldings, so irresistible to the eye, is only the visible manifestation of the invisible forces actually operating. It is a manifestation, in other words, of the unquenchable energy of the arch principle, for the action of arches and the manner in which their

thrusts act and react upon each other is the only theme treated.

In composition, therefore, and detail both, carried out through every part and portion of the structure, the exhibition of vital energy in architecture is the supreme motive of Gothic. But do not let the reader imagine that it is a stone struggle only he is watching in those dim cathedral vaults, that the matter ends there, in those piers and arches, and that any structural explanation of these will give him the clue and meaning of it. No, the meaning must be looked for elsewhere. The measure and equivalent of the energy here displayed will be found in the human energy of the race which brought forth the style. If the Goths alone loved the unquenchable vitality latent in the arch principle, if they fostered and developed it, made it their plaything and measured their strength against it, it was because they alone sympathised with and understood it, because they felt within themselves the kindred impulse, because they *were*, in a word, what they were making. In their own image created they these wrestling ribs and vaults. It is here the secret lies of the overmastering attraction which the new style possessed, not for the leaders and geniuses of the age only—for this was not one of those purely artistic products which claim special insight and are great only in the hands of the great—but for the mass of the people and the whole race. This is the reason of the spontaneous and rapid growth of a style which sprang up without effort and of its own volition because it was an embodiment of racial character and because men recognised in it and

carried within their own hearts the clue to its meaning.

It is to the authors of the new style we must have recourse. We know that in the sphere of architecture what Gothic energy did was to break up Romanesque. But Romanesque, to adopt Professor Banister Fletcher's definition, "may be said to include all those phases of Western European architecture which were more or less based on Roman art, and which were being carried out, in a rough-and-ready way, in various parts of Europe, from the departure of the Romans up to the introduction of the pointed arch." All these round arched styles are Roman in origin. They were, with many variations, still carrying on the main Roman traditions, and in fact between a Saxon, Norman, or Lombardic church, with their general massiveness and rounded arches and vaults, and the baths and palaces of the classic age there exists, under the differences, a fundamental similarity of character which cannot be mistaken. On the other hand, if these styles derived from Rome held their own, as Professor Banister Fletcher says, "from the departure of the Romans up to the introduction of the pointed arch," the new races, the barbarians who overwhelmed Rome, could not during all that time have produced a distinctive style of their own, and we must consider Gothic as being, therefore, their first distinctive style. So that the vigorous attack of Gothic on Romanesque is the attack of the great style of the barbarians on one still in the main Roman. That is the architectural side of the matter. If, however, we turn back some six or seven centuries

in European history we shall come to a more lively representation of the same encounter, and one which will, perhaps, throw some light on its architectural aspect.

We shall be well within the mark in saying that the Roman Empire was the greatest triumph of administrative control known to history. The idea of control, indeed, as opposed to the idea of freedom, was its guiding motive. Gibbon, who held that powers of self-government "will be first abused and afterwards lost if they are committed to an unwieldy multitude," and whose own ideas of government were perfectly represented by the Roman polity, has described with much appreciation her careful measures for suppressing the dangerous spirit of liberty. When that object had been attained, "when the popular assemblies had been suppressed by the administration of the Emperor," then indeed, "the conquerors were distinguished from the vanquished nations only as the first and most honourable order of subjects." But the first business was to crush out the spirit of local initiation and individual freedom. "In Etruria, in Greece and in Gaul," says Gibbon, "it was the first care of the Senate to dissolve those dangerous confederacies which taught mankind that, as the Roman arts prevailed by division, they might be resisted by union. Those princes whom the ostentation of gratitude or generosity permitted for a while to hold a precarious sceptre, were dismissed from their thrones as soon as they had performed their appointed task of fashioning to the yoke the vanquished nation. The free states and cities which had embraced the cause of

Rome were rewarded with a nominal alliance and insensibly sunk into real servitude."

The centre of the whole system was Rome. Thence all orders issued, thither all eyes were turned. "The public authority was everywhere exercised by the Ministers of the Senate and of the Emperor, and that authority was absolute and without control." By these means the spirit of liberty, denied all exercise, was gradually exterminated, and as it died down a series of gifts and privileges, administered on a sliding scale according to the docility of the subject, introduced a feeling of loyalty and pride of quite another kind. The "civis Romanus sum" pride of Roman citizenship, so far from having anything to do with liberty and independence, was bought by the sacrifice of liberty and independence. It was the pride of serving or assisting in some humble capacity, or at least of having one's existence recognised by, and being on friendly terms with, a tremendous and imposing organisation which could bestow important benefits or inflict terrible penalties.

The result of this system of control, pursued patiently, tactfully and implacably for several centuries, was that in Europe the spirit of liberty was literally killed out. The individual was sunk in the system, and when the system broke up, when Rome herself was no longer capable of diffusing energy and exercising control, the entire fabric collapsed and fell to the ground. In the separate parts of it there existed no life, no capacity for independent action, and not the direct necessity, not the instinct of self-preservation even, could

galvanise into such independent action those great provinces which had been accustomed for centuries to have all the strings that moved them pulled from Rome. There is a singular example of this helplessness, which is quoted by Guizot in one of his lectures, and which occurs in a despatch addressed in the year 418 by the Roman Emperor to the Prefect of Gaul. I need not quote the despatch. The object of it was to establish in Central Gaul, with its headquarters at Arles, a kind of representative government which might rouse the country to its own defence. The attempt failed owing to the fact that none of the towns or provinces took the slightest interest in it. No one went to Arles; no one elected deputies. Rome had done her work too well. The provinces had become so inured to control that it had come to be the only form of government conceivable to them. That they themselves, that their own individual inhabitants, could exercise rights of their own, combine among themselves, provide for their own safety, and act on their own initiative, was an idea they were not capable of entertaining.

What I would ask the reader to pause and notice here is the accuracy with which this character of the Empire is reflected in its architecture. That architecture is usually held to testify to the greatness and power of Rome's dominion. It does so, no doubt, but it reveals also the nature of that dominion. Its chief characteristic is its deadly and vast monotony. Local conditions count for nothing in it. It is impossible to trace the slightest record, in these theatres and amphitheatres and temples and

triumphal arches, which adorned the Empire from one end to the other, of the character of the inhabitants of that particular country or neighbourhood. The likes and dislikes of the people, national usages and customs, traditions or superstitions, the influences of climate or of scenery, nay, the influence of time itself, all go for nothing in Roman architecture. It suggests the idea of having been turned out by some great central factory and forwarded to the different parts of the Empire as need arose. Near the little village of Sbeitla, overlooking from the southernmost spurs of the Aurès the distant expanse of the Sahara, I once came quite unexpectedly upon the well-preserved remains of several of these Roman temples. In that land of clear skies and fierce heat, of palm-trees and tents and melancholy wastes of sand, one might expect the local genius to reveal itself. But no! these columns and architraves and friezes, these ugly composite capitals and the solid blocks of masonry would have been equally in place in the Roman Forum. Even the quality and tricks of workmanship, the use of the drill as a cheap and expeditious means for emphasising the sculpture, and the loading of the architraves with misplaced ornament, followed the Roman model. Nothing is to be learnt here of the history of Sbeitla or of its inhabitants. On all those matters of human character and human life of which architecture has usually so much to tell us, Roman architecture is dumb. It knows nothing of man and can tell us nothing of him. It can utter but one word, and that word is "Rome."

Here, then, is visibly at work in architecture the

same influence which was so strongly operative in life — the influence of routine and cut-and-dried official system. It was, of course, inevitable that the system which had been fatal to freedom in life should be fatal to it in art also; but what is particularly significant, and what is evident from the very plentifulness of these remains and their stringent uniformity of character, is the pride the people took in their own servitude. There was no hardship in the matter. The turning out of these endless, dull, acanthus-leaved capitals, which have since adorned or disfigured so many churches and mosques, evidently seemed to the sculptors of that age the only legitimate exercise of their trade. Art is the interpreter of life, and what could their art do more for them than express their entire acquiescence in the great administrative system which had so completely absorbed them? One may fairly conjecture that the arch, gateway or temple of Roman pattern must have been as coveted by the provincial towns of the Empire as the charters and privileges which attested their freedom were by our later English boroughs. This architecture, with its immense dullness and perpetual iteration is, in short, no symptom of the active tyranny of a despotic government, but of the passive tyranny of routine. It suggests not oppression but apathy.

It was upon this scene of unparalleled listlessness and torpor, over which officialism seemed to have woven a kind of enchantment, that the hordes of barbarism descended. In mass behind mass, Goth and Visigoth, and Ostrogoth and Hun, they gathered along the Eastern frontier like ridges of toppling

thunder-clouds at the close of a stifling day. They were the judgment Rome had heaped up for herself. The individual energy and initiative, which the Empire had slowly and carefully crushed out in its own citizens, now rose up from without to destroy it. It has been usual to credit these wild forefathers of ours with profound, mystical intuitions, to imagine their dark and troubled spirits lit with strange gleams from the supernatural world, and to suggest that they were visited in their frozen forests by impulses of deeper birth than fall to the lot of average humanity. Such may have been the case : indeed, their creative work, as soon as they undertook it, clearly proves that to some extent it was the case. But it is impossible to observe their movements and consider the effect of their actions without perceiving that the instincts which really in the main governed their conduct were by no means of a mystical or imaginative kind, but, on the contrary, intensely practical and to the purpose. Races of robust stock seem, like individuals of the same character, to go through a stage where virile efficiency is a sufficing ideal ; when the physical qualities of strength, fleetness, endurance, and the moral qualities of fortitude, courage and daring are the only ones worth having. The ideal is an almost purely physical one ; the only virtues acknowledged being those which tend to the free and effective display of physical efficiency. It was thus with the barbarians. Their life was action, and they valued exclusively, or at least primarily, such qualities as took effect in action. On the other hand, owing to this very restriction of ideas, it is obvious that the barbaric tribes must have been,

as indeed we know they were, altogether lacking in the power of organisation. In their migrations and campaigns we perceive the motion of hordes, not moved by disciplined authority, but by the unanimity of will of individuals all equally fierce and enterprising. So that we may say the influx of the new races into the Roman world was an attack on a system of organisation pure and simple by individual energy pure and simple.

What followed immediately was the total overthrow and smash-up of organisation. What followed by degrees was the re-establishment and re-starting of society on a new basis, the basis of individual initiative and the recognition of the rights it involved. The coming of the new races poured a fresh tide of vitality through the Empire; the old listlessness and torpor disappeared and free play for the individual became the ruling principle of life. This is the change which by-and-by is to transcribe itself with literal exactness into architecture. This tide of vitality is to be poured into column and arch, and we are to see a style still Roman and passive, transfigured, as here we see society, with startling suddenness, into a style expressing in every line a consuming energy.

But why, I can imagine the reader objecting, did not all this happen at once? When the life that had made Roman architecture what it was went, why did not the architecture go with it? When the new inspiration came in, why did not its appropriate architecture follow it? Why did half a dozen centuries elapse between the change in life and the change in architecture? An obvious, though not a

complete answer, is to be found in the fact that the barbarians were barbarians, and incapable therefore of putting their ideas into stone; but a moment's consideration of the nature of art itself will give us a reason which will perhaps lead us to something more definite.

Art is always a somewhat mysterious subject to deal with, but we may say this about it with some confidence, that it never manifests itself with certainty, and least of all in the shape of a great architectural style, until it has behind it a combined and united effort. It has in it something of the nature of a solution of life's problem. So far as the particular race which creates it is concerned, it is an answer to the question how to live. And for this very reason a great creative epoch in art never can occur where society is uncertain of itself and distracted in its aims. Art being the expression of a solution, it follows that the solution must be reached in life before it can be expressed in art. There have been very few great creative epochs in art. The Greeks, we may almost say, lived in such an epoch. But to the Greeks was given in their own way, a finite way perhaps, an extraordinarily clear perception of what, so far as they were concerned, life meant. The Italian Renaissance was another creative epoch, much less sure of itself, it is true, than the Greek, but still for the time being assured that in its novel sense of intellectual expansion lay the answer to life's problems. For the time being, Renaissance art did, more or less adequately, express the life of its age, and was therefore genuine.

But, further, all manifestations of art, even those

quite minor and subordinate ones which are more than fashions, but less than genuine creative epochs, demand an effort of a certain weight and unanimity to back them. For example, such movements as the Louis Quinze and Louis Seize periods bear witness to the influence which at that time was supreme in France, the influence of an idle and luxurious upper class detached from yet dominating the life of the nation. So, too, if the English aristocratic style of art of the same time was less thorough than the French, it was because the aristocratic ideal had less completely gained a hold upon English than upon French life. If such minor manifestations as these seem trivial when compared with the great art epochs, the reason is to be found in the fact that they interpret the life, not of a people but of a class. Their importance is less to the degree in which the conviction of a single section of society is weaker than the conviction of the whole of it. In each case the power and sincerity of the movement in art is determined by the extent to which the idea inspiring it has already possessed itself of life and penetrated life. An idea that has collected a great deal of life will inspire a robust art. An idea that has collected but a little life will inspire a feeble art. But always the idea must have established itself in life, and made good its hold upon life before it can manifest itself in art.

The reader will see why I emphasise this. In Gothic architecture the Northern nations have had their, so far, one and only great creative epoch. It deserves that title, for it had behind it, if ever art had, the conviction of a whole people. At the same

time the important thing to remember about it is that the idea it embodies, before it could translate itself into art, was bound to work itself out in life, and thoroughly possess itself of and penetrate life. Accordingly, what we are concerned with immediately is the working out of the Gothic ideal in life. That was the problem at which the new races were labouring for six centuries and more.

What that ideal was we know. In his "Democracy and Reaction" Mr. Hobhouse tells us that "what is spontaneous in a people [meaning by the phrase what is instinctive and primitive, a racial characteristic in them] is always the source of life, the well-spring of the secret forces which recruit jaded civilisation." What, in this sense, was spontaneous in the northern invaders and destined to recruit the jaded civilisation of the Empire was, as I have already pointed out, the intense personal vitality and energy in which the new-comers were so rich. Their mission to the West was to vindicate the primary truth that man himself is greater than any routine or system of his creation ; that he is to wield such systems, not they him. To a world lapped and lulled in routine they came to preach the rough gospel of individual initiative and freedom of action. This was their unconscious doctrine, and they preached it in their own straightforward way not ineffectively. So long as tearing up and clearing away was their cue, they had but to let themselves go. But to clear the ground is one thing : to rear and reap the crop another. It was the process of constructing a society and evolving a scheme of government containing as its vital principle their

own characteristic theory of free play for the individual that took the time.

The difficulties before them were enormous. For four or five centuries after their first appearance the elements of which the new society was to be composed were never at rest. Fresh influxes of barbarians force their way westward. No sooner does a settlement, a definite form, begin to emerge out of the chaos than it is broken up and swept away by a new combination and arrangement of its material. Moreover, the invaders had not only the refractoriness of society, but their own individual refractoriness to order. The very idea of an organic society presupposes in its members a certain power of generalising, of deducing abstract principles, of looking at life impersonally; powers which the Gothic races, in the first centuries of their settlement, certainly never possessed. Their ideal of an unobstructed physical energy would probably have meant in those early days, translated into a social principle, little more than the liberty to indulge in their own furious whims and passions. It had to go through a long course of tempering and refining before it could emerge as a principle of national freedom capable of forming a social bond.

Many forms of government came and went in the interval; many experiments in the ordering and casting of society were tried and failed. None of these experiments embodied the Gothic idea; none of them involved the unanimity necessary to back up a creative epoch in art. In what place and what time in Europe from the fifth to the twelfth centuries can we imagine such an epoch

occurring? What would it have had to say? What would have been the solution it would have proposed? Can we imagine it appearing during the reign of Charlemagne, that rule of military despotism over social anarchy? Or during any of the inflexible tyrannies that make up the history of the German Empire? Or in a Europe disintegrated by the feudal system and parcelled out into a number of estates, each one the theatre of miniature revolt and insurrection? Can we lay our finger anywhere during all these centuries on a society of which we can say that it knows its own mind, that it is animated by a definite conviction, that it has a message to deliver, a thought to utter? Evidently we cannot. During these centuries the social material is either in violent commotion, or, if settled or settling, has not yet found the law of its nature. It has nowhere yet put into life the principle it was charged with. Under such circumstances it would be obviously impossible for a great creative epoch in art to occur. The makings of such an epoch are non-existent.

We must pass on until we find these makings. There is not the least doubt as to the moment of their establishment. It is a trait of the Gothic spirit, as much in life as in art, that it is obvious and unmistakable in all its doings. The barbaric ideal was no profound and subtle affair, difficult to track and analyse, but an outward matter of action and politics. Its natural tendency was to work itself out into a social and political system safeguarding the rights and liberties of the individual, and its ability to do this is what marks its establishment in life.

The systems we have glanced at, of Charlemagne and others, were directed to checking this tendency. Their whole aim and object was to prevent the new ideal from working itself out into life at all. The tradition inspiring them as governments was the tradition of the extinct Empire.

It is not until we come to the national movements of the twelfth century that we find these obstructions overcome, and the Gothic thought victoriously asserting itself. The ideas of the common weal—of public right, of a king not despotic but as "grand juge de paix du pays," of liberty and justice as inalienable possessions of the people—now for the first time makes its appearance as a basis of government. It is the same old idea that the barbarians have always had, that they brought with them out of their forests, that Rome made way for. But it has expanded and grown, it has been adapted to the needs of a community, and it is expressed now, not in its raw form of individual licence, but as a social and national bond. In a word it has passed into life, it has a united effort behind it, it has become capable of artistic expression.

That expression followed soon enough; indeed, both these final acts, the assertion of nationality and the rise of the national style, are executed with all that decision which belongs to the Gothic character. Green tells us that the reign of Henry II. "marks the period of amalgamation when neighbourhood and traffic and intermarriage drew Englishmen and Normans rapidly into a single people." He adds, "a national feeling was then springing up before which the barriers of the older feudalism were to be

swept away." In referring the rise of nationalism to this time Green endorses the common decision of history. What is important to note is that its rise signified the recognition of public liberty as a governing principle. The liberty of the citizen was the foundation on which the European nations have been built. The "national feeling" was the consciousness of freedom as a bond of union among the people. There is no need to insist on this. The signs of developing nationality are unmistakable. The growth all over the country of free towns with self-won rights and liberties and charters, the rise of the influence of the commons, the blows aimed at the throttling influence of feudalism, are among the unmistakable signs that the struggle towards national unity was a struggle to assert the supremacy of the idea of freedom in life, and to safeguard the rights and liberties of the individual citizen. In short, the fact is, I think, clear that nationalisation was the final vindication of the Gothic ideal as a matter of life; so that if, having once possessed ourselves of the dominant characteristic of the barbaric races, we were asked to determine the moment when that characteristic established its control over life, we should have no hesitation, as we reviewed the succession of events from the fifth to the twelfth centuries, in laying our finger on the rise of national consciousness and saying, "This was the moment."

And in pointing to the moment when the Gothic ideal came to the front in life, we point also to the moment when it declared itself in art. The reign of Henry II., when the Gothic idea worked itself

out in life, lasted from 1154 to 1189. The new style of architecture in which that idea embodied itself dates from the same time, that is from the last twenty years of the century. Fergusson, accepting Canterbury as the first example, gives the year 1175 as the date of its first appearance. Mr. Russell Sturgis and other authorities give 1190; others 1185. Such minute discrepancies are immaterial. We shall be safe in referring the event to about the end of the reign of Henry II. We shall be safe, that is, in saying that the manifestation in art of the Gothic idea came directly it felt the weight and unanimity of the national impulse behind it.

But, I dare say it will be objected, Gothic did not have its birth in England: France was the nursery of the new style. Well, if we turn to France we shall find the same change in society occurring there and the same working out in life of the Gothic principle going on there as we see in England, only declaring itself, as it ought to do, rather earlier. French historians date the rise of national sentiment in France from the reign of Louis le Gros, just as confidently as Green dates it in England from the reign of Henry II. All the forces which brought about that development, the rise of free communes, the breaking up of feudalism, the change in the character of kingship from a military despotism to what Guizot calls "the guarantee and protector of public order, of universal justice and of the common interest," occurred a little earlier in France than in England. These things give to the reign of Louis le Gros its "caractère tout à fait nouveau," as Guizot describes it, among the hitherto existing govern-

ments of Europe, and incline French historians to date the history of France as a European nation from that time.

Accordingly we find this thought which the barbarians brought with them into the West of the sacredness of individual effort and its right to free play assuming control of life and constituting a national bond in France just in the same way as it does in England. France, however, takes precedence. The Gothic idea had its collective impulse behind it in France before it had in England, and consequently found its artistic expression there earlier than it did with us. Louis le Gros reigned from 1108 to 1137. French Gothic may be dated from the foundation of the Abbey of St. Denis in 1144.

But French Gothic is not only earlier than English; it is also purer. What France shows us is that the national idea is not to be thought of in connection with defined frontiers and the aspect of the completed national form. A nation is not a mere mass of territory of a certain extent and shape. This material definition is subsequent, and its ultimate form more or less accidental. The unifying influence is a common idea acting as a common bond, and in France we see this action working quite independently of territorial extent and dimensions. France does not attain the outward aspect and form of a nation until long after England has attained it; but the principle is active, the pull is being exerted, earlier in France than in England.

Thus at the time of our Gothic outburst in 1190 England was to all appearances an already united

nation, while fifty years earlier, when that outburst occurred in France, the French kingdom consisted only of a little nucleus round the Ile-de-France, a patch of territory not half as big as Ireland. Up to some thirty years before that date nothing had foretold that that particular spot of earth was cradling a great idea. The Capets had possessed hardly a semblance of authority over the feudal princes of the rest of the country, and their own independence was perpetually threatened by Norman aggression. It was Louis le Gros, as we have already seen, or rather, to be exact, it was his minister, Suger, who first joined the kingly office to that instinct which was then working merely as a social force among the rising communes, and thus turned it into a governing ideal and made a national bond of it. From that moment an influence of a new and decisive character emanates from this centre. The kingdom seems endowed suddenly with a power of assimilation. Its influence is magnetic, and it increases and extends itself not so much by conquest as by attracting the surrounding provinces to itself.

And what is further worth observing in this national extension in France is this, that although the same struggle to realise the same ideal was being carried on by the French people outside the national area as within it, yet nothing of this could take effect in art, or vent itself in appropriate architectural expression, until national concentration acted upon it. I have tried the experiment of tracking and gauging this extension of the national idea by drawing a map showing the order of the rise of Gothic

buildings. The first example occurs appropriately in the royal chapel at St. Denis, close to Paris. Then we have Notre Dame in Paris itself, followed by Senlis, Rheims, Chartres, Rouen ; and the movement spreads till we have some score of buildings registered, and our map looks like a target with the marks of shots scattered over it, all aimed at, and thickest nearest to the bull's-eye, Paris. What with political complications and the uncertainty of the date of buildings, it is not, perhaps, practicable to trace with exactness the national progress in the national style. But we can at least say with certainty that the new style in architecture had its birth in the very centre of the little national vortex, that it came into being with the national idea, and from this centre, hand in hand with the national idea itself, overflowed the neighbouring provinces.

French Gothic is, then, more a Gothic of the pure idea than English. English Gothic shows in itself something of those mixed influences of contact and blind force which went to make the nation, and which were due to the arbitrary mould within which the national impulse had to work. The English races were not drawn by a central attraction only. They were drawn, but they were hammered and pounded as well. And their national architecture shows this. Not only is it not so logical, not so penetrated by the spirit of energy proper to the style, not only does it fail to carry out the meaning it was meant to carry out with the completeness and absoluteness of French Gothic, but you cannot in the same way follow its progress from the centre and observe it keeping pace with the spread of the idea. You can

say of English Gothic that it arose with, or immediately after, the sense of nationality, following it as sharply and abruptly as the report follows the explosion. And perhaps this is enough to say. But with French Gothic you can say more. You can say that it springs into being with the sense of nationality at a given point, and that, as the sense of nationality spreads, as the struggling, unruly and distracted social elements gather round it and concentrate and combine into an ever-enlarging homogeneous body, so, too, Gothic extends its sphere of operations, everywhere answering to, and made possible by, the bond of national cohesion. The conclusion pointed to is that just in so far as the new races could work out their ideal as a matter of life by making a national bond of it, was it granted to them to give it utterance in its appropriate architecture.

Moreover, if we interpret Gothic architecture in this sense, as the embodiment in its moment of triumph of the great thought with which the new races had invigorated the old world, we shall the more readily sympathise with the extraordinary popular zeal and enthusiasm which the new style excited and understand the rapidity with which it established itself. Added to much that is unique in it, Gothic has this, that it was built, so one may almost say, without the help of architects. In spite of the appalling difficulties to be overcome, and the daring innovations involved, any one could build Gothic. The people needed no teaching in the style. They seemed already to know all about it, and the architecture consequently rose, not slowly and by degrees,

but spontaneously, with one impulse, rather like the uplifting of some tremendous chorus than the slow setting of stone upon stone.

All this, I say, seems natural and intelligible if we regard the style as the visible presentment of the people's own profoundest convictions and deepest racial characteristics. That art comes easily which expresses the thought that has thoroughly penetrated life. It is there the difficulty lies—not in the artistic expression, but in the accumulation of the weight of conviction behind it. The obstructions in the way of Gothic were overcome and its accomplishment made easy and inevitable, not by the builders and masons of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but by a score of preceding generations of our rugged forefathers who held by the instinct of their race, and, in the face of many obstacles, worked their thoughts slowly out into a practicable scheme of life. These were the real Gothic architects. The thought that had attained to such a hold on life as theirs had fell into stone almost of its own accord. The resulting architecture was the expression of a solution already arrived at.

I cannot therefore but think that this extraordinary transformation—the rise of Gothic out of the old Romanesque style—is an event which admits of a more satisfying explanation than is to be derived from a mere examination of the material used, or the laws by which that material is disposed. The fascination of architecture, as of all art, lies in its application to life. Nor is this a difficult or subtle operation, or one involving any special technical knowledge. Any one who compares the vigorous

vitality of an English borough of the thirteenth century with the torpor and apathy of a town of the Roman Empire, will have presented to his mind at a single view the full effect of the change wrought by the new idea which the Gothic races had introduced into life. He will easily perceive that, though this idea might work itself out in many ways and many directions, yet always the root was the same, and strikes back to that ideal of personal energy which the new races had burst into the West with centuries before. But any one, too, who looks from the contrast in life to the contrast in architecture must see that the same change is embodied here, that the listless apathy of the Roman town is embodied in the buildings it erected, while the personal, human energy of the Gothic races breathes in every line of their own peculiar style. To realise that connection, to perceive the intimate relationship between the character of an age and the forms into which it casts itself, is to infuse into the subject of architecture a vitality of interest which no technical explanations can obscure for a moment. Between the forms and shapes of architecture and the instincts and impulses of human character there exists a natural affinity or aversion according as those forms and shapes embody or fail to embody such human instincts. To search for the origin of forms, as forms, is a wearisome and sterile task. Let us rather search for the dominant thought of an age, and accept that as the origin of the appropriate forms in which it will inevitably clothe itself. The greater the creative epoch and the stronger its convictions, the more easily and irresistibly will it seize upon the forms appropriate

to such convictions and the less need have we of scientific explanation or research.

I would add one word of qualification. Do not let the reader suppose that in what I have written I imagine myself to have "accounted for" and exhaustively explained Gothic architecture. That is far from being the case. One whole side of the subject, the deep devotional and contemplative instinct which runs through mediæval life, so curiously contrasting with its vigorous energy of action, which expressed itself in life in the yearning after monastic seclusion and in art in the solemn glowing tints of the stained glass of the period—this side of the subject I have not in the present volume even touched upon. All I have aspired here to do is to take what seems to me the most characteristic and vital trait in the Gothic epoch and to show in what degree that motive inspires Gothic architecture. It is this motive that we English people, if we would rightly understand the history of our own country, have such deep need to appreciate.

At present it is not appreciated at all. Professor Simpson, in his recently written work on architecture, remarks that the word Gothic "conveys nothing as to the origin of the style and is meaningless." Professor Simpson is a great authority on this subject, and has as much to do as any one, probably, with dictating the ideas and theories which are accepted at the present time. Moreover, he does not in this case argue or suggest, but pronounces a final verdict. He has so many authorities with him that he can afford to be summary.

As against this I ask the reader to look at the

facts for himself. What was the Gothic contribution to life? We use the word Gothic, of course, as the obvious and convenient appellation for the whole succession of germanic barbarians which Rome's declining strength admitted into the West. What was the contribution to life of those races? To answer that question we must look first at society as it was under the Roman Empire and next at society as it emerged from the Dark Ages and after the Gothic influence had acted upon it. The difference between the two is the Gothic contribution.

Let the reader compare them. On the one hand he sees a community swayed and controlled by a huge official system; a community in which the last traces of popular liberty have evaporated and upon which a spirit of absolute lethargy and inertia has settled. On the other hand he sees a community instinct and glowing with local and individual initiative; a community in which the popular sentiment, consolidated in guilds and boroughs, asserts against all forms of official or class tyranny its free right to self-government. This human vitality translated into political action is one with the instinct for liberty, for my right of free action, of doing and being and saying the thing I will, is identical with my resolve to resist any form of tyrannous control and to assert my right to be self-governing. This is the deepest instinct of our race, and that in it which is characteristic. It is this which animates English history and gives it a dennite purpose and aim, and no one, failing to grasp this fact, can be said to be in

touch with that instinct and with that aim. This I call the Gothic contribution to life, and will any one who watches with his mind's eye the hardy vitality of mediæval citizenship and contrasts it with the political lethargy of the Roman colony deny the justice of the definition?

But equally, will any one recall the styles of architecture in which these two social states have expressed themselves and question that in these styles we have the very attributes of each society embodied in stone? What expression of the ponderous routine of the Roman system could be more appropriate than the mechanically reiterated features of Roman architecture? What expression of the mediæval vigour and virility could be more lifelike than the almost fiercely energetic features of Gothic? Do not the minster and the cathedral palpitate with the very same vitality which is animating the boroughs in which they arise? If the reader still doubts let him trace the connection in detail. He will find that not only does the mediæval style embody all that the Goths possessed and all that the Romans lacked, not only does it arise in Europe punctually at the moment when the Gothic ideal obtained control of life, not only is it participated in by whole populations with an eagerness which marks it as the response to a racial instinct: but also he will find that it keeps touch always with the barbaric element in the population, that it is strong where that element is strong, weak where that element is weak, and non-existent where that element is non-existent. Where the seed is sown the crop springs, and wherever the

Gothic race has settled there and there only does the Gothic style arise.

And yet in face of facts like these the professors of architecture assure us that the word Gothic conveys nothing as to the origin of the style and is meaningless. I leave the matter to the reader's consideration. In the next chapter I shall have to speak of certain aspects of mediæval life and art not hitherto touched on. But these will not be of a kind to weaken the conclusion arrived at so far. The difference between the Roman colony and the mediæval borough is the Gothic contribution to life, and Gothic architecture is the embodiment of that contribution in stone.

NOTE.—It is desirable to mark clearly the difference in principle between the Greek treatment of the arch as illustrated in S. Sophia and the Gothic treatment of it. To the Greeks it was a feature in arcuated construction, of which kind of construction the dome is the inevitable crown and summary. To the Gothic races the arch was a delight in itself because of its inherent activity and energy. It was this characteristic rather than the idea of arcuated construction as a whole which they set themselves to develop. Their treatment has nothing of the Greek intellectual thoroughness, but within its own limits is carried out with extraordinary vigour.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RISE OF THE RENAISSANCE

The vertical and horizontal styles of architecture : What they stand for : Energy idealised in the twelfth century : Chivalry, ballad poetry, crusades, Gothic architecture : Break-up of the system before advance of intellect : The classic note in architecture : Its breadth : Correspondence of the quality with classic intellectualism : Spaciousness of classic thought and classic buildings : Survival of this trait among Latin races : Italy's reception of the Gothic style : Consistency of her criticism : She insists on horizontal expansion : Rejects Gothic as inadequate to intellectual ideas : Revives classic proportions as more appropriate : The case of France : Intellectual awakening there, too, followed by adoption of spacious forms : The Renaissance in England : Its insular character : The expansion or contraction of architecture expresses the play of the mind of Europe

PRACTICALLY all the architecture of the West is traceable to two main sources—to the mediæval source or the classic. Under classic we include not Greek and Roman only, but those round-arched styles which, under the general title of Romanesque perpetuated Roman tradition in Europe. By mediæval we mean simply Gothic in its various manifestations. The main mass and body of European architecture is made up of these two. There are found here and there touches of Byzantine, the architecture of colour; there are here and there found touches of Saracenic, itself belonging to the same family as Gothic. There may even occur an

occasional trace of Egyptian, Persian, or Chinese; but all these are the merest experiments, and in no way form an integral part of our architecture. They might all be deducted and never missed. Of the churches and buildings we see round us in our daily walks, all of them, practically speaking, and every feature and detail belonging to each one of them, launch us into one or other of the two main currents which have their springs in the mediæval or classic age. Moreover, intermixed as they often are, these streams never really blend. The forms of which the rival styles are composed may be forced into unnatural association, but they never combine in effect; they are based on opposite, apparently irreconcilable, principles. Mediæval architecture is based on the idea of vertical expansion, classic architecture on the idea of lateral expansion. The desire of the one is to rush up; of the other to spread. The salient trait in the architectural history of the last seven centuries has been the feud that has raged between these two principles.

What is interesting to observe, also, is that this feud seems to be something more than a quarrel over technical forms. On both sides there appear again and again the same favourable or unfavourable circumstances. Conditions which we learn to distinguish as favourable to the vertical principle precede or announce its arrival, and in the same way conditions favourable to the lateral principle prepare its way for it in the world. These conditions consist in the character of epochs or of races. There are epochs in which the spirit of the age fosters one or other of these principles. There are

races which, through all ages, have a natural affinity for one or the other of them. This being so, can we, by following these indications, by observing the conditions favourable to these principles, which recur with their recurrence, and on which they feed and prosper, affix something of a human character to the architectural principles themselves? Can we say they stand for such and such a tendency in human nature, and prove our conclusion from historical evidence?

It is recorded of Keats by his friend Edward Holmes that in his childhood he greatly preferred fighting to reading. "He would fight any one, morning, noon and night, his brother among the rest. It was meat and drink to him." A year or two later, when he was fourteen or fifteen, we find him so "suddenly and completely absorbed in reading" that, according to Charles Cowden Clarke, "he never willingly had a book out of his hand." Perhaps in Keats's case the change came with unusual abruptness, but still it is more or less a normal one. With most people the early days, when action and love of adventure are all in all, are marked off with some distinctness from the later days of experience and thought. Energy a boy possesses, and imagination; but not intellect. Boyhood feels but it does not reason. Consequently all its spiritual intuitions and ideals, instead of feeding thought, are translated direct into terms of action. Romance, love, friendship, ambition, weave themselves in boyhood into dreams of splendid deeds. The dreamer is always a doer: he sails the sea a smuggler or pirate; he explores tropic archipelagoes or virgin

backwoods with Mayne Reid and Fenimore Cooper. His heroes in fiction are Lancelot, Boisguilbert, and Amyas Leigh. In real life they are the captains of his cricket and football elevens, and an uncle who was wounded in the Boer war. It is a complete philosophy, but fugitive—complete because based on an intelligible view of life, fugitive because it ignores a main principle in human nature. Later that principle comes into play. Experience and observation nourish the power of thinking. To body and soul is added mind; life grows wider, deeper, fuller; action can no longer express it, and that it should ever have seemed capable of expressing it is recognised as the arch-delusion of boyhood.

In something the same way there are epochs in the progress of races that seem to correspond in their ideals and limitations to this stage of boyhood—epochs when the main theme of life is action, and when those accomplishments and qualities are most valued which lead to success in action. Such ages have their own conception of what is noble and becoming in conduct and manners, and their own interpretation of art, and poetry, and religion. But all these represent, when analysed, aspects of the view of life common to the age, the view, namely, that all ideas, however beautiful, or holy, or romantic, can be expressed in terms of action; that the brave heart, the strong arm, the tough lance, are the fittest instruments of religion, and love, and honour, and supply the only deeds fit to be sung and celebrated. In their concurrence these manifestations combine to depict a life complete and self-consistent because

based on a distinct principle—a life in which all the traits are in agreement and seem animated with a similar character. But the duration of such an epoch is limited. Steadily and surely it is undermined by the influence of thought, which introduces into life ideals which action can no longer satisfy or even express. When this occurs the whole fabric of achievement in which the earlier phase of life had embodied itself cracks and splits asunder, and men march through a crumbling *débris* of old customs and beliefs to a more complicated, perhaps, but more ample existence.

The nature of the limitations of mediævalism is apparent directly we fix our attention on the age itself. If we draw back from the life of this period and survey it as a whole, we perceive that it is in a sense complete. In reaching the stage of crusades and chivalry, of romance, poetry and Gothic architecture, the principle underlying mediæval life had reached its maturity. This was its time of fruition. A stage of human progress is here rounded off and completed. The coming stage will not perpetuate the old endeavours and ideas. Crusades, chivalry, romance poetry, the Gothic style, will none of them be permanently established. All will pass away, for they represent a principle which is played out. The determination of the mediæval age to translate the loftiest ideals into terms of action must seem to an age that has learnt to think an illusion. It is not that we have lost the old ideals, it is that the mediæval expression of them has become inadequate. Honour, courtesy, loyalty, courage, all the makings of chivalry, still subsist among us; but

chivalry in its mediæval shape is extinct, and it is so because the splinterings of lances and overthrowing of adversaries no longer seem a satisfying expression of those ideals. In the same way a St. Louis of to-day would find no outlet for his piety in slaying Saracens. He would conduct his crusade by his own fireside and the paynim he would endeavour to overthrow would be his own gross or selfish instincts. Chivalry and the crusades are, in a word, the characteristics of an age of action, not an age of thought. They are lacking in the inwardness and depth which thought brings, and are sure to die out as soon as thought shall have revealed their inadequate interpretation of the ideas they have undertaken to express. So also it is with romance poetry. That poetry, like the life it portrays, has great energy and vigour; but, like the life it portrays, it lacks depth. The descriptions are literal only; it deals with the appearances and outsides of things; it does not enter into their real nature; it is deficient in thought. To pass from the poetry of Luc de Gast or Walter Map to the poetry of Milton or Wordsworth is to pass from a poetry that does not think to a poetry that does. Romance poetry, from its directness and vigour and historical interest, may still command a fitful attention; but as poetry, as nourishment for mind and character, it has lost its value. It has died of the malady inherent in the very life of an age that undertakes to translate ideals into terms of action, its fatal inability to think. If, however, this is so, it is evident that Gothic must share in the general deficiency. Itself the typical child of the mediæval

age, it is clear that if the mediæval age was as poor in thought as it was rich in energy—and I do not know how any one who studies the age can doubt this, or what meaning, if they do doubt it, they can possibly attach to the Renaissance—then the same shortcoming must infect Gothic architecture. Only what can be got out of life can be put into art. The energy which characterises mediæval life we find in the architecture. If lack of thought equally characterises that life we shall find that in the architecture too.

It is the consideration of how this deficiency of the age affects Gothic architecture which will bring us in touch with our second great architectural principle, the principle of lateral expansion. We referred just now to the way in which the upward-rushing lines of Gothic embody the spirit of mediæval energy. But a certain structural limitation necessarily attends that impulse. The reader will see that the more steeply lines rush up the more energy they express, while the more they droop and incline to the horizontal, the more the energy dies out of them and the more passive they become. Equally obvious is it that the steeper the lines the less space they span, while the more they droop the more space they span. Accordingly it follows that comparative narrowness of proportions is an integral and essential quality in Verticle architecture. This, structurally speaking, is the limitation on which the positive achievement of Gothic is founded. Expansion vertically is granted to it because expansion laterally is denied. When we stand within a Gothic nave it is the expressed intention of the

building, the upward rush, that draws our eyes. But this effect is not obtained without loss. Mr. Berenson speaks in one of his essays of the "noble spaciousness" of the classic interiors, and he also notes the seeming inability of northerners to appreciate this beauty. No one certainly will accuse the interior of Westminster Abbey of noble spaciousness. The nave recalls some narrow chasm among gaunt sea cliffs. The aisles are still narrower corridors. The walls and piers so press upon one as to give the feeling of being gripped in a stone vice. Noble spaciousness, whatever it may be worth, is here quite lacking. It is the price we have paid for all this energy.

What then is this noble spaciousness worth? In other words, what does lateral expansion stand for? It is not a very difficult question to answer because though the spacious style has been used to serve a number of base and worldly ends, there is still about those times in history when it has come nearest perfection a general similarity in character and ideas which cannot be mistaken. The central type of the lateral style is, of course, the Doric temple. Perfected and refined during several centuries, the Doric temple is admitted to have attained its utmost expressiveness in the last half of the fifth century B.C., and in Athens. This half-century was marked by the rebuilding of the Parthenon and by the presence in Athens of such names as Socrates and Plato, Thucydides and Herodotus, Phidias and Miron, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes, which have made the age of Pericles unrivalled in the world's history for the variety and

perfection of its culture. Whatever else it is, then, the Doric Temple, the supreme example of horizontal architecture, is essentially the product of an age of thought. It is the product of an age just as fully charged with thought as the mediæval age is charged with energy.

And also, this Greek culture is remarkable not only for its variety and perfection but for the distinct ideal it laid before itself. No one has written more sympathetically of late years about the Greeks than Professor Butcher; and Professor Butcher points out in many places clearly enough what this ideal of Greek culture was. It was the equal and harmonious development of the human mind. The expert and specialist had no part in the Greek system. "With all their restless curiosity, their insatiable love of knowledge, they had no respect for mere erudition." "Wealth of thought, not wealth of learning, was the thing they coveted." "Extensive reading, the acquisition of facts, the storing of them in the memory," all this, unless it is accompanied by "enlargement of mind," unless it "fits men for the exercise of thought," unless it leads on to "mental completeness and grasp," is material wasted. It was the study of the Greek to see all things in their relation to other things and in their relation to life; and to do this, that even and complete development of all his faculties was necessary which was the aim of his whole training and education.

Moreover, this system of culture was not the Greek system only, or did not remain Greek only. Handed down by Athens to Rome, it became the

note of classic culture generally. When, to this day, we use the words *classic* and *classical,* it is this system we have in our mind. We do not imply necessarily a special and particular knowledge, but the capacity for seeing a thing in its relation to other things and to life. We imply that "enlargement of mind," that "mental completeness" which is capable of a wide survey, and, also, we imply the manner that corresponds, the moderation, calmness, and lucidity which are the characteristics of the classic style.

And, since men work in stone much as they work in other things, we shall not be surprised to find that this classic way of thinking imaged itself in an architecture like to itself. Mr. Berenson's phrase "noble spaciousness" might indeed be transferred with perfect propriety from the classic architecture which occasioned it to the classic mind which occasioned the architecture. Of course, it is true that classic architecture, as developed under Rome, not only, as has been previously pointed out, fell into a dull groove of iteration, but was disfigured by all sorts of vulgarities and a vast amount of ostentation and pride, and was artistically perhaps of very small account indeed. I am not attempting an estimate of that architecture. I am merely indicating the one thing of value which, in spite of its many bad qualities, it really did possess. Its one fine quality consisted in its spacious and ample proportions, proportions in which are measured for us the qualities of the classic mind, and which produce upon us something of the same calming effect which contact with the classic mind itself produces.

I need not here dwell upon the preliminary phases which developed the Augustan age. The Mediterranean Empire of Cæsar was the larger stage prepared for it; the spread of Greek influence and ideas was its inspiration. As in politics the conservative, or distinctively Italian, element resisted the cosmopolitanism of the new Empire, so in literature and thought the local standard and local scheme of culture resisted the Hellenic widening influence. The triumph of general ideas, though under conditions of political servitude which first enfeeble and then corrupt them, is declared in the years leading up to and culminating in the age of Augustus. It is declared in two ways, ways which, we shall perhaps see by-and-by, are inseparable. In the first place it is declared in an outburst of intellectual activity remarkable not so much for individual genius, though individual genius (Virgil, Livy, Ovid, Horace) is rife enough, as for a general and universal interest in thought and study, an interest which shows itself in such signs as the founding of libraries, not public only, but private, not in Rome only but in country towns and villas, in the forming of literary clubs and societies, and in the honour and consideration in which the art of literature was held by all from Augustus himself downward. In the second place, it is shown in the outburst of building activity by which Rome in this age was transfigured, and which itself is distinguished architecturally by magnificence in part, but, more fundamentally, by a sense of order and stateliness and a love of broad and ample proportions.

Henceforth we find this sense of breadth and

amplitude established as the essential principle of architecture. It becomes architecture's constant and unfailing attribute, the quality in classic architecture which goes with that quality we call classic in thought and literature. We find it transferred to the early Christian basilicas, and, shrunken and diminished, feebly surviving as a structural motive in various forms of Romanesque down even to the twelfth century. Then Gothic, the style of energy, killed it, and there followed an epoch when the old classic breadth was absent from the architecture, as it was absent from the mind, of the age. But though apparently dead it was destined to a renaissance, and it is to that Renaissance, attesting as it does the significance of the horizontal principle in architecture, that we will now turn.

Mr. Symonds has given an account of the Renaissance and of the causes which led up to it which I cannot but think in some respects misleading. It is his conviction that the Renaissance is an act of emancipation. To this word he returns again and again. "The emancipation of the reason for the modern world," the "emancipation of the reason of mankind," "the work of intellectual emancipation for the rest of Europe," and so on. The power that had hitherto held mankind in a state of "mental bondage" was, according to Mr. Symonds, the Church. He draws a terrible picture of the Church sitting like an incubus on the intellect of the Middle Ages. "The mental condition of the Middle Ages was one of ignorant prostration before the idols of the Church"; and the Church itself had attained to such an ascendancy that the age

might be said "to look at life through a cowl." This theory of the mediæval mind, prostrated and priest-ridden, and ot the Renaissance as the fairy prince setting it free, is the keynote of Mr. Symonds's analysis; but I do not in the least see how either proposition will stand examination. A disinterested student of the Middle Ages will find plenty of ignorance, no doubt; but he will find very little prostration. He will find that the age looked at life more often through a steel visor than through a cowl. He will find that the barons of the twelfth century needed no instruction in the art of managing their priests, and that the exhortations of the Church were only so far attended to as they happened to chime with the humour of the age. Mr. Symonds seems to have mistaken a state of mental insensibility for a state of mental bondage. The northern races in the Middle Ages had all the intellectual emancipation they needed or could have had. If thought was lacking, it was not because it was strangled but because the thinking age had not yet been reached. When it arrived, the age moved forward, carrying, as it always does with perfect comfort, its Church and priests along with it. The Renaissance, as I understand it, was not an act of emancipation but of natural development; the succession in its due time and season of the age of thought to the age of action.

In tracing the rise of Renaissance art in Europe the facts we have to bear in mind are these: We have already identified the Gothic style of architecture with the northern racial temperament. It was the inherent energy and individual initiative of the

northern races which infused both a new vitality into the old Latin society and a new vitality into the old Latin architecture. We have therefore in Gothic a style commensurate with the northern influence, and which we shall naturally expect to find, and find only, where that influence is dominant in life. On the other hand in classic architecture we have made acquaintance with a principle of a quite different kind, the principle of horizontal development, which we recognise as expressing the ruling classic characteristic, namely, free play of intellect.

Now what, if these definitions are sound, must be the tendency of Renaissance art? For one thing, the Renaissance was essentially an intellectual movement; for another, a Latin not a Gothic race took the lead in it. Our thoughts turn to Italy. Italy was never Gothicised. She received a leaven, or top-dressing, as it were, of the northern racial element, but she remained in the bulk of her population essentially Latin. Therefore if our reading of Gothic art be right, Italy will resist the importation of Gothic forms of architecture. On the other hand, Italy was the birthplace of the modern intellectual movement. Therefore, if our reading of the horizontal expansion as applied to building be just, Italy will instinctively turn to the horizontal principle as a means of self-expression.

Now let us see how this works out. What is apparent at a glance is that all those modes of utterance to which the north had recourse, chivalry and romance poetry, crusades and Gothic architecture, fell in Italy quite flat, or at least only fizzled fitfully here and there in the northern parts of the

country where the admixture of Gothic blood was strongest. We will not follow these manifestations here except so far as they concern architecture, but the reception given in Italy to Gothic architecture is particularly worth noticing, partly for the light it throws on the meaning of horizontal and vertical proportion, and partly because it really belongs and leads up to the Renaissance movement itself.

In the first place, then, we find that, immeasurably ahead of the northern nations as Italy was in general matters of art, she had to be instructed in a style peculiarly their own. The towns of the north were the first to receive the style, and the earliest examples were built by German or English architects. Fergusson selects the church of St. Andrea at Vercelli as "perhaps the first Italian edifice into which the pointed arch was introduced." It was begun as early as 1219 by the Cardinal Guala Bicchieri, who had been Legate in England, and who brought with him an English architect to introduce the new style. However, in spite of this, "with the plan all influence of the English architect seems to have ceased and the structure is in purely Italian style." As to the general character of this style, "Italy, though a fashion rather than a taste had introduced a partial approximation to the forms of northern architecture, never really loved or even understood it." Fergusson dwells on this idea of its being a style misunderstood. It "is a style copied without understanding." It "displays ignorance of the true Gothic feeling." It was "a feeble imitation, copying a few Gothic forms without realising their spirit." This is the usual northern estimate of Italian Gothic.

But these Italian buildings show more method in their treatment of the style than commonly belongs to mere ignorance. What they seem to exhibit is not ignorance so much as dislike of the Gothic feeling. They contain a criticism which, whether justifiable or not, is at any rate consistent and intelligible and worth a moment's consideration.

The Cathedral of Florence, called by Fergusson "by far the greatest and most perfect example of Italian Gothic," may be taken as representative of the style. The measures taken here for counteracting the northern influence are adopted more or less without exception in every Gothic building in Italy. These measures are of two kinds. In the first place the vertical tendency, the upward rush, in which the energy of Gothic primarily resides, is peremptorily checked. In fully developed Gothic the craving of all the lines to soar receives its expression in the use made of the clustered shafts. These shafts are really, as I have pointed out, bundles of stalks projected through their capitals in every direction ; so that, looking up the length of a Gothic nave, one is impressed by the great array of lines springing in clusters from the pavement and guiding the eye without let or check to the apex of the roof. This is the feature which pre-eminently exhibits the energetic character of this style, which excites most powerfully the ecstasy of its admirers, and which is most stubbornly resisted by Italian architects. In the Florentine cathedral the aisle piers are formed of massive, engaged pilasters, four square. Their flat faces have none of the fiery energy of the Gothic cluster and they are surmounted

by heavy and elaborate capitals. Above these, however, an indication of the Gothic idea is given by the appearance of vaulting pilasters. These commence the ascent of the nave wall, but before they have got far they are stopped by the imposition of other big capitals of no use structurally and merely serving as blows dealt at the vertical principle. Once more the pilasters emerge and crawl painfully a few feet higher, when their career is finally quenched by a projecting gallery, formed of heavy corbels supporting a massive stone balcony which runs entirely round the building, remorselessly splitting it in half.

And now, the vertical principle being thus effectually disposed of, the Italian architect turns his attention to those ideas of his own which he wishes to substitute for it. That powerful horizontal line of the balcony which we have seen dealing the vertical tendency its *coup de grace*, is the line he loves, and gives the clue to all his efforts which are now directed to developing the idea of lateral expansion to the utmost. Inside the Florentine cathedral is opposed to every northern example by its enormous width. Though not so long as Westminster Abbey, it wants but a few feet of being twice as wide, and this width is accentuated and apparently greatly increased by the enormous span of the aisle arcades. The reader is aware that narrow arches and close-set shafts add to the appearance of height and detract from the appearance of width, whereas shafts far apart and spreading arches detract from height and add to width; the inclination of the eye being to travel always in the

direction of the lines given it to run on. The Florentine aisles consist of only four arches, and these span about the same distance that fourteen Westminster arches would reach. By these means the naturally great width of the interior is accentuated, to such a degree indeed that all Gothic feeling is totally eliminated from it and in its general character it much more recalls an early basilica than the style of the North.

Outside we should find the same idea insisted on. We should find the powerful, vertical lines of the northern buttresses toned down or obliterated, and in place of them the long level outline of the nave, underlined by heavy horizontal cornices, giving the idea of lateral expansion. Many other features of the same kind might be instanced. I will content myself with mentioning the dome, which, in Italian Gothic, takes the place of the northern spire. Externally no feature embodies the northern feeling so powerfully as the spire. It seems to have been designed as a corrective to the necessarily more or less horizontal aspect of the building as seen from without. It was sure, therefore, to be peculiarly obnoxious to Italian taste, and in place of it we have the wide and ample dome victoriously asserting the old idea of lateral expansion. These modifications are, it must be remembered, typical. All Italian Gothic is more or less altered from the northern original, and it is the invariable purpose of all these alterations to substitute lateral expansion for vertical. The Italian treatment of the style is, in short, perfectly consistent, and is not to be regarded as meaningless or merely a bad imitation. It con-

tains a quite definite criticism which, whether just or unjust, has purpose and significance.

Further, it will be seen from this that the Italian Gothic style may almost be said to form part of the Italian Renaissance itself. At least it is the appropriate introduction to it. Any one who had observed the Italian modification of Gothic would easily conjecture what the general character of Italy's native style would be when her time came to produce it. He would see that she was persistently hankering after breadth in architecture, and that no exhortations, however earnest, had power to detach her from it. He would accordingly be able to assert with confidence that the Italian style proper, when it came, would be as purely a horizontal style as Gothic was vertical. It is the more important to notice this foreshadowing of the character of Renaissance because we are apt sometimes to imagine that, at least in architecture, it adopted the forms it did merely because they were classic forms, a part of the furniture of that Roman life which the Italian imagination found so captivating. But it is certain that Italy could no more have taken from Rome a style that did not suit her than she could take from the North a style that did not suit her. If she borrowed the Roman style of architecture, it was because that style said pretty nearly exactly what she herself had it in her mind to say; and that this is so is shown by those systematic experiments in the horizontal which we have been watching in Italian Gothic. One is tempted sometimes to wish that the earth had lain a little deeper on the Roman ruins, and that Italy had been left to evolve her new

architecture for herself. An original style produced by the Renaissance, Michelangelo working architecturally in the ideas of the period, would have been vastly more interesting to posterity than the reproduction of stereotyped classic formulas. At the same time there can be no doubt that in general character this Italian style would have resembled the older classic. It would at least have resembled it to the extent that it would have been strictly a style of horizontal development.

And this it would have been because the mental conditions underlying it were similar to the mental conditions underlying the old classic styles. The ideal of all-round culture which formed the scheme and ground-plan of classic thought, is precisely the ideal which we find reasserting itself as the scheme of Renaissance thought. Here lies no doubt the secret of the Renaissance as an inspiration. We are sometimes inclined to wonder, as we trace back our various systems of thought, our philosophy and theology, our sciences and arts, our discoveries and inventions, and all the fruits of modern reason, to their common starting-point in the Renaissance, that results which have since loomed so large should have had, save in the one matter of art, such small beginnings. All knowledge seems to flow from the Renaissance, yet in the Renaissance itself there is but little knowledge. But as we study the play of mind of that age the wonder passes. The truth appears that Italy's mission in the Renaissance was not to achieve but to stimulate. She plucked no fruit of knowledge, but she taught men to climb the tree. And this she did by infecting them with her

own joy in thinking, her disinterested love of ideas, her vivid, sensuous delight in the mere movement and play of the mind. There are other schemes of culture perhaps, but this is the scheme that brings joy. The happiness which we recognise as belonging to the Renaissance is the happiness which springs, not from results achieved by study or reflection, but from the sensation of the activity of the mind itself.

This in the Renaissance is the classic note. Its actual achievement, as compared to that of Athens or Rome, was slight. Nevertheless, between the ages of Pericles, Augustus and Lorenzo there is a profound intellectual affinity, arising from the love of disinterested thinking, common to all three. If we realise this affinity we shall not fall into the delusion of supposing that the Renaissance adopted classic architecture, together with classic fashions and ideas of all kinds, merely for the reason that it hailed from Rome. The broad arcades and ample vast interiors of Renaissance palaces and churches are the natural lodging of minds that dislike barriers and obstacles of all kinds, and have an aversion for everything cramped and narrow. The spirit of the Renaissance age needed such lodging, and such a one had been long in preparation. Out of the most refractory material the attempt had been made and the determination expressed to establish in Italy the architecture of spaciousness. The style of Imperial Rome was seized because it met this need. It is easy to exaggerate the importance of the affectation and erudition of the style. its daubs of acanthus foliage,

its trophies and orders and such other bric-à-brac. These are accidents: the expression merely of Italy's effusive gratitude to a style that gave her what she wanted. Let us think rather of the main proportions, those "symphonies of space" as Mr Berenson calls them, which produce on the senses "the tonic and ennobling effect of classical music." This is what stands for the real, interior relationship between classic Rome and the Renaissance, the relationship of mind and intellect.

And now if the reader, glancing back over the course of our argument, and having followed the fortunes of the horizontal principle from its great days in the classic age through its struggle with the vertical principle to its triumph in the Renaissance, having noted, too, the mental conditions that inevitably attend and announce it, is inclined to recognise a connection between spaciousness in architecture and a free play of the mind, let me ask him to follow onward the course of history and observe what further justification this connection receives from events. The Italian Renaissance did not long remain Italian. The love of thinking which was revived by the old race was by-and-by developed by the new. When this happened the new race, having attained more or less to the same intellectual standpoint, began to reach out towards Italian architecture exactly as Italy, a century or two earlier, had reached out towards classic architecture. There came about a counter-revolution in the northern style. As the style of ideas had been killed by the style of energy, so now the style of energy went down in turn before the style of ideas.

Everywhere, keeping pace with the flow of ideas, went the proportions that could properly house them; but not everywhere do we find those proportions spreading with the same quickness or the same completeness. The old style struggled against the new, and sometimes the struggle was long, obstinate and doubtful; sometimes shorter, and, in the result, decisive. If now we keep one eye on the spread of ideas and the other on the spread of horizontal architecture, we shall find that in the architecture we have a kind of register of the thinking aptitude of Europe. We shall find that the accessibility or inaccessibility of various parts of Europe at various times to ideas is measured for us in the readiness of architecture in those parts to expand, or in its refusal to expand.

By nature a lover of ideas and prompt to entertain them, France, more readily than other nations, entered into the spirit of the new style. But even in France there was a long transition period extending perhaps, as Fergusson thinks, almost to the succession of Louis XIV. in 1642. That period is covered in two steps. During its first half the tendency was to maintain Gothic outlines and proportions, but to fill in with classic ornament and detail. During the second half, when Gothic was dying out, the tendency was to substitute classic outlines and proportions with, as yet, little regard to harmony, but to introduce a number of Gothic details and minor features with very disconcerting effect. This altercation between opposite principles, this attempt to unite "the picturesqueness of Gothic with the gigantic features with which Michelangelo

had overlaid his pseudo-classical constructions," may be taken as the lowest point in taste reached by French architecture. During the reign of Louis XIII., however, that architecture was finally making up its mind to which principle it should adhere, and "forming itself into the purer style of the Grand Monarque."

As to this purer style I will not here stop to consider the many charges that may be brought against it. That it is worldly, cold-hearted, arrogant and purse-proud is indisputable, and equally indisputable is it that these were signs of the times and of society. But there is something else much more worthy of notice and more characteristic of the age both in the architecture and in society than this worldliness and arrogance. In the palaces and châteaux and great Parisian hotels of the period there comes to light a quality hitherto never recognised by the North. The age was one of great activity in building, and of an activity directed to a definite end, animated by an intelligible principle and hence resulting in a *style.* And of this style the main characteristic, under all its gilt trappings and gewgaws, is once more the old width and space. In these ample courts and stately salons and spacious galleries, there revives again something of the atmosphere of classic days and classic architecture. No mere wealth and love of show ever achieved an effect like this. What it indicates, we, by this time, know, and we can turn to the life of the age with a confident assurance of finding it.

By the middle of the seventeenth century Italy, as

the preacher of the new gospel, the gospel of ideas, had dropped out of the running, and France had taken her place. Henceforth the task of inculcating ideas and keeping alive in Europe the love of disinterested thought was to be the task of France; and there arose, as though in response to the call of destiny, a host of great names to carry that task out. Corneille, La Fontaine, Molière, Boileau, Racine, La Bruyère, Descartes, Pascal, Bossuet, Fénelon—as we review the list it seems as if all the genius of French literature were crammed into one pregnant half-century. But what is the key-note and mark of intellectual affinity in this galaxy of talent? It is, or used to be, the fashion to judge Louis Quatorze literature by one or two great dramatic poets, and to pronounce it highly artificial and stereotyped. But if we turn to the general mass of the literary work of the period the result is extraordinarily different. For this general mass of literary work is notable above all for flexibility, liveliness and naturalness; for its remarkable clearness of intelligence, and the ease and precision with which it expresses its ideas. This liveliness of intelligence, much more than pedantry and artifice, is the characteristic of the age. Madame de Sévigné is far more typical than Racine. From her letters, to say nothing of the endless memoirs and journals of a reign singularly rich in this kind of literature, we gain an idea of the culture of French society. Introduced to numbers of clever men and women, we can follow their interchange of judgments and ideas, and catch the intellectual tone of the age. And, allowing for the slight difference arising

from Italy's bent being more artistic and France's more literary, the tone of French society in the seventeenth century is singularly reminiscent of the tone of Italian society two centuries before. There is the same atmosphere of curiosity, alertness, and eagerness to know and learn, only taking in France a more distinctively literary turn than in Italy.

The great intellectual and literary work which emanated from the seventeenth century in France is itself a proof how widely spread the pleasure of thinking disinterestedly and expressing accurately was; for it is itself collective in character. That work was the fashioning of the incomparable French prose; a prose flexible, deft, precise, fit to become the medium of exchange for European thought. Fashioned and tempered in an age when the disinterested love of ideas was a paramount intellectual instinct, this prose bears witness in every inflection to the influence of that instinct. Every one knows how much easier it is for a Frenchman to say exactly what he means than for an Englishman or a German; the reason being evidently that the French medium of expression was forged in an age when the mind of the nation was clear; when it was not distraught by prejudices, or pledged to local standards. Constructed by pure ideas, it was fitted in its nature to express ideas. It is in the minds of its architects that we must look for the origin of the lucidity of French prose; and of its architects, if Descartes, Pascal, Fénelon, La Rochefoucauld hold foremost places, it is only as first out of a multitude. That prose was in reality the work of all those who in this age felt the delight of exercising their minds

it is, in short, a work of the age itself, and it is what vindicates the age's claim to the title of classic.

Thus, under the glitter and state and show of Louis Quatorze society we search for and find, for the first time among northern races, the intellectual freedom which is the main characteristic of the time; just as under the show and glitter of its buildings we found that love of ample space which was the main characteristic of its architecture. These two, the play of mind in the age, the breadth in the architecture, are the vital traits. They are also inseparable. Step by step they keep pace as they advance and every struggle of the mind out of the strait-waistcoat of mediæval prejudice is chronicled in a modification of the narrowness of mediæval architecture. Arrived at this point, the meaning of France's preceding long transition becomes clear. In divesting herself slowly and painfully of the last vestiges of her mediæval style, France was but undergoing the necessary preparation for the *rôle* she was to adopt; the *rôle* of a preacher of the gospel of ideas. She was but doing what Italy, with the same end in view, had found it equally necessary to achieve three centuries earlier.*

* On page 104 of Mr. Blomfield's interesting "Studies in Architecture," France's debt to Italian culture is duly recognised. "Of the service that Italy rendered to France in the matter of culture there can be no sort of doubt. France learnt from Italy the lesson of humanism." On the following page we find her architectural debt also recognised. "From the first Francis used every effort to induce Italian artists to settle in France. The Justes of Florence were already there, and busy at Tours. Solario, the pupil of Leonardo da Vinci, had been at work in 1508; and Francis persuaded the great master himself to settle in France." After 1527 the Italian influx increased and all the chief earlv Renaissance work was

Such is the testimony of France. That of England, though different in kind, is similar in import. Our insensibility to ideas, so elaborately analysed for us by our chief literary critic, has, since his day, been expatiated on to that degree that we may be pardoned for being a little sick of the subject. There is no need to dilate upon it here. There are, perhaps, signs which seem to show that the reproach will not always be true of us; but however that may be, no one will deny that it is true of our past. Isolated and cut off from Europe, and especially remote from Italy, it is no wonder that the steps by which the English were induced to adopt Renaissance ideas were slower and more uncertain than was the case in other countries. This being so, no wonder too that the spaciousness in architecture which goes with ideas should have been equally reluctantly admitted. The ideas and the proportions indeed go so inevitably hand in hand that words applicable to the one are applicable to the other. "The steps by which the English were induced to adopt the classical style were slower and more uncertain than those which preceded its introduction into other countries of Western Europe,"

superintended by Italians. Thus we have culture and architectural forms coming in together. Mr. Blomfield does not note any essential connection between the two: nevertheless we have only to dwell on the meaning of that word "culture," as understood in Athens aud Florence, with all its suggestions of harmony and balance and many-sided, ample development, to feel that between it and the spacious Renaissance architecture the closest possible connection did, in fact, exist. Indeed, it was only in proportion as France managed to assimilate the culture that she was able to evolve the architecture.

are Fergusson's remarks on the reception of Renaissance architecture in England.

Nor was this only the case. Not only was the style received very reluctantly, but changes of great significance were wrought in it before it was received at all. What those changes were the reader will easily guess. He will remember the fate of the vertical style when that was introduced into Italy, and how persistently the Italians set themselves to stretch and amplify its narrow proportions before they would have anything to do with it. Well, here we have the reverse process. Just as the Italians would have nothing to do with our narrow style until they had widened it, so we would have nothing to do with their wide style until we had narrowed it. St. Paul's in this respect is to St. Peter's at Rome exactly what the Florentine Cathedral is to Westminster Abbey. The style of St. Paul's is, or tries to be, the style of lateral expansion, but of a lateral expansion so cramped and curtailed that the general character of the interior is much more closely akin to the mediæval than to the classic temper.

Thus we find not only that the horizontal principle revived in Europe with the love of ideas, but that it afterwards kept pace with the circulation of ideas. It developed its full amplitude where ideas were freely welcomed; it put forth a pinched aud meagre growth where they were coldly and unwillingly entertained. In short, it acts, as was just now said, as a register by which the expansion and contraction of the mind of Europe may be accurately gauged. Only, in order that it may act thus, we must make up our minds to deal with essentials, not accidents.

We must not be put off by those plausible words "taste" and "fashion," nor think that the character of all architecture resides in acanthus leaves and pilasters. We must penetrate beneath taste and fashion to the mind of the age on the one hand, and we must look beyond ornament and detail to the main proportions of the architecture on the other.

A great deal more evidence might be cited on the subject, but having attempted a general outline I may leave it to the reader to add instances. He will find no lack of them. I am not sure that his best way of considering the subject would not be to compare broadly the times and people belonging to the two styles. For instance, if he were to select such representatives of their age as Plato, Livy, Leonardo da Vinci and Fénelon, he would be conscious of no antagonism in their association. All four would get on well together and have plenty to say to each other. But introduce a representative of mediævalism, introduce a St. Louis or Cœur de Lion, and what a jar and discord is created! And why? Why should Fénelon and St. Louis be dumb to each other while Fénelon and Plato can discuss the immortality of the soul with mutual interest? Because, of course, Fénelon and Plato, like Livy and Leonardo, are intellectualists, while St. Louis and Cœur de Lion are not. Merely to imagine the juxtaposition of such individuals is enough to make us conscious of the gulf which separates an age of action from an age of thought. If to this we add the architecture of the time, taking it as embodying the mind of its age: if we try to

imagine St. Louis in a classic portico, or Plato in a Gothic minster, we shall find ourselves struck by the same sense of absurdity as when we compare the men themselves. The men and their architecture go together. To one party belongs the vertical principle, to the other the horizontal. The men of action, with their lances and plumes, congregate in the building whose soaring lines embody their own fiery energy. The men of ideas meet together where the noble breadth of the architecture gives room for the play of thought.

Or, if the reader would particularise, let him choose the Gothic period itself in England for examination. Let him trace from Henry II. to Henry VIII. the slow stretching of the national mind, the effects of the work of universities and other civilising influences, the gradual evolution of a type of statesman and thinker—Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, Earl Simon, John Wickliffe, William of Wykeham, Colet, Cranmer, More, Wolsey, Archbishop Warham and many others—still insular it may be, yet of an ampler cast than is found in the earlier age. And having noted this, then let him look up at the architecture and watch the gradual drooping of the long lines and their approach more and more to the horizontal in their effort to express a lateral expansion little in accordance with their original impulse. Here he will find again the tally between proportion and thought, and the expansion of the architecture will register for him a similar expansion of mind.

One final instance I wish briefly to mention since it possesses some of the interest of contemporary, or

almost contemporary, history. We all know that what happened after the French Revolution was that England was thrown violently back upon herself. Though we had dealt summarily at Waterloo with the aspect of the movement most intelligible to us, yet France's shot-and-steel propagation of ideas had confirmed us in our original distrust of the species.

An epoch of contraction followed. Insular prejudices and limitations reasserted themselves, and England became entirely cut off from European life and European ideas. This isolation took effect in many ways. It showed itself in the dullness and ponderous self-satisfaction of Early Victorian society and Early Victorian art. But, above all, this isolation, this severance from the life and thought of Europe, showed itself in a passionate revival of Gothic architecture. All the usual explanations of this revival are forthcoming. It was due to the influence of two or three individuals, to a revived interest of the public in the art of building, to the many models of the style existing in the country, to the cheapness of the material used in its construction, and so forth. Let us be put off by no such phrases. We reverted to our old narrow style in the nineteenth century for the same reason that Italy reverted to her old wide style in the fifteenth, because it fitted our mental outlook. We saw, in the fifteenth century, the widening mind of Italy brought within reach of the horizontal and seizing that. We see in the nineteenth century the contracting mind of England brought within reach of the vertical style and seizing that. Would not the reader, as he watched the treat-

ment of the horizontal principle in England, its slow and partial reception and the changes and contractions wrought in it, have said that here was a country which needed but a strong set-back in ideas to be thrown once more into the arms of the old narrow style after which it was still evidently hankering?

Thus, we have attempted some answer to the question with which we set out as to the meaning of the vertical and horizontal principles in architecture. We find that the former stands for energy, and is the outcome of an age which glorified energy and made it a vehicle for the expression of all ideals. We find that the latter stands for thought and the free play of intellect, and that its great epochs are distinguished and related to each other across the ages by their love of ideas. Further, we find that these two principles measure for us the play of mind of Europe, and that free circulation of ideas or reversion to local standards is indicated in the corresponding expansion or contraction of the architecture of that place and period. Whether this interpretation will meet with the reader's acceptance I do not know, but I will venture to affirm that, even if it be accepted, Gothic architecture will not, on the whole, be the loser. Lose in some respects, no doubt, it inevitably will. We should no longer, if we accept it, agree with Ruskin when he says that Gothic is the most perfect style of building that ever has or ever can exist; or with Mr. Lethaby when he declares in his excellent "Mediæval Art" that our Gothic cathedrals are "more than buildings, more than art," that "their seeming perfections are but parts of a larger perfection," and that "from which-

ever point of view we may approach them the great cathedrals satisfy us." We should observe, once and for all, that no really first-class art or first-class poetry could by any possibility have issued from Northern Europe in the twelfth or thirteenth century, because the intellectual ripeness which goes to the making of first-rate art and poetry did not there and then exist. We should not pretend that Gothic religion, even, could satisfy us any more; for if there is one thing certain to-day it is that religion henceforth must include the mind, that it must express the intellectual as well as the spiritual, and be the result of the harmonious development of a man's whole nature. We should feel that in these days less than ever can Gothic content us. For the work of the past century, its discoveries and inventions and science, have rendered isolation henceforth impossible, and our participation in the life and ideas of Europe inevitable. In a word, the spirit of the age is making for expansion. It has outgrown Gothic, and, unless we would lay up for ourselves the sure unhappiness which attends the resolve to cleave to that which time has resolved to abandon, we must do the same.

But, allowing all this, there would be other respects in which Gothic architecture would gain heavily. By putting it back amid its own surroundings we should endow it once more with human interest and significance. The theory it embodied, the theory that eternal truths can be expressed in terms of action, may have been a delusion. We know now that it was a delusion. Nevertheless it was a great and splendid delusion. For a century it was acclaimed;

for a second century it was clung to; during a third it was gradually abandoned. During these three centuries this great delusion dominates the life of Europe and of this mighty influence Gothic architecture is the sole adequate surviving manifestation. Here lies its true and lasting value. It is the clue to the secret of three centuries of history. The unanimity of the impulse behind it gives it a human and historical significance unparalleled in art. If we accept this as its claim upon our regard, though to do this will involve a full recognition of the limitations which the style shares with its age, we may find that it will gain in human interest far more than it will lose in æsthetic glamour.

CHAPTER IX

SCULPTURE AND THE MODERN MIND

Breakdown of classic intellectualism : West and East in contact : The West imbibes the Eastern thought of spiritual vision : Effect seen in Hellenistic sculpture : Character of that sculpture : Its now indefinite hopes and fears : Loss of the old serenity and calm : Parallel between Hellenistic and Renaissance art : The Florentine intellectualism : The presence of a spiritual religion in the midst of it : Consequent inability to realise the classic ideal : Savonarola : His teaching and influence : Lorenzo the Magnificent : Blending of spiritual and pagan motives : Michelangelo : The conflict in his art between the act of definition and thought which refuses definition : He expresses the conflicting ideals of his age

IN an earlier chapter something was said of the intellectual nature of sculpture and the consequent affinity which existed between the art of sculpture and the Greek temperament. The Greek temperament, it was pointed out, in love with definition, essentially intellectual, addicted to clear-cut ideas on all subjects, and instinctively distrusting the necessary vagueness of emotional apprehension, was a medium by which all motives and conceptions were prepared and made ready for the sculptor. Greek ideas on all subjects are exact and definite. They possess, that is to say, the attributes of form. This being so, the sculptor has no preparatory struggles to go through to consolidate his vision. Thoughts which have been given exact form meet the

art of form half way and drop into marble almost of their own accord.

But if this is so, if Greek sculpture is governed and conditioned by the clear-thoughted quality of the Greek intellect, how did the sculpture fare when Greek intellectualism lost its classic purity? The change in the Greek outlook, as the reader knows, followed, and is evidently dependent on certain political events. The conquests of Alexander towards the close of the fourth century B.C. brought the East and West in contact, and it is on that account rather than in their magnitude and extent that those conquests constitute one of the most momentous events in history. Already, it is true, the Greek had shot his bolt. He had worked at the intellectual vein until he had worked it out. By the exercise of its own intellectual methods the classic mind was brought to a recognition of the insufficiency of a purely intellectual interpretation of life, and to a dim perception, even, of the faculties which take cognisance of the infinite. On the other hand, the emotional and spiritual side of life, stirred already, was of a sudden stimulated by the infusion of Eastern ideas, and, thus reinforced, burst the barriers which intellectualism had constructed for its own defence. The Macedonian Imperialism opened to the Greek a new world of ideas. The view of life which he now found himself in contact with was precisely the view which the Classic Age had so consistently discountenanced and the classic intellect had so severely held in check. Already disenchanted, however, with his own ideas. he proceeded to assimilate Eastern ones,

and especially he thirstily quaffed at the spring of mystical thought of which the East is the abounding and perennial source.

It is always the case that spiritual and emotional influences, more impalpable in their nature, are less distinct in their modes of action than intellectual and rational influences. Of the two classes of ideas which the Greek race has developed or transmitted, the intellectual class, coincident with its national unity and expressed in definite terms, seems, at least, of far the greatest importance. Still, the more carefully the reader considers the nature of the conflicting impulses which have controlled the life of Europe, and the more he searches for the causes of the difference between classic and modern life, the greater will be the weight he will probably attach to the interpretative work of the Greeks in the spiritual sphere, for the greater will seem the effect of the current of Eastern emotionalism to which the Greeks acted as conductors.

It is not necessary here to enter into an account of Græco-Oriental ideas ; what we have to note is that, from the time of the breaking down of the barriers between East and West, the simplicity and precision which had accrued to classic thought from its resolute rejection of the infinite and the abstract, and its resolute insistence on the concrete and the definite, were rendered impossible by the admission into the Western mind of the Eastern mystical thought of spiritual vision. This was fatal to the reign of intellectualism, for it dissolved the very limits which had held and contained in-

tellectualism. Henceforth the West was never to be free from a haunting consciousness of the infinite, never to be really happy and at rest in the world of appearances. Immerse herself though she might in her studies and sciences, propose though she might intellectual solutions of all problems and enigmas, there were yet, mixed in her blood, needs which intellect could not satisfy and aspirations to which intellect could never respond; so that, to this day, her moments of greatest intellectual achievement are quite lacking in the pagan calmness and sincerity, and the sickening conviction is never far from her that the very modes of intellectual perception are themselves questionable.

In Hellenistic sculpture the change in the mind of the age is at once apparent. Standing on the threshold of the movement, the last of the great Greeks, the last preserver of the tradition of classic self-control, yet shaken, already, by new thoughts and emotions, one of the most interesting figures in the art of this epoch is undoubtedly Lysippus. The portraits of Alexander which remain to us from his hand or school inseparably connect the names of the sculptor and the king. On independent testimony, however, it seems evident that the sculptor was working as early as 368, and there is no evidence to show that he lived long enough to profit or suffer materially by the current of ideas for which his great patron opened a path. Mr. Gardner places his activity between the years 366 and 316. Yet even on Lysippus the shadow of the future falls. The antique type, self-sufficient, calmly posed, the finest vindication the world has seen of the unaided

dignity of man, this type, in which the most human of the arts had, as it were, its stronghold, is for Lysippus already obsolete. The traits that engage attention are already those which hint at the mystery of the human lot. They are the subtle, pathetic and wistful traits which disclose themselves in individual expression, and are conveyed in the slightest and most sensitive inflections of a lip, an eyebrow or a nostril. While the ideal of Phidias and his contemporaries suggests a fixity and assurance of thought amounting almost to philosophic dogma, the ideal of Lysippus and his contemporaries suggests, on the contrary, the beginning of a search, a quest, a groping in the void.

Hellenistic art, closely following on Lysippus, is itself divided in its aims. On the one hand, the ancient tradition, drained of vitality yet preserving something of its prestige, tends, as is always the way in such cases, to harden and stereotype into fixed generalisations; on the other, the new experimental impulse, inclining to the exploration of subtle ideas and shades of character, wears down ever more irremediably the old bounds and limitations. In his recent book on Greek sculpture, Mr. Gardner observes that during the earlier part of the Hellenistic age the influence of Praxiteles, Scopas and Lysippus remains paramount, though variously blended:

"The isolation of the various schools seems to have been to a great extent broken down; and as after the conquests of Alexander, first a Panhellenic and then even a cosmopolitan spirit prevailed, so in sculpture also it would depend more upon the in-

dividual predilections of the artist than on his local origin to which of the earlier masters he looked chiefly for inspiration. Much might also depend upon the subject with which he was dealing. If grace and beauty of form were his chief aim, he would follow the lead of Praxiteles; if passion and dramatic force, that of Scopas; while those who sought either to carry still further the special study of athletic types, or to commemorate historical events by monumental sculptures, looked mainly to Lysippus as their master."

Mr. Gardner adds that the Pergamene school, though owing much to Scopas, should be ranked among the followers of Lysippus. It may, however, be pointed out that all this, though true, is open to misinterpretation. If the Hellenistic style is to be recognised as a distinct phase or development in the history of sculpture it must be associated with a distinct motive. It is, no doubt, difficult to do this, because no hard and fast line of separation between this and the earlier style is anywhere traceable. The trio of great sculptors who served as the models of early Hellenistic art were themselves in process of abandoning the ancient ideals of the Greek race, and there is some doubt whether to call them, in certain aspects of their work, the last of the Greeks or the first of the Hellenists. Still, a growth, though gradual, may attain a point at which it is open to fresh classification. Hellenism, in the evolution of Greek sculpture, marks such a point. Mr. Gardner would, I think, agree that what is vital and distinctive in the Hellenist movement is

not so much the imitative traits in it and its clinging to precedent examples as the fact that it exhibits a growing impatience of the classical tradition, and an increasing endeavour to reach out into hitherto unexplored regions of thought and emotion. With regard to the Pergamene school, Mr. Gardner supplies us with an illustration of the warrior's head in the British Museum, on which he makes the following significant comments:

"In the intense expression of the eyes, and the way they are shadowed by the brow, we recognise a treatment derived from Scopas; but in the rough and matted hair, the knotted and exaggerated rendering of sinews and veins, and the restless and mobile brow, there is a contrast to the restraint and moderation which is never absent from fourth-century work, even if it be as vigorous as the Tegea heads or the portrait of Alexander. The modern effect produced by such a head as this, in which

'New hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters,'

anticipates in many ways the Christian art of a later date, and suggests at the same time that the reason why such things are not found in Hellenic art is not because earlier sculptors could not but because they would not produce them."

The unruly influence of the new spiritual thoughts which were coming in could not be better indicated; but how could the earlier sculptors have been open to such an influence? The sense of

struggle and effort, the new hopes and new fears which distinguish this Hellenistic work, and which ally it so obviously to modern examples, are the characteristics, the note, of the life of Hellenism. How could the earlier generations, which knew nothing of these hopes and fears, embody them in form? How could they give utterance to hopes they had never entertained and fears they had never experienced? Does there not seem here to be some lack of clearness in Mr. Gardner's analysis, and does not that lack of clearness arise from his not having held sufficiently in view the mental conditions out of which the old and new sculpture arose?

Suppose we try to state the case, putting the mental factor first. Greek sculpture, at its prime and in its great days, was the consequence and effect of the thought of its age. That thought, nobly rational in character, was distinct in its processes and definite in its statements. The art that came to meet the thought coincided exactly with it in character, and hence it follows that Greek sculpture of this period, whatever may be its possible limitations, is the most *perfect* phase through which the art has passed. But by degrees the thought itself changed. Worn thin already, it yielded to an influx of spiritual ideas and emotions administered through contact with the East, and forthwith a corresponding change affected art. The new ideas endeavoured, in their turn, to get themselves expressed in marble. But they were not, like the old ideas, adapted to such a transition Indefinite, tentative, vague, they rebelled against the limits of form, and refused to submit themselves

to exact definition, and hence the restlessness, the struggle and the effort which we distinguish as the marks of the Hellenistic style.

Taking this view of the matter, we may say that here again we have a sufficiently vivid illustration of contemporary life and thought offered us by art. In dealing with the rise of Greek art I drew attention to the striking representation which that art, in its growing naturalism and sense of reality, gives us of the dawn of the intellectual faculty. Intellect has played a great part in the world since the days of the Greeks, and in the new realism of early Greek art, working like a leaven among the old artistic conventions, we are able to observe almost its birth and the character of its earliest efforts. So in the case of Hellenistic art we are conscious also of being present at a birth; but it is the spiritual faculty, intellect's great rival, whose advent we now discern. The old barriers break up, depths open where a hard surface had been, new aspirations invade men's minds, and a sense of spiritual mystery falls upon and enwraps them. For the first time Greek thought becomes troubled and inarticulate. Through a thousand channels the mysticism which was to exert so powerful an influence on Europe's development was filtering westward. Such are the influences to which, in the new style of sculpture, the marble responds. It is but a picture, after all, of the mind of its age. Ruffled already by the soul's agitation, Hellenistic sculpture is embarked on a voyage of discovery that is not ended yet. "Modern," Mr. Gardner calls it, and modern indeed it is, for the problem of how to express infinite

ideas in terms of finite form is the problem that occupies us still.

I would call attention briefly to the later treatment of that problem. It scarcely needs to be stated that the dominating characteristic of the Italian Renaissance is the spirit of vivid intellectualism which is so strongly reminiscent of the Greek prime. The actual results obtained by Renaissance thought were nothing very considerable, and stood often on not over-secure foundations, but the impetus it gave to the mind of Europe was incalculable. To its guesses we owe our certainties. The Renaissance is the greatest extant testimony to the truth that far more happiness is derived from the activity of the mind itself than from any fruits which that activity may yield. Man is ever in search of happiness, and it was the discovery of the long-forgotten fact, that intellectual activity is a source of happiness, which placed Italy, and especially Florence, in the position of guide and mentor to the rest of Europe. For the rest, the character of this mental activity, in which Florence led the way, is sufficiently obvious. Intellect is the faculty which defines, observes, analyses. There is little that is sensuous and emotional in Florentine thought. It is active, not passive. It does not receive impressions, but seeks distinctions. It is subtle and fine in analysis. It does not regard any subject as beyond the reach of intellectual interpretation, nor does it greatly care to follow any line of inquiry beyond the phase of definition. In short, as was of course bound to be the case, there are the strongest mental resem-

blances, amounting in many respects to identity, between the age of intellect's birth and the age of intellect's awakening; between the Athens of the fifth century B.C. and the Florence of the fifteenth century A.D.

Considering this similitude in mental stimulus and the spirit of the age, we should naturally look for and expect a corresponding degree of similitude in artistic product. And this similitude we, of course, find. Florentine art, like Attic art, is essentially an art of form. Form advanced to meet Florentine ideas almost as readily as it had advanced to meet Greek ideas.

Between Attic and Florentine sculpture there is this fundamental resemblance, that both are prosecuted with the zest and natural ease with which a people adopt the kind of art suited to their genius. Florentine painting takes the lead of other Italian painting, but still other Italian painting exists, and is important. But when we come to the art which is pre-eminently, by the laws of its own nature, the art of form—to sculpture, that is to say—Florence practically monopolises the whole field. It is here she is most "in her element." Though the sister cities of Pisa and Siena made the first definite start,

"Florence by the thirteenth century had taken the lead; the sculpture of the Renaissance had its birth here, here it went through all the phases of its development, and here, finally, its transition to the baroque was prepared. As antique sculpture culminates in Greece, so that of the Christian epoch finds its crowning expression in the plastic art of

Florence. In two cities only has that branch of art been able to attain to its full and glorious prime in unrestrained freedom—in Athens and in Florence."

The general truth of these observations, taken from Professor Bode's recent work on Florentine sculpture, will not be questioned. It will not be denied that in spontaneity and fluency Florentine sculpture approaches Athenian.

Yet, if both speak the same language with the same freedom, they speak it with a very different accent. The course of Florentine sculpture is ruled by none of the high and grave conceptions of the functions of the art which carried such weight with the Greeks. It is restless where Greek art is serene, experimental and tentative where Greek art is steadily coherent, uncertain of its own aims and purposes where Greek art is calmly self-confident. Critics have argued that these discrepancies and defects, as they apparently are, in Florentine work may have been due to ignorance of the Greek masterpieces. It was, it is urged, from the muddy stream of Roman rather than the purer springs of Attic art that the Italians drew their models in sculpture, and to that taint in its source the derelictions of their art should be ascribed. But can we imagine Donatello and Michelangelo, whatever their tutelage, other than they were? The early phases of the development of the art might, and no doubt would, have been different. Niccolo Pisano would have been the last of the Greeks instead of the last of the Romans. But would that have affected the later course and character of the art? To imagine that

it could have done so is to form, it seems to me, but a slighting estimate of the living forces which were feeding Renaissance art. These were not, I imagine, of so feeble a kind as submissively to adapt themselves to this style or that. If the first essays of Renaissance sculpture accepted Roman guidance, the imitative phase only lasted until the art had established contact with contemporary life. The Florentine sculptors of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are no more Roman than they are Greek. They are themselves. The art they practise is not an imitative but an original and living art; and it is so because it is the expression of living ideas. In short, it is not among extraneous influences but within the life of Italy itself that we must seek for the causes of the differences as well as the resemblances between Florentine and Athenian sculpture.

In considering the inward life of the two states in connection with the art evolved by either, two points of difference seem most noteworthy. Both, as we have said—both Athens and Florence—were in cast of thought preponderatingly intellectual; this explains the bias of both in favour of the arts of form. But in its control of life the intellectualism of Florence went much less far than the intellectualism of Athens. Athenian life aspired to regulate and direct itself through the intellect, on the basis of a system of rational ethics. The dictates of reason in regard to right conduct and the conception of ideal characteristics were authoritative. Now what were those characteristics? Self-control, moderation, serenity, right proportion, harmony, symmetry—these, as we figure the Greek ideal man.

are the epithets which rise to our lips to describe him. But these, as the reader will see, are words very susceptible of artistic application. I have already attempted to deal with the influence of Greek ethics on Greek art as exhibited particularly in Doric architecture, and must not dilate on the point here; but the reader will see at once that where we have an intellectual system of this sort in authority, where symmetry and harmony and the rest of them were reverenced as principles to live by, there we have also a system ready made for application to art; a system which would control and govern art as appropriately as it controlled and governed life. In truth it is impossible for any one at all open to such influences to contemplate typical examples of Greek sculpture without being conscious that they do in fact illustrate in their own personalities the beauty of the ethical principles in which they were conceived: without being conscious, that is to say, that the Greeks turned ethical principles into artistic laws.

But the Renaissance never got to this; even Florence fell far short of it. Strive as she might to recapture the classic point of view Florence never succeeded in reinstating the intellectual faculty in its old position as ethical lawgiver to life. And failing in this her sculpture pays the penalty. The qualities of harmony, self-control, proportion, symmetry, and so on, not being accepted as laws of life, could not be, and never were, passed on into art: could not become laws of art. The loss is tremendous, irreparable. There is nothing in the whole range of Renaissance sculpture that touches,

however faintly, that note of tranquil and majestic self-sufficiency which belongs to the great figures of the Parthenon pediment.

The loss, I say, is irreparable, and seems at a blow to degrade sculpture from its ancient office of a witness to the truth and a support to human nature, and to cast it down among men to become the instrument and prey of individual caprice. But there is, as I said, a second point of difference between Classic and Renaissance sculpture, and this seems to offer some slight compensation for the loss incurred on the first count. It need scarcely be pointed out that the reason the men of the Renaissance declined, or were unable, to accept a rational philosophy as supreme guide to life, was not because they aspired to dispense with a guide altogether but because they already had one. It is customary to make very light of the religion of the Renaissance, and no doubt in so treating it we are but following the lead of the Renaissance itself. But, however lightly religion might be regarded, there the religion was. In so far as men strove to lean exclusively on the intellectual faculty they might weaken or atrophy the religious sense in them, and it is probable that if we were to analyse the characters of most of the consummate villains whose murders and treacheries and unbridled licentiousness grace the epoch, we should find that their pre-eminence in vice was the consequence of their falling between the two stools of a spiritual standard they had repudiated and an ethical standard they had never attained to. They were emancipated equally from the laws of God and man.

It would argue, however, a superficial knowledge of human nature if we were to deduce from such individual examples the conclusion that Christianity as an influence had ceased to operate. The signs to the contrary are too many and significant to be gainsaid. The religious motive was constantly manifested in life and constantly manifested in art. It stood, weak or strong, in place of the Greek ethical motive and exercised, as that had done, a direct influence upon art.

But its influence was of a very different kind. Being in its essence spiritual rather than intellectual, it did not lend itself, as its rival had done, to the process of form delineation. The Christian ideals, charity, humility, surrender to God's will, &c., cannot, like the classic ideals, symmetry, harmony, proportion, be readily converted into principles of art; nor will ideas which have been dipped in the vague aspirations, hopes, fears and surmises, which haunt the Christianised imagination, submit to concrete definition with the readiness of the clear-cut distinctions of Greek thought. We have seen already, in the case of Hellenistic sculpture, how mental indefiniteness acted on the arts of Greece, and we shall discern the same phenomenon, in a more marked degree, in the case of Renaissance sculpture.

If the reader will turn his attention for a moment to the culmination of the Renaissance movement, he will easily distinguish the existing conflict of motives in the life of the age together with the effect of that conflict on art. Take him for all in all, we may say that Il Magnifico is a worthy representative of the pagan Renaissance, and that the amplitude of his

culture and splendour of his talents are themselves a high testimony to the depth and genuineness of the soil that nourished them. It was, perhaps, during the period of his ascendancy that the Renaissance as a revival, as an attempt, that is, to live on classic ideas, most nearly achieved success. A careless glance, misled by the enthusiasm and animation with which the leading actors threw themselves into their parts, might almost deem the success complete; but a closer scrutiny, even of that enthusiasm and that animation, would quickly undeceive it. For this classical fervour is in truth far from the classical temper. It is too self-conscious and forced, too evidently maintained by effort and liable to collapse should the effort cease. It lacks the classic calm and security, and its very perturbation and anxiety to force the pace are certain indications of the existence of a hostile presence.

As it happens, this presence also is typically represented. In the entrance passage of the Convent of St. Mark, at Florence, there hangs a portrait at which all visitors turn to glance a second time. The strong, ascetic features, the large hooked nose, the deep furrows of the cheek, above all the fire, ardent and fierce, in the black eyes that stare intently upward, are traits evidently taken from the life. There is nothing in the face to win or attract, yet Savonarola was a more potent influence in Florence than Lorenzo himself. Though his eloquence was almost entirely denunciatory, and his descriptions of divine wrath and impending judgment frightened his hearers into fits, yet the walls of his church, and even the squares of the city, were too narrow to

contain the multitudes which gathered round him to tremble and weep at his words. The awful reality, the awful proximity, of God, was the constant burden of his eloquence. In place of paganism, in place of intellectualism, in place of the humanist culture, which centred in the Villa Medici, he upheld the idea of a spiritual guide, a spiritual ruler, a spiritual judge. The effect of his words is a proof of the ineradicable survival, even in that centre of intellectualism, of the spiritual faculty. A fierce spiritual reaction set in, and the whole city, swept by an emotional ecstasy, surrendered itself to the guidance of the instrument of God.

There are few more striking contrasts in history probably than Lorenzo and Savonarola, and the scene at the former's death-bed throws that contrast into striking relief. Death, we may suppose, is usually a test of the sincerity of a man's opinions, and the old Greeks died in their paganism as calmly and sincerely as they had lived in it. But the paganism of the Renaissance, though good enough to live in, was no creed to die in, and with the consciousness of approaching dissolution upon him Lorenzo sent for the Dominican. The meeting summarises the Renaissance. If we would know why it is that the classic note in the Renaissance strikes us as strained and overdone, why it is that characters like Pico della Mirandola have the hectic flush on them, why it is that the imitations of classic manners, the revival of the Garden and the Academy, the Aristotelian and Platonic encounters, the wish even to revive the worship of the gods, and all the other signs of an almost breathless enthusiasm

for the usages of paganism have something obviously extravagant and excessive in them and are tinged as it were with an element of play-acting, we have but to call to mind the death-bed of the humanist with the monk standing over it to perceive the reason. The Renaissance was strained in its paganism because it was not really pagan. Fain though it was to persuade itself that it was what, for the moment, it wanted to be, yet with all its eager protestations it never quite succeeds. There are present in the life of the age elements which no pagan system can contain. We have chosen Savonarola as the representative of these elements at the moment of the climax of the Renaissance, but if we were to revert to the eve of the movement and consider the still more far-reaching effect of the more spiritual teaching of a St. Francis, should we not be obliged to confess that from the very first the pagan experiment was doomed to failure? Indeed, might not a shrewd observer already at this juncture, seeing what profound spiritual instincts were inwoven in the national character, have foretold what was bound to happen? "You have here," he would have said, "something which no human interpretation of life will ever satisfy. No philosophical system, by which you think to control these spiritual aspirations, but will always be liable to be rent asunder by an outburst of spiritual emotionalism." So much, without being a prophet, he might have surmised; and when, three hundred years later, at the very moment of the intellectual apogee, Florence went mad over Savonarola, and the nobles and ladies burnt their finery in the

market-place, and the dying prince of this world sent post-haste for the custodian of the next, he might have added, "I told you so."

These, then, are the two main points of difference between the Classic and Renaissance life: (1) The latter never succeeded in installing an intellectual ethical system in command of conduct and action; but (2) in lieu of such a system it was haunted by a vague, spiritually conceived faith in the will of an omnipotent God. Also it is the case that this contrast between Renaissance and Classic life is in many ways identical with the contrast between Renaissance and Classic art. Renaissance sculpture is, in the first place, totally lacking in the broad abstract principles which govern Greek sculpture; but, in the second place, it does reveal a spiritual aspiration and a consciousness of spiritual vitality such as we shall search Greek art for in vain. It seems almost superfluous to illustrate these points, but if we are to do so the means lie ready to our hand. Lorenzo and Savonarola embody, I said, the dual aspects of the Renaissance, its outward triumphant paganism and its inward smouldering spirituality. It remains for the greatest sculptor of the age to depict the two and the conflict between them in terms of visible form. To name Michelangelo in this connection is enough. There is no need to dilate on his appreciation of the intellectualism of the Renaissance. We all know what a sense he possessed for the concrete, for substance, and what a passion for the science of articulation. He had, if ever a man had, the temperament of the sculptor. But we all know, too, what depths of spiritual

emotion underlay the mighty capacity of the man and taxed and mocked its utmost efforts at definition. Both points of difference I have been dealing with are brought out in his work with equal force. There is a truth in that old nickname the "Great Barbarian"; for if we admit, as we must admit, that the Greek gift of culture consisted in the ability to realise ethical laws in the dominions of art and literature, there must needs appear something barbarous in a rejection as absolute as Michelangelo's of any such connection. It is not possible to think of the Classic principles of symmetry, harmony, proportion, moderation, in presence of Michelangelo's figures. They never suggest such motives, save accidentally, for they were not evolved in obedience to such dictates. What to the Athenian was his chief holdfast on truth and sanity is to the Florentine a consideration of no interest whatsoever. On the other hand, was ever sculpture more racked with spiritual indefinable impulses than are these tragic forms? We are carried back again to that hour when first the Classic intellectualism broke down and new hopes and fears were struggling for articulation. In spirit Hellenistic sculpture is far closer than Hellenic to the Renaissance. It consists of the same elements, and the same problem, how to embody spiritual ideas in terms of form, perplexes and baffles it. There is a profound similarity in life between the two periods, which works itself out into a corresponding resemblance in art. The typical warrior's head, to which allusion has been made, the head, as Mr. Gardner describes it, of the "rough and matted hair," of the "knotty and exaggerated

rendering of sinews and veins," of the "restless and mobile brow" : this head, so "vigorous," so "intense in expression," yet so lacking in the "restraint and moderation" of earlier Greek work which, at once torn and inspired by strange hopes and fears, has such a "modern effect," and "anticipates in many ways the Christian art of a later date"—this head might have come straight from the workshop of Michelangelo, and had it done so would pass muster as an entirely characteristic example of his art. So strangely similar upon art are the effects of similar thought-currents in life.

In dealing with classic sculpture I ventured to suggest that the study of art would derive considerable additional interest if it were more often studied in conjunction with, and as an expression of, the life of its own age and place. That suggestion I would here reiterate. It is probable that the ideas we have been discussing may have occurred to many of my readers before : they are such at least as might readily occur to any one interested in these subjects. Nevertheless they can scarcely be too much pondered and dwelt upon. The added significance they are able to pour into the art they deal with is incalculable. A great genius, poet or artist, is the medium through which an age speaks. The figures of Michelangelo incarnate the very genius of the Renaissance. There, in the anatomy, the foreshortening, the elaboration of flesh and sinew, is the play of intellect and love of science we know so well; and there, in furrowed brow and mobile lip, is the spiritual anxiety and restlessness which also, though we often ignore it, is blent inextricably with

the spirit of the age. In a work entitled "A Hundred Masterpieces of Sculpture," which I commend to the reader's notice as one of the best sketches of the history of sculpture recently written, there occurs a passage on Michelangelo from an unnamed source, in which this clash and jar of motives is expressed with entire comprehension:

> "Dans les marbres froids où bout son âme altière,
> Comme il a fait courir avec un grand frisson
> La colère d'un Dieu vaincu par la matière."

We are not to think of these great creations as works of individual genius only, but as nourished and inspired by tides of contemporary thought and emotion. Their agitation is the agitation of a century. Not only do the science and intellectualism of that age, its love of analysing and defining, its keen appreciation of the significance of matter, receive at the hands of the great Florentine their complete embodiment; just as truly and significantly representative is the spiritual anxiety and perturbation of his art. These are the very traits acting upon life. The cowled figure hanging over the Magnificent's death-bed is an element, in its fleshly form, of the art we are gazing at, and as for the denunciations of a materialistic age which ring from the pulpit of St. Mark's, what are they but the audible utterances of that very "colère d'un Dieu vaincu par la matière" to which the marble gives mute expression?

Only, perhaps, if we would view the matter in its right aspect, we may question the word "vanquished." The *struggle* between matter and spirit, not the defeat of spirit by matter, seems the message of the har-

assed but unconquerable marble, as it is the message of the harassed but unconquerable monk. Gone is the old sufficing ethical code, the old clear-sightedness and calm, the old agreement between philosophy and art. We are embarked upon the troubled tide of modern thought, and the still unanswered riddle, how to reconcile spirit and matter, infinite ideas with finite expression ; in a word, how to combine the thought of the East and of the West, has already presented itself for solution.

CHAPTER X

PAINTING AND THE INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT

Manual dexterity of modern art : Consequent superabundance and confusion of subject-matter : Contrast with earlier creative epochs : These were protected from redundancy by their own ignorance : They had not our fatal executive facility : Course of Italian painting from Giotto to Raphael : Development of painting keeps pace with intellectual development : The new precision and accuracy of intellectual vision : Seeing with the mind : Need of this in order to realise and represent naturally : By what degrees the eyes of men during the Renaissance were opened : Man himself the centre of the movement : Renaissance art realises first man, then man's handiwork, and finally nature : It keeps pace in its progress with the intellectual advance of the age

IT is the peculiarity of modern art that to an entire doubt as to its own aims and principles it unites an extraordinarily highly developed gift of manual dexterity and great technical knowledge. It can paint or carve anything it likes exactly in the manner it likes; at the same time it does not know in the least what to paint or carve, or with what purpose to paint or carve it. This combination of a practised and fluent hand with a vaguely groping and distracted mind is comparatively new in the history of art. Its consequences have only been realised since the successful pre-Raphaelite revolt against authority and law let loose upon us the whole flood of a hitherto controlled and organised dexterity. At the

same time the conjunction is a natural one, for the very possession of unlimited powers of execution is bound to render the task of evolving a sound and authoritative theory of art in some ways more difficult. In the rise of an art, when its attempts to express life are attended by a very slowly yielding ignorance of how to express anything at all, and by a total lack of fluency and facility in execution, this very ignorance and lack of fluency are a safeguard to it. They keep it in the right way because they insure that all subjects and objects delineated shall be such as possess unusual importance and significance, such as strike the artist's attention with peculiar and reiterated force, and which it is worth making a determined effort to portray. In this way a slowly moving and laborious art is driven by its own short-comings to practise methods of selection. It is saved from the accidental and the trivial, from distracting detail and meaningless superfluity, not because it knows better than to yield to their solicitations, but because it does not possess the skill to depict such things. It goes right because it cannot go wrong. Throughout the earlier stages at least of the Greek epoch, as throughout the Renaissance, it is very apparent that art is steadied and kept to a certain path because this is its easiest course. It does not wander, it does not indulge in those individual eccentricities and whims which effectually disperse the force of a creative movement, simply because it cannot. The hand has not acquired the facility of execution which will permit of the representation of such slight themes.

If the reader will glance at the course of Italian

painting from Giotto to Raphael, he will easily perceive how the most fruitful and powerful tradition in Christian art was shepherded for generations by the ignorance and lack of dexterity of its practitioners. The development of painting in Italy keeps pace with the development of the intellectual faculty. It has its rise in the first movement of intellect; and as intellect moves on step by step, widening the range of its observation and interest, so painting moves hand in hand with it, recording its conquests, and in its own artistic progress registering the intellectual progress of the age. The limitations in early Renaissance painting are limitations in intellectual development. They stand for the as yet dark places of the mind, and chronicle the steps of a transition from a state of intellectual indifference to a state of complete intellectual sensibility.

This mental transition and the degrees by which it is accomplished are the governing factors in Renaissance art. A "great intellectual awakening," as we call the Renaissance, implies an aroused consciousness of the character, form and substance of things. It substitutes for the vague acceptance of appearances common to the pre-intellectual age, an active examination of structure and contents, and for indefinite emotions definite ideas. "Moving about in worlds not realised," may express the mental attitude of a pre-intellectual age; to realise the world is the task of intellect.

And in the carrying out of this task mind and eye work together and constantly act and re-act upon each other. He who looks at things with the eye of intellect sees them with a new precision and

accuracy. He is driven by the intellect itself so to see them. Intent on probing into the nature of things, on divining their purpose and composition, and whence they came and whither they are going, and a thousand other facts about them, the intellect must needs in all these matters employ the eye to collect data for it, and this in turn results in a new discernment and discriminative power imparted to the sense of sight. So that the desire of the mind to distinguish accurately and define exactly grow by degrees into unconscious properties of vision, and *seeing with the mind*, as it may be called, becomes seeing in a new and more positive sense of the word.

One main effect then of that great intellectual awakening which we date from the Renaissance was that it taught men to see in the intellectual way, with a new exactitude and discrimination and with a suddenly enhanced comprehension of the reality of what they looked at. But we are not to suppose that the intellectual awakening itself came all at once. Men did not get up one fine morning and gaze about them with a full-fledged curiosity which embraced equally all objects in view. No, the awakening came gradually, and step by step. It challenged the most obviously interesting and important things first, and by degrees extended its survey to others more remote. Now the most obviously interesting and important thing to mankind is man. Accordingly it is upon man that dawning intellectual curiosity first concentrates its attention. Man's aspect and appearance, the motives of his conduct, the causes of his happiness or unhappi-

ness, his past history and future fate, the evil or beneficent influences that attend upon him, these are the questions which the conscious attention that springs from intellect first proceeds to examine. Love of human intercourse and delight in human society are the most attractive characteristics of what, for this reason, has been well called the *Humanist* movement. As a matter of mental culture and thought, this centrality of man gave a definite point of view to the intellectualism of the Renaissance. The importance and significance of all objects were calculated in terms of human relationship. Those things which partook intimately of the human lot were more important ; those which remotely affected it were less important ; while those which were so far removed as to be apparently cut off from it altogether were devoid of any importance or significance whatever.

This is the course of development followed by the Renaissance intellectually, and the intellectual expansion, with its gradual conquests and ordered motion, is what determines the course of Renaissance painting :

The awakening of intellect, as was pointed out, came by degrees; therefore, since the power to draw rightly depends on intellect, that, too, must come by degrees. The awakening intellect extended itself in successive, more or less definable, radiations from man, its source and centre, to man's handiwork, from man's handiwork to familiar and domesticated nature, and finally to more remote and wilder nature. The power to draw rightly must follow the same lines of development.

It should be easy to show, in brief outline, that it did so. So long as the Byzantine tradition lasts, nothing, not even the figures, is realised intellectually. The attitudes, stiff and angular, are not real attitudes. The long cadaverous faces are not real faces. The reiteration of the same sterotyped features allies such treatment with the Oriental in all ages. Intellect has not got hold of the subject-matter of these drawings. It is before the awakening. Ere the thirteenth century is out, however, there are signs of the approaching change. These first occur in the figures, which begin to break their flat, hieroglyphical postures and come to life. They soon appear in various attitudes instead of always in the same attitude, they are of various types instead of always the same type, and the faces express various intelligible human emotions instead of no emotions at all. They move and act, stiffly it is true, and within a very limited range of movement; still the consciousness of their real nature begins to stir in them. It is, I cannot help remarking, for one who looks upon art as the expression of life, one of the most touching and pathetic moments in the whole of her history. Of all discoveries none ever brought in such immediate, rich results as the discovery of man by man. The interest of man, of the motives, emotions and ideas that stir his mind, that change and are to be traced in the expression of his face, that prompt the appropriate postures of his body and gestures of his limbs; all this, the intimate, intellectual recognition of all this, as compared with the unconscious acceptance of it, is the new stimulus which the mind of the age is applying to

the eye. It is a time of extraordinarily keen delight in human fellowship and intercourse, a time when the pleasures of society begin to be first consciously felt and then to be cultivated and enhanced. A new ideal of life and manners, a new comprehension and power of sympathy, a new gentleness and urbanity are coming into being. We conceive the youth of the Renaissance gazing at each other with eyes in which delight and a dawning recognition are dispelling the old insensibility. Such was the gaze by which the Oriental emaciations of Byzantine art were roused to life. "Those are not real cheeks: real cheeks are round and ruddy. Those are not real eyes, nor that a real body, nor are those limbs and hands and feet real." Thus the artist felt; but before he, as spokesman of his age, felt it, what a new power of observation must have come into men's eyes, and with how hitherto unfelt a desire to appreciate the significance and beauty of faces and forms and expression and gestures must men and women in those days have begun to gaze at each other!

This is the first step. Man lives for man in real life, and forthwith man begins to live for the artist on his canvas. But not much else lives. For the most part the flat gold background, blotting out all save the figures, still meets the claims of the universe with a blank negation. Soon, however, interest spreads. The works of men's hands form, as we said, the next sphere it is to conquer, and of such works that which far eclipsed all others in the estimation of citizens so proud of the civic dignity and grandeur of their several cities as the Italians,

was necessarily architecture. From the earliest days of the Renaissance, architecture, as must be the case in all great epochs of art, was the pursuit and industry which most engaged attention, and the new spirit that henceforth began to animate this art is peculiarly characteristic of the change of mental attitude of the age.

Accordingly this is the subject in which, after the figures, painting makes most decisive and earliest progress. Before the thirteenth century is out architectural accessories are introduced as a setting to the awakening figures. They are invariably executed with a new care and closeness of attention, the mouldings and details being drawn with fastidious precision, while the character of the structure is fully realised and rendered. It is, indeed, often over-realised, and with too complete a consciousness of the function and formation of columns, architraves, and cornices ; the consequence being that buildings, in Renaissance painting generally, are apt to assert themselves too vigorously, and with something of the harsh exactitude of an architect's plans. So enamoured is the artist of the intellectual interest of his subject that he cannot deny himself the pleasure of articulating every detail of it. More, he cannot help introducing it even amongst the most incongruous surroundings. Stately pleasure domes or classic temples must start up in the wilderness, or be perched on inaccessible crags : and the crib at Bethlehem must be sheltered by a Corinthian pediment.

And what renders the strength and realism of the architectural drawing the more remarkable is that

the scenes amid which it commonly occurs are, as regards their natural features, rendered, at first with an entire, and later with a partial lack of comprehension. The eye turns from some difficult, elaborate structure, a triumph of realistic painting, to a river indicated by parallel white lines with fish cruising about on the surface, or to a foreground of a dull, whitish grey, in texture neither soil nor rock, but of the nature, apparently, of pipe-clay, or to certain shapeless peaks in the background, of the same white clay as the foreground, with two or three trees, in make and shape like enormous black toad-stools, poised on their summits. It would not be possible to have marked for us more clearly the limits to which intellectual realism had reached. On the one side of those limits all is reality and accuracy, on the other all is dull insensibility and images without character or life. The awakening intellect has realised figures and has realised buildings, but rivers and rocks, the common earth and mountain peaks, it has not realised at all. In the representation of these features certain formulas are reiterated and acquiesced in with almost the apathy of the old Byzantine days. The stratification of rock, the outcrops of ledges, the ripples on water, the shapes of clouds and many other natural objects are indicated by conventions which are repeated quite in the Oriental spirit for a century. Progress in these regions remote from humanity was slow. Even Leonardo never came to perceive that the savage rocks possessed a character of their own and structural laws of their own, which made them worthy of being painted with all possible care and

thoughtfulness. He had never looked at rocks with the eye of intellect, and he painted them accordingly as if they had been made of cheese.

But if progress, in dealing with scenes of wild nature, is slow, it is much more rapid in the rendering of domesticated or tame nature. The coloured flower-heads that peeped from the grass at men's feet, the trees, symmetrical and cultured, which grew around their villas, or tempted them by their promise of cool shade to ascend the gentle eminence on which they stood, these were the artists' first natural subjects; and it is with these as with the architecture—no sooner is attention once turned upon them than they are rendered with a perfect articulation of leaf and petal which testifies to the new comprehension which has suddenly seized upon them. But still the limit of intellectual realisation, the point it has attained to but beyond which it cannot yet penetrate, though pushed back a step, remains clearly marked; for while the surrounding shrubs and flowers are wrought with a perfect delicacy of discrimination, the hills and earth are pipeclay still, and the rocks mere shapeless dumplings. The old suddenness of transition from knowledge to ignorance remains. As a man standing in the heart of a mist sees the vapour lift and recoil, uncovering by degrees the nearer objects while still obstructing the remote, so is it with the intellectual range, and so with the artistic capacity of the Renaissance. Man; man plus architecture and clothes; man plus architecture and clothes, plus a few flowers and trees; man plus architecture and clothes, plus a few flowers and trees, plus an enlarging area

gradually extending to things remote, but never quite mastering the absolutely wild—these are the degrees of enlightenment. From man as the centre of all interest intellectual realisation proceeds, and as it proceeds, working outwards, first one set of objects and then another is comprehended, rendered definable, and so brought within the grasp of the artist.

Thus most Renaissance pictures—all of them which comprise a sufficiently wide range of subject-matter—are to some extent shared between knowledge and ignorance. How far knowledge has got, to what extent it has penetrated the whole picture, will, of course, depend chiefly on the period at which the work was painted; but until the movement comes to an end and art begins to decline into anarchy, there remain always moods of nature not realised, not paintable ; and so in every work of adequate range the limit of intellectual realisation will be distinctly apparent. Once let this idea be entertained and the reader will find, as he walks through the rooms of the National Gallery, that his eye will easily learn to distinguish the intellectual range of most of the works. For example, in "The Nativity," by Luca Signorelli, the figures, attitudes, faces, expressions, movements, are all free and expressive ; the little flowers and herbs and grasses in the foreground are exquisitely realised and reproduced ; the temple in the middle distance is drawn with the most determined correctness, as also are the battlements and towers of the town on the hill ; but the crags and rocky declivities which form the greater part of the composition are not in

the least like natural stones and cliffs, but are merely the perpetuation of certain dull formulas accepted as signifying the real things by artists whose comprehension had never grasped their actual appearances. A still more conspicuous example of the same limitation is Mantegna's "Agony in the Garden" in which the figures, near and distant, are drawn with easy mastery; in which, too, the white Jerusalem walls and towers, and all the delicate architecture of the city, are elaborated with exquisite accuracy, yet in which the wild peaks and rocky landscape are executed with a complete and childlike unconsciousness of their real character.

Nor can it be maintained in explanation of such limitations that the capacity of Renaissance art progressed from the more easy to the more difficult. On the contrary the reverse is rather the case. The success achieved is in inverse proportion to the ease in achieving it. Of all subjects the human form, with its infinite variety of gesture and expression dependent on minute inflections in drawing, is the most difficult to master; after figures, architecture, with its complex perspective and the demand it makes on exactitude of line, is the next most difficult, while when we come to nature, the trees and flowers of the foreground are certainly much harder to render than the remoter features of the landscape. Any student of water-colour painting at the present day could draw a wild landscape with a truth which no painter of the Renaissance could have rivalled; and it would be only as he approached the more difficult features in composition that he would find Renaissance art forging ahead of him.

The cause of success or failure, in the case of Renaissance art, does not therefore lie in ease or difficulty of execution. It is to be found rather in the fact that as we make the transition from wild nature to tame, from tame nature to man's handiwork, and from man's handiwork to man, we are moving from the outskirts of a circle of knowledge towards the centre of it, which is man himself; and consequently, with every step we take, the appeal to human interest increases in power and intensity. This human interest it is, this power, as I have called it, of intellectually realising the object looked at, which is the clue to the progress made. Let intellect catch hold, let it inform the eye with its desire for penetrating, measuring, defining, and whether the thing looked at be difficult or easy to draw, the artist will soon learn to draw it. Let intellect fail to catch hold, fail to direct the eye, and though the object be comparatively easy to represent, he will find himself helpless before it.

If once we conceive artistic activity as based on intellectual, we have at once a visible register to the whole intellectual development of the Renaissance. We have, for example, the dominating position of Florence defined with a new clearness. In the case of several schools of art, analysed by Mr. Berenson in his "Northern Painters," it is apparent that the Florentine influence is always the fruitful and progressive one, and that motives derived from other sources always tend to sterility. This will seem natural enough if we recognise that artistic progress was made possible by intellectual progress, for there is no question for a moment of Florence's

intellectual supremacy. What the Renaissance, as a whole, did for art was to turn it into a vehicle for the expression of intellectualised life, and it was because Florence led the way in matters of intellect that she led the way in matters of art. Side by side at the rise of the new epoch stand the two great Florentine figures of Dante and Giotto, like a pair of mountain springs, from which the twin rivers of literature and art flow down to the valleys and the plain ; dealing, both of them, with the more momentous issues of man's fate, and dealing with them with that new, unmistakable and terrible force of intellectual realisation of which they were the first appointed instruments. Down from Dante stretches a line of poets and prose writers whose study is still man, but who develop by degrees a more and more familiar and mundane intimacy with their subject; while down from Giotto stretch the Renaissance painters, pursuing a like course, and handling by degrees more familiarly all the circumstances of human life. The literary impulse thus given is to end in the minute realisation of the modern novel. The artistic impulse thus given is to end in the correspondingly minute realisation of modern painting. But the two, at every stage of their development, are allied, for they both alike result from the intellect's widening survey or closer scrutiny.

But although, this being the case, we might, as indeed we generally do, approach the Renaissance from the literary point of view, and perhaps from several other points of view besides, yet I cannot help doubting whether any of these methods of

study, or all combined, would give us the same vivid perception of the course followed by the movement as is to be gained from painting. Does one reader in fifty realise the meaning of that dull phrase of ours, "the awakening of the intellect," which we have repeated till it has become a mere formula? Does one reader in fifty realise it as an active process, with tangible results and methods, and a regular scheme of development of its own? I venture to doubt if any historical, political, or literary study of the subject could endow it with such a living interest. But consider it in relation to the view of painting that has been suggested. Watch the operation of the new faculty touching into life, like a magic wand, the figures and countenances of men and women; thence moving on to things most soaked with human interest, and so by degrees to others more removed. Watch the mental activity thus rendered visible, creeping and spreading from stage to stage, giving realism to each thing as it reaches and grasps it. Does not such a manifestation of its activity, thus laid on the canvas before our eyes, quicken our old phrase with a new meaning and enable us to realise the intellectual awakening as a vital process?

We may also, I think, arrive at something of interest if we go on to consider our own case and the depth of the difference between Renaissance art and ours. The old limitations no longer in these days exist. So completely has the modern mind become intellectualised, and so completely has it intellectualised the eye, that the modern artist can paint anything. Not wild nature only, throwing it

all, just as it is, upon the canvas, and not all the daily incidents and moments of human life only, fugitive glimpses seen one minute and gone the next, yet caught with the extraordinarily swift intellectual perception of modern sight—not these things only can the artist of to-day paint, but atmospheric effects of shadows, and reflections, and mists; of sunbeams in the air and upon the leaves and grass—effects so aerial and evanescent that they seem scarcely palpable to sight itself. The change would seem all in favour of ourselves. Instead of being able to deal only with a very limited range of subjects, modern art can deal with, can realise, the universe. Its sphere of interest and its sphere of capacity are alike indefinitely enlarged, and in this sense the task which Renaissance art set out to accomplish, the task of converting painting into an adequate vehicle for the expression of intellectualised life, may be said to have been achieved. But there is something to set against this. Our facility in representation, our miscellaneous and universal range of interest, threaten us with pitfalls from which Renaissance art was exempt. The man who can draw but little, and that little all from the same point of view, cannot widely err. The man who can draw anything from any point of view is liable to infinite error. There might be no great occasion to preach the need of selection and the evils of redundancy to an artist who could paint only a bunch of cyclamen, a praying saint, and an acacia-tree, but how widely different does the case become when we have to do with artists who can paint rocks and dew, and the tangle of woods and street crowds. and 'buses and

hansoms, and all the motley panorama and topsy-turveydom of natural and human life all over the world.

This is the difference that puts modern criticism on a new footing. Instinctively we look to the Renaissance, the great creative epoch in painting of Christian times, for instruction and guidance in the art. We do so because we feel that the coherence, significance and simplicity of that art are the essential qualifications for all effective art, that all art is effective only in so far as it possesses these qualities, and that our own art must somehow or other attain to them if it is ever to express anything at all with clearness and power. Doubtless we are right. The qualities of Renaissance art are the qualities of great art in all ages, and we cannot too clearly recognise it. But also we cannot too clearly understand that it is impossible for us to attain to these qualities by the road by which the Italians attained to them. We have lost the old human centralisation and the strict limitations in executive range of Renaissance art which were such safeguards, which forced coherence, significance and simplicity on their generation, so that that generation could do without a thoughtful and sound critical theory of art. Those safeguards and restraints have vanished. Nothing any longer forces coherence, significance and simplicity upon us, and therefore we cannot do without a thoughtful and sound critical theory of art. We who know enough to go wrong, must know enough to go right. If the reader would realise how grave a peril facility of execution, unguided and unrestrained, may become,

he has but to glance around at the anarchy and confusion which have everywhere invaded the domain of art. Never were energy and activity in that domain so universal as at present, yet never was the direction which all this energy and activity should take more obscure. One knows not whether to marvel most at the volume of the yearly output which this energy is responsible for, or at the number of spasmodic and contradictory impulses in which it fritters itself away. Looking down once on the great cataract south of Wady Halfa, which the Arabs call the "Belly of Stone," I saw below me a vast expanse of scattered boulders among which the water gushed and foamed, spouting in a thousand petty channels, sometimes in this direction, sometimes in that, so that in the chaos and din it was difficult to distinguish any forward movement at all. Never was the progress of water in less proportion to its energy. Voluble yet incoherent, eager yet aimless, of such a kind is the activity which possesses modern art. No one will deny what all lament. The speculation at the back of every mind is, how are we to regain the coherence and simplicity we have lost, how are we to curb and control this terrible dexterity which takes the impress of every random whim with such fatal facility?

Will the art of criticism prove equal to such a task? Intellect, with its realisation of the actual appearance and structure of things, has given us the dexterity: will intellect, pressed further and revealing inward principles of coherence and order, teach us how to curb and control it? I do not mean to suggest that criticism can ever stand us in the stead

of creative genius, still less that it can be a substitute for those profound impulses of emotion and faith which unite whole populations in a common endeavour and are the main instruments in the evolution of artistic epochs. Criticism will never of itself generate a great creative epoch. It may, however, prepare the way for such an epoch, and it may greatly enhance its value when it comes. And in the meantime, while we are still in the experimental stage, it may instil the beginnings of a purpose and a concerted aim into the experiments of the hour by formulating a body of authoritative ideas which may serve as a check on the too facile indulgence in personal vagaries, and suggest to all earnest people the existence of certain assured clues amid the labyrinth of alternatives around them.

This seems the task cut out for modern art criticism. The new circumstances under which art is now carried on are forcing every year more peremptorily this duty upon it. To share the enthusiasms of the moment, to follow instead of guiding public opinion, is an easy critical method and one sure of reward, for he will not have to wait long for recognition who supplies us with reasons for liking what we like already. But it is not by such means that criticism will justify its claim to be considered a serious intellectual vocation. That claim it can justify only by shouldering the new responsibility cast upon it and setting itself to build up a code of laws which shall answer the purpose of the old executive limitations in controlling and concentrating the creative faculty.

CHAPTER XI

THE ART OF AN ARISTOCRACY

The question of style: Style in French furniture: What constitutes it: The luxury of this furniture its sole reason for existence: French society in the age of Louis XV: Luxury and frivolity the governing motives of its every action: Aspect of France and of French policy in that age: French colonisation in the East and West: French campaigns: Decline of the military spirit: The reign of corruption: Diderot and the Encyclopædists: The seriousness of the Court etiquette: Total severance of French aristocratic life from all real practical considerations: Its approaching doom and the terror that hangs over it: The visible manifestation of these ideas embodied in its characteristic art

PROBABLY every one is secretly impressed by the prestige and significance of style, and, in some dim way, is made conscious of the fact that style possesses a meaning and is fraught with an intelligible message. The uniformity and unanimity of great buildings is proof of the existence of such a meaning. Coherence of structure stands for coherence of thought. Where not a detail, or smallest feature which in any way conflicts with the general character, is admitted, we cannot but be aware of an intelligent principle at work, selecting and rejecting. We observe also that this principle is independent of and stronger than individual will, since the more it comes into play the more the initiative of the individual is superseded and his action absorbed.

From this absorption of the individual there results that uniformity of the great styles which, we feel, can embody no petty whim or chance current of floating fashion, but a powerful, deep-seated conviction of the age. The typical buildings that stretch back in long array into the past, Doric temple and Roman palace, and early Christian basilica and Arab mosque and soaring Gothic minster, seem each to incarnate this spirit of their own time. So different, yet each instinct with definite character, they invite us, like sphinx riddles, to guess their meaning. And we are never tired of guessing. Each generation in turn addresses itself to the task, and ponders over the message which it feels must inhabit forms so harmonious and coherent.

Such is the attraction of style. But it is not confined to styles of architecture. No sooner, even in comparatively trivial subjects, do we come in touch with that peculiar uniformity and ordered motion which marks the presence of style than we are conscious of the same sense of definite character and meaning. Styles of furniture have this definite character as well as styles of building. Louis Quinze furniture is as uniform as Gothic architecture. There is, however, this difference, that the purpose and meaning of style in furniture is slighter and more on the surface than the meaning of style in architecture, and for this very reason is perhaps easier to seize. The meaning of Gothic lies deep in the heart of its age. It is the voice of national conviction, inexhaustible in interest but difficult completely to grasp and formulate. The meaning of

styles in furniture refers, as a rule, to the society of the period, and deals not so much with national conviction as with the manners and life of a class.

In attempting the following interpretation of French art I have at least this advantage, that I am dealing with a subject familiar to every one. French eighteenth-century furniture has been so long a fashion that most people's houses contain specimens of it. Moreover, besides these scattered examples, we have our great collections : we have the Wallace Collection giving us the full blaze and life of the ancient *régime*, and the Jones Collection giving us that exquisite grace and refinement which to the end kept the sight of horrible reality from the vision of poor Marie Antoinette. These are museums, not of the furniture only, but of the painting and whole system of decoration of their period. It is scarcely necessary to point out the great value of such collections as these, when it comes to the interpretation of the meaning of a style. It is, as I said, in its unanimity, in its development of the same theme and the same set of ideas in many different ways, that the significance of style is felt. All that we set eyes on, not the furniture only but the ornaments and *bric-à-brac* and pictures on the wall, must combine to convey the same impression, if that impression is to be adequately appreciated and rightly understood. It is this unanimity in variety, the consciousness of being surrounded by ideas of the same character, but reproduced in countless different ways, which fills the suites of rooms at Hertford House with the very atmosphere and life of the French eighteenth-century aristocracy. True, what we have here is no

deep and solemn conviction, such as inspires those great manifestations of style in which the spirit of an age is embodied. It is only the spirit of a section of society which pervades these salons; a section, too, confessedly frivolous and pleasure-loving and altogether lacking in seriousness and depth of interest. And yet, the delightful complacency with which the philosophy of this particular class is voiced for us by the glittering harmony through which we move, makes it impossible not to wish to transcribe the message. French furniture has often been praised for its beauty, its preciousness, its fine workmanship; but how seldom do we hear it praised for its historical significance! How seldom do we value it for what it tells us, not of the manners and tastes only, but of the ideas and limitations and view of life of this dominant section of the French nation! Let us remember, too, what there is of peculiar and fatal significance about a section of society in whose doom the spirit of *opéra bouffe* and tragedy, unparalleled frivolity and unparalleled ferocity, are so horribly mingled and involved. The airs and graces, the solemn antics and elaborate etiquette, of the French *noblesse*, relieved against the inky background of the Revolution, are inspired with a half-serious, wholly pathetic interest which, in themselves, they might not possess. *Morituri te salutant.* This *débonnaire* philosophy, so lightly echoed by the splendour of these rooms, is the philosophy which was controverted by the guillotine.

How shall we seize it? Let us choose the most obvious characteristic here present and question that; it is sure to be the most significant one. Nor

as to this most obvious characteristic, is there much room for doubt. The richness of material, the elaborate and infinitely painstaking workmanship of each object we turn to, suggest at once a consummate luxury and the manners and life of an essentially luxurious class. It is a furniture *de luxe*, if ever there was one. The gorgeousness and glitter of it, the loaded gilding of the chairs and couches, the inlays of precious woods and metals, the carved ormolu and painted porcelain, the ornaments of gold and silver and enamel, studded with gems, or wrought out of lapis lazuli, or rock crystal or other rare and precious stone, all bear out this character. The more we look, the more this impression is confirmed. Luxury here is dominant, is the master motive. It dominates, for one thing, the labour that serves it. There is never any mistaking for a moment the kind of excellence in workmanship which springs from the free use of a natural gift, and which belongs to all expert craftsmanship. It has a flexibility, what musicians call a sense of *touch*, which stamps it at once. The excellence here displayed is not of that kind. It is a forced excellence; an excellence not exerting itself freely, but constrained, whether it will or no, to celebrate the supremacy of luxury. Rarely, save among Orientals, do we find the toil of the workman lavished in a spirit so patiently servile.

This luxury, then, so universal and so dominant, is the obvious characteristic which we are to question more closely. There is a great deal of luxurious furniture made in all epochs, and perhaps, at the first glance, it might puzzle us to say what is the

difference between this universal, luxurious furniture scattered through the ages, and the luxurious furniture of Hertford House. There is, however, if we consider the matter, this difference: that with luxurious furniture in general the luxury is an attribute dependent on the use of the thing. It is an adornment and decoration of something real, an accessory or afterthought, which, though often carried far, still keeps its decorative purpose and does not thrust itself forward as the aim and object for which the thing was made.

The peculiarity, on the contrary, of the Hertford House luxury is that it is an exposition and analysis of the quality of luxury as a governing motive. Ostentation and show are not here accessory to use and comfort. They are the primary conditions. If we question any bit of this furniture we shall find this divorce from reality admitted, and this purpose of display confessed. The primary use of chairs and sofas is, after all, to sit or lie upon, and in most luxurious furniture this use is fully admitted, and the luxury consists in elaborating and perfecting the use, and by adding the easiest springs and softest cushions, making the chair or sofa still more lie-able or sit-able on. But the Hertford House chairs and sofas are made for no such purpose. The adornment lavished on them, far from emphasising their natural use, has actually annulled that use, so that they are now far less lie-able or sit-able on than any cottage bench or stool of common wood. Sight-seeing is tiring work, but we do not imagine that any visitor, however tired, has ever felt the temptation to sit and rest on one of these stiff and gilded seats.

The reader is familiar, probably, with an architectural theory which asserts that ornament must conform to structural use. This theory, which applies to a good deal besides architecture, seems to be, in the case of French eighteenth-century craftsmanship, reversed. None of it suggests use at all. We have said that the chairs and sofas do not invite us to sit on them. But neither do the glittering inlaid tables with their golden legs offer to supply the ordinary use of tables. How could we venture to hide such splendour under a litter of newspapers and novels? In the same way the *escritoires* are not made to be written at, and the cabinets are not made for putting things away in. Nothing, in short, that we look at, makes it any longer its object and purpose in life to fulfil those functions for which originally, as a species, it was called into existence. Everything has passed beyond that stage, and, by common consent, has substituted a decorative for a useful purpose. Functional use has retired into the background. Show and display have asserted themselves as the *raison d'être* and serious business of life. With immense pains and patient care, each article and object, in all these gorgeous suites of apartments, sets out to be primarily an ornament; divests itself of reality, puts away the practical purposes of life and gives itself up to an exclusively decorative treatment.

This is, as it seems to me, the *note* of the style before us. If, as we stroll from room to room, we take with us the formula "a decorative rather than a useful purpose" and apply it to each object in turn, we shall find that each will bow to the justice

of the definition. Style, as we said, marks the presence of a definite meaning or message, and here we have the meaning of these French styles; a meaning scarcely to be questioned by any one who, in such a place as Hertford House, submits himself to the cumulative influence of his surroundings. Let us, that we may the better realise it, note its moment of origin. Louis Quatorze furniture, like Louis Quinze, is luxurious and splendid, with its brocades and tapestries and rich Boulle inlays. But it is splendid in a stately, dignified fashion. It harmonises well with the ordered long arcades and the great ceremonious suites of salons of the architecture of the period. Moreover, when we come to consider it, it has by no means yet lost touch with the uses and realities of life. A study of the furniture collection in the South Kensington galleries will show that, as regards shape and form, a good deal of the simplicity and massiveness of the old Gothic furniture survives even to the eighteenth century. Through the Renaissance period this massiveness is retained, though the tendency to redundancy of carving is apparent. Down to the latter half of the sixteenth century the sculpture is for the most part out of the solid wood, and the pieces, in material and shape, are simple and strong in construction, though treated pompously. Later we come to inlaid marquetries, but still the substantial forms survive. The decoration, however overdone, does not usurp the place of function and become the ruling purpose. And this is the case even during the gorgeous Louis Quatorze period. M. Havard selects the word "majestic" as descriptive of the

art as well as the life of that period, or at least of the first half of it, and, admitting a trifle of vulgarity in the majesty, it is a well-applied epithet. The fact is Louis Quatorze splendour still cloaks something real. Affairs of state still count for something. The pride and power of the nation are still important considerations. Louis never allows any one to forget that he is a great king. This sense of dignity and stateliness runs all through the splendour of this reign, as it runs all through its life and politics, and makes one constantly aware that it is a splendour compatible with a certain large effectiveness of character and aim.

With the passing of the *grand monarque*, however, this majesty passes too. "Avec le dernier soupir du plus majestueux des rois, la majesté, déjà, quelque peu méconnue, achève de s'envoler de la terre." A new spirit that knew nothing of the duties and responsibilities of life takes its place. "En quelques instants tout change; le vieux décor s'effondre et sur ses ruines un monde nouveau, frais, pimpant, gracieux, léger, indiscret et joyeux, s'établit et s'installe." Seriousness in life and art goes out with Louis Quatorze; frivolity comes into life and art with Louis Quinze. The old strength and stateliness give place to an artificial and excessive refinement in workmanship, not of detail only but of form. What was ornament in the older style assumes control, eats form away, until form itself becomes ornament. It is the peculiarity of the studies of curves and scroll work of Louis Quinze furniture, and the slender, attenuated proportions of Louis Seize, that they no longer represent the

beautifying and perfecting of the common things of life, which after all is the true function of art as applied to things like furniture, but minister and bear witness to a life cut off from such things. It is impossible, as I have said, to associate these exquisite creations with the idea of everyday life and common use at all. They have forgotten all about use and reality, and have made of mere luxury their *raison d'être* and supreme justification. The artificial has to them become the real.

To this we return as the keynote of these later styles, and it is in this that they portray so effectively the life of the class and period to which they belong. For it is not mere luxury which is found in the French court of the eighteenth century. Luxury has generally been a habitant of courts. It is the fact that luxury has assumed control of life, that it has eaten into society's core, eaten realities and duties quite away, and become itself the only serious preoccupation of life, which stamps it, in the French society of the time, with such peculiar significance. The remarkable thing about this French society is that it is incapable of any useful function whatever. The courtiers and nobles of Louis XV.'s reign seem to have lost all power of taking an interest in anything save court scandals and intrigues. Those among them whose memory goes back to the manners of an earlier age, an age not destitute of courage, dignity and fortitude, deplore the falling off in virile virtue. They can scarcely credit the change which has taken place under their very eyes. There is no principle, not honour itself even, which has not succumbed to the corroding affects of

frivolity. The nation is visibly drifting to destruction, the signs of an approaching catastrophe grow daily more threatening, yet society jests and titters on, incapable of realising anything save its own dissipations and its own elaborate etiquette.

Let us examine this a little more closely. Let us take the formula we applied to the furniture—a decorative rather than a useful purpose—and see how it answers as applied to society. And in applying this formula to society let us note this: That it is not the dissipation and luxury themselves which are significant, but the fact that the dissipation and luxury have usurped the place of reality and become the one serious business of life. The significant symptoms, accordingly, will be those which show us this reality passing out of the serious and important things of life. Such facts as that the Prince de Conti used the dust of a crushed diamond to dry the ink of a *billet* to his mistress, or that the Queen gave the Dauphin a carriage covered with rubies and sapphires, or that Madame de Matignon paid 24,000 livres a year to have her hair brushed, or that the Comte d'Artois pulled down and rebuilt a castle to prepare a fête for the Queen, or that young de Chenonceaux lost 700,000 livres in one night's gambling, or that another courtier kept forty horses for an occasional ride in the Bois de Boulogne, and another bought up and emptied the streets leading to his residence that his amours might be conducted in secret, or that Madame du Barry's bills during the time she was in favour amounted to some four million livres; such facts as these—and they might be multiplied to fill volumes—are not, after all, the

kind of facts that best serve to show the character of the luxury of the age. They can be matched, more or less closely, in the histories of most aristocracies in most ages. The facts which are significant are those which testify to the insensibility of this pleasure-loving class to natural instincts and primitive duties and responsibilities; which testify, that is to say, to the ebbing of reality out of the serious things of life. When, for instance, a Comte de Tilly records that he was brought up by valets, or a Duc de Biron, observing that a lackey had the superintendence of his education, remarks, "J'étais d'ailleurs comme tous les enfans de mon âge et de ma sorte, les plus jolis habits pour sortir, nu et mourant de faim à la maison," then we begin to realise what was being deducted from the serious things of life to pay for the frivolities. It is curious to notice that the value of children in this society was essentially a decorative one. To be trained in the etiquette of their elders, to be dressed in the mode, the little boys in ruffles and swords, the little girls in rouge and patches with false hair piled on their heads, and have their precocious gallantry and *savoir-faire* paraded to the laughter and applause of society, were the uses they were put to. Their infantine compliments and *bons mots* are recited with enthusiasm, and they are allowed to constitute a charming addition to the lapdog and the negro page of their mother's suite.

In the same way, when, in turning over the memoirs of the day, we find ourselves arrested by phrase after phrase and episode after episode which record how entirely the whole meaning of marriage

and married life has been swamped in a sea of intrigues and petty liaisons, the same sense of the sapping of the serious things of life is brought home to us. One almost hesitates to intrude moral considerations into the presence of anything so irresponsibly gay as the society of the French court, for indeed there is something disarming and next door to innocent in the excesses of people who are quite unaffectedly and honestly blind to the serious side of things. At the same time, nothing can alter the fact that fathers and mothers and children and husbands and wives are among life's chief realities, and, by a normally healthy society, must be so treated. The truth, of course, is that where great store is set on trifling things and the pursuit of them followed up with intense seriousness, this seriousness has to be paid for in the loss of a corresponding amount of interest in what is real and important. It is this loss of interest in what is real and important which is the really deadly symptom of the French court life of the period. The supreme importance attached to gaiety and dissipation and show has so sucked the strength out of all real and important functions that at last the sense for reality has become a lost sense. Children are not realities; wives and husbands are not realities; victories and defeats, as we shall see in a minute, and shame and dishonour are not realities. Nothing can exist, nothing can occur, but it is turned immediately into food for jests. The defeat of Hochstadt is deplored because the skit on it lacks humour. Rosbach is approved because its verses are excellent. Necker's attempts as Minister of

Finance to stave off national bankruptcy count for nothing. His fitness for his office is proved by a particularly splendid banquet given to the fashionable world of Paris. Every event however tragic, every crisis however grave, is dealt with as comedy. In proportion as the unreal has become real, the real has become unreal.

But this instinct for unreality, which we come to recognise in the court party as quite unfailing, reveals itself in much more important than merely social matters. It reveals itself with just as much infallibility in matters of state policy and national government. It is important to remember in this connection that French society and the French Government were, in spirit, one. Richelieu's policy, bequeathed by him to Louis Quatorze, of wrecking feudalism once and for all by depriving the great territorial nobles of their civil duties and responsibilities, was fated to have as grave an effect on the King's authority as on that of the nobles themselves. Shorn of all useful purpose, their authority and functions in their own departments usurped by crown officials, the aristocrats left their huge chateaux and estates and gravitated to Versailles. If they could not be useful let them be ornamental. It had been decreed that the State should be nothing to them, they proceeded to make society everything. Hence was developed that purely decorative purpose which became the distinguishing note of this French society. But that purpose did not stop at society. It proceeded to corrupt the governing principle itself. Imbedded, so to speak, in the heart of this society, breathing its air, living its life, receiving its

influence, cut off by it from the outer world, the monarchy became rapidly infected with its spirit. It had created a frivolous class and itself caught the disease. The Government which ensued, a Government of mistresses and favourites of mistresses, was animated purely by the prevailing social frivolity. Henceforth monarchy and aristocracy advance to their doom hand in hand.

We shall not be wandering from our subject if, without plunging too deeply into history, we dwell just long enough on one or two stages of this progress to bring out the special characteristic we have in view. Several of the chief factors which were leading up to the Revolution had their origin in the middle years of the eighteenth century, and of these the two chief, perhaps, were the war of the Austrian Alliance and the philosophic movement in literature. It is interesting to observe how thoroughly in their own manner was the handling by the Court party of these significant events.

During these middle years of the eighteenth century two distinct and opposed lines of policy were offered to France to choose between. One was a policy of concentration ; an internal, exclusively European policy, leading to no national development and addressing itself merely to the adjustment of European rivalries. The other was a policy of expansion, consisting in the recognition of the larger opportunities which the newly realised East and West were beginning to unfold to human enterprise. In this latter policy lay, of course, France's true line of progress. Her position, both in India and America, was strong. In America she

laid claim to the whole basin of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi, and was prepared to back her claims. In 1754 Washington's expedition was forced to capitulate, and in the following year Braddock's much more important force was practically annihilated. The English Company of the Ohio was quashed, and English attempts at expansion everywhere checked and foiled. French forts and blockhouses rose on every eminence and commanded every valley. It was France's avowed object to drive the English east of the Alleghany Mountains, and she was in a fair way by 1755 to accomplish it. Similarly, in India the boldness of Dupleix's schemes of French conquest and dominion seemed justified by circumstances. In the rivalry between French Pondichéry and British Madras the French settlement had the best of it. Madras fell in 1746. In 1748 the combined land and sea expeditions under Major Lawrence and Admiral Boscawen against Pondichéry were repulsed. It is noticeable that in these colonial wars the French leaders were usually men of remarkable energy and dash, prompt to act and ready to accept full responsibility for their actions. Such were La Gâllisonière, Du Quesne and La Corne in America, and Dupleix, La Bourdonnais and Lally in India. They were well supported, and the vigour with which France's interests were served in these enterprises is in strong contrast to the nerveless and feeble character of her operations in Europe. The truth is that it was in the opportunities for national expansion promised by India that the hopes of French development lay, and so long as she showed a disposition to avail

herself of these opportunities France drew to her service all the keenest and most adventurous spirits among her children. Instinctively these felt the inspiration of a truly national enterprise, and their activity and vigorous tactics bear witness to the stimulus which arises from co-operating with the spirit of the age.

Their designs, however, as we know, came to nothing. In a few years' time French hopes of expansion both in America and India were blighted. Not for a century was France to resume, under healthier auspices, the scheme of national development which Du Quesne and Dupleix had foreshadowed. What flung her back was the Austrian Alliance. Of the two policies she chose the retrograde one. In bucklering the cause of Austria against the progressive races of the North, France associated herself with a set of worn-out, aristocratic and feudal traditions which were sinking into decrepitude. She championed the ideas that were going out against the ideas that were coming in. The circumstances attending the treaty and the conduct of the war that followed were all of a piece. La Pompadour, as the reader knows, was the guiding spirit throughout. It is not every day that an angry woman can make the armed strength of a nation the instrument of her jealousies and caprices, but La Pompadour enjoyed that luxury. Frederick never troubled to conceal his opinion of her, and his contemptuous "Je ne la connais pas," when Voltaire presented him her compliments, was in stinging contrast to Maria Theresa's adroit flattery. Old Kaunitz, past master in the diplomacy of courts,

easily perceived the possibilities of the situation, and, while the Empress plied the mistress with compliments, made it the object of his manœuvres to secure the latter's good offices on behalf of Austria. That done, all was done. La Pompadour was France's mistress as much as Louis's. Louis reigned and his mistress governed, was the saying. The crisis, though the fate of nations hang on it, is purely farcical in motive and idea. La Pompadour, snubbed or noticed by the legitimate sovereigns of Europe, suggests to our fancy a Becky Sharp, railing at the Countess of Bareacres, or fawning on the Marquis of Steyne. It was for causes such as these that the greatest colonising chances ever laid before a nation were neglected and thrown away.

Needless to say the whole Court party threw itself into the Pompadour quarrel with immense enthusiasm. If there was a nation, or society rather, which the French nobility could sympathise with it was to be found in Vienna. If there was a nation repellent to them above all others it was practical-minded, unpolished Prussia. Frederick himself might stand for all they most despised and least understood in human nature. They armed for the campaign with delight and an inconceivable frivolity. It was a new distraction. With the fatuity which attended them whenever they came in contact with realities they conceived that their march through Germany would be a species of grand boar hunt. Encumbered with baggage-trains of fine clothes, perfumes and rare wines they advanced as far as Rosbach, where Frederick's rough troopers, in the space of a single hour, scattered them to the four

winds. Between Bernis, La Pompadour's Minister in Paris, and the generals in the field there ensues a correspondence which curiously brings out for us the spirit in which France was conducting this enterprise. Soubise, chosen to command, as we are carefully told, for no military qualifications, but for his ingratiating manners and popularity at Court, veils the disgrace of a rout he seems scarcely to comprehend under a tissue of euphuisms, excuses and compliments. The more experienced Saint-Germain writes bluntly that he had under him a band of thieves and assassins who were as ready to mutiny in camp as they were to run away in the field. "Never was anything like it; never was there such a rotten army. The King has about the worst infantry under the sun and the most undisciplined. How can we fight with such troops? The country was covered with our runaway men for forty miles round." He adds savagely, what was indeed the thought of many, "Our nation has no longer any military spirit, and the sentiment of honour is dead in us." The veteran Belleisle writes in similar terms. Never would he have believed that those Imperial troops, whose traditions and actions had been so splendid, could lose thus suddenly their glorious reputation and become the scorn of Europe. "We were not ready," wails poor Bernis in reply; "we had to begin without proper preparation; on s'est embarqué téméraire-ment." The army has no food, and no shoes, half of it is without clothes and the cavalry lack boots. Saint-Germain cuts in with a few trenchant home truths about the men and officers. The army indeed

appears to be a very faithful image of the nation at large. "The misery of the soldiers would make your heart bleed. They live abject and despised, like chained dogs kept for fighting." The officers meanwhile entirely neglect their military duties and devote all their energies to plundering the country through which they pass.

As the campaign progresses the rage and wonder of those conducting or watching it increase. "Mon Dieu, que notre nation est aplatie! et qu'on fait peu d'attention à la décadence du courage et de l'honneur en France!" "Dans cent régiments on ne trouverait pas six bons lieutenants-colonels. Nous ne savons plus faire la guerre. Nulle nation n'est moins militaire que la nôtre . . . Nos officiers ne valent rien, ils sont indignes de servir. Tous soupirent après le repos, l'oisiveté et l'argent." The Versailles system of promotion is naturally the subject of some criticism. "Our best officers, recognising that there is no chance of promotion for them since they are not under Court protection, can ill endure to be commanded by a lot of boobies. How should young colonels, la plupart avec des mœurs de grisette, reinspire the army with the ideas of honour and constancy?" And for the hundredth time the lament is heard that "ignorance, frivolity, negligence, cowardice have replaced the old virile and heroic virtues."

To the actors in these scenes the general incapacity and decadence were inexplicable, and to the few who remembered earlier and better traditions the present seemed, as Bernis calls it, a horrible nightmare. To us, looking back, the obvious suggestion

offers itself that the strength of France was not put forth in this war because it was not really a French war at all. Engaged in a quarrel of the King's mistress, and led by the favourites and flunkeys of Versailles, the rout of the French army at Rosbach, and the disgraces of the campaigns that followed reveal to us, not the degeneration of French character and courage, but rather the total separation and divorce of the governing body from the realities of French national life. It is curious to observe how, while the pride of Choiseul and the soldierly instinct of Saint-Germain and old Belleisle prompt them to a reconstruction of the army and the continuance of the war, Bernis, weaker but much more clear-sighted, foretells the failure of such a policy and lays a finger on the real cause of mischief. "I am floored, not by our misfortunes, but by the certainty that the true remedy will never be applied. There is but one cure—a better Government. Give me a good Government and I will go on with the war, but there is no chance of our getting one." A Government in touch with the realities of the nation's life, that is what poor Bernis feels the want of. It is the hopeless frivolity of the present government that puzzles and sickens, and indeed seriously threatens to send him off his head. "We live like children," he moans, "the wills of children control the governing principle." The King, "nullement inquiet de nos inquiétudes ni embarrassé de nos embarras," has distractions of his own into which it is well not to pry too closely. The Court is the Court still. Its gaiety suffers no eclipse. Rather the contrary, for defeats are always

something to talk about, and the loss of an army is almost sure to inspire a good joke or two. In vain poor Bernis tears his hair. "Il n'y a pas d'exemple qu'on fait si gros jeu avec la même indifférence qu'on jouerait une partie de quadrille." At last he can stand it no longer. The jokes and gibbering laughter round him break down his nerves. He begs and implores to be dismissed from office, and, having with infinite trouble achieved his own disgrace, creeps away to his exile at Vic-sur-Aisne, glad at any price to be quit of the nightmare existence he had of late been leading.

All these symptoms, it will be seen, are of a piece, and all may be referred to the same cause. The purposeless, unmeaning quarrel, the unclothed and unfed armies, the Court-favourite generals, the languid operations in the field, the utter indifference of the nation to the whole business, the idiot laughter of the courtiers at their own reverses, the frenzy and lamentations of poor Bernis—what are all these signs but a testimony to the one root-fact that the French Court has got altogether out of touch with the realities of life? Granting that, all the rest follows. In conception and execution the campaign is a consistent and perfectly frank avowal that in the governing body frivolity has passed into that phase when it assumes control of life. From that final and terrible phase there is no return possible. The rout of armies, the loss of colonies, the starvation and misery of the people are events which will be dealt with by this frivolity in accordance with the laws of its own nature. You may cut these people in pieces, but you will get nothing

real or serious out of them. They will pay their visits of ceremony and talk trifles and gallantry in the Bastille, and reserve, in all good faith, their most polished witticisms for the scaffold.

And if these great events and the policy adopted by the country bear witness to the dying out of the sense of reality in the Court party, not less clearly does this also appear when we turn to the intellectual movement of the age. In France, more distinctly than elsewhere, the idea leads the way, and the great outburst of the Revolution was preceded forty years earlier by an intellectual revolt of corresponding energy and daring. It was during the decade from 1750 to 1760 that this revolt declared itself. The appearance of the Encyclopædia may be likened to that moment in a general action when, to the scattered shots of scouts and advance guards, succeeds the roar of heavy guns in position. The effect of the publication in affording a rallying-point for independent thinkers was decisive. The persecutions by the Court and the Jesuits broke in vain upon the movement. D'Alembert might be choked off, but the indomitable Diderot gathered round him a body of associates of unflinching tenacity. The crisis had in it something of the excitement of an actual conflict. It differs from most philosophic enterprises in this, that the theories and definitions of the Encyclopædists are not abstract theories and definitions, but are designed for immediate use. They are not shot off into the air, but are aimed at a mark. The appearance of the first instalment of the Encyclopædia marks the formal declaration of the mind of France for the nation and the people, and against

the Court and the privileged class, and the agitation which ensued is, as Lord Morley in his Life of Diderot points out, not a speculative and philosophical agitation, but a political and social one.

"Political ideas have been grasped as instruments; philosophy has become patriotism," are phrases in which Lord Morley defines the character of this great mental awakening. In article after article of the Encyclopædia the evils of the age are hinted at or criticised. That more than a quarter of France was lying untilled or abandoned; that arbitrary imposts resulted in the flight of the population to the large towns; that large tracts of land are turned into wildernesses by the abuse of the game-preserving system; that an equal distribution of profits is preferable to an unequal one, since the latter results in the division of the people into two classes, "one gorged with riches, the other perishing in misery"; these are the kind of points raised, and these, it will be observed, are thrusts dealt in earnest. The Society of Jesus clamours for the suppression of the publication. The King wavers betwixt a snarl and a whimper. It is suppressed, and Diderot is imprisoned. It is continued, and Diderot is released. Meantime the movement all over the country gathers head. In every province and country town the pens are going. Ideas, with that wicked sparkle in them which marks them as missiles, are hurled from all sides against King and courtiers and priests alike. The closeness of the act behind the thought is indicated by the public excitement, and outrageous placards, pamphlets, and satires of ever-increasing bitterness and directness give that excitement vent.

But this, after all, reveals a destructive rather than a constructive purpose, and it is by its constructive purpose that the real character of a movement declares itself. What, then, is the constructive purpose of the Encyclopædists? It may be indicated in two words of Lord Morley's. They were inspired, he says, by an "earnest enthusiasm for all the purposes, interests, and details of productive industry," and, following this bent, they attached an importance to physical science and the practical arts which marks "the distinct association with pacific labour of honour and a kind of glory, such as had hitherto been reserved for knights and friars." A keen sympathy with, and earnest desire to resuscitate, all that is practical, all that is productive; sympathy with the workshop, the factory, the agriculturist, the artisan, with all forms of useful and fruitful labour, that is what constitutes the attitude of the Encyclopædists towards life. And the desire to revive conditions favourable to this useful and fruitful labour is their constructive purpose. This is what forms the bond of brotherhood between them, and this is what marks the movement as the definite recognition of the basis of a new "society."

And all this may be summed up by saying that the object of this movement was to regain touch with the realities of life. That is the long and short of it. At the very moment when frivolity is entering into undisputed command and, in all affairs of public policy and private life, is busy turning everything into unreality to suit its own nature, the mind of France awakens to the character of the crisis and

declares for poor despised reality. To explode the shams and make-believes which the spirit of frivolity had evolved, and to raise up and reanimate all those down-trodden and oppressed causes and interests which constituted what was real in the national life, became the aim of the French intellect. If ever a nation was saved by ideas France was so saved in the last half of the eighteenth century. This movement it was which in the world of thought and of ideas represented reality. What share had the Court party in such a movement; what welcome did they accord it?

No mental sensation is more curious than the change we are conscious of in passing from the affairs of the world, and the eager arguments and expositions which were exciting the interest and curiosity of all minds in France capable of such emotions, to the affairs of the Court. Here all life seems under the power of some spell or enchantment. No sound from without penetrates the magic circle. It has its own ideas, its own standards, its own tastes and engrossing pursuits, all of which are ignored by the world as the affairs of the world are by it ignored. Looking at it from the outside you would say that life within this circle was some acted charade or pantomime, and that by-and-by the actors would relapse into the pursuits and duties of everyday life. Only when we have turned the pages slowly of some of the abounding memoirs of the period do we begin to acquire ourselves some feeble consciousness of the seeming reality and apparent genuineness of this sham existence. Let us quote, as a specimen, the following account of

the introduction of the Venetian ambassadress to Court:

"Madame de Luynes made a curtsy to the Queen and another to the ladies of the Court and then went to receive Madame Zeno, the wife of the Venetian ambassador, outside the door of the Queen's room. They saluted each other, complimented and kissed each other. Then they came in to the Queen, Madame de Luynes walking in front to the right, then the ambassadress, and after her M. de Sainclot. Madame de Luynes having taken up her position, Madame Zeno made one curtsy to the Queen as she entered, a second in the middle of the room, a third when she got close to the Queen, and then kissed the hem of her Majesty's robe and made a fourth curtsy, at the same time addressing her a brief compliment. A few minutes afterwards the King arrived by the salon which serves as the Queen's withdrawing-room. Madame Zeno immediately rose, as did all the ladies. She made two or three curtsys, during which the King, who had bowed to her as he came in, advanced and kissed her, but only on one side of the face. Madame Zeno then made another curtsy. The King retired the same way he came. The ambassadress then proceeded to repeat the same three curtsys she had made on entering, except that, after the second, she made one to the Court ladies, and reserved the third till she got to the door."

The Duc de Luynes, the husband of the lady who made the first curtsy, was a very favourable

specimen of a French aristocrat of his time. He wrote his memoirs in seventeen volumes, and of those seventeen volumes the above quotation is a fair sample. Upright and honourable, not wanting in sense, he was a courtier and shared the limitations of interest of the Court party. If the reader will immerse himself for an hour or two in these memoirs of the Duc de Luynes, he will find that, as the details of an interminable etiquette are described and dissected, the solemn and unquestioning seriousness of the treatment will gradually have its effect upon him. Court ceremony and Court gossip will envelop him. He will find himself accepting as matter of deadly interest the most petty jealousies and intrigues, scandals and whisperings, sarcasms and effronteries, machinations and plots of mistresses and favourites, and all the thousand trifles which compose the tissue of this effete and bloodless existence. And as the unreal becomes real, the real will become unreal. He will hear the voices, speaking the thoughts that are soon to be put into terrible actions, die away into an unmeaning murmur. Never is the serenity of this "beautiful Armida-Palace," to use one of Carlyle's phrases, "where the inmates live enchanted lives," broken by any sound from the outer world. A faint and faraway note, with little meaning left in it, occasionally penetrates, and our good duke raises his head to catch the unusual sounds. "On dit que les esprits s'échauffent," he mutters, vaguely troubled, to himself. And again, "Les esprits sont encore bien éloignés de la soumission que le roi demande."

And yet again, more puzzled than ever, "la conduite du Parlement devient plus singulière de jour en jour." Then back we go to the serious business of life, to the number of horses Madame de la Tournelle is to be allowed to drive in her carriage, or the varieties of the royal meals and the distinction between *pot royal*, *petit pot royal*, and *grand pot royal.*

The severance of a section of society from the mind and purpose of its age is, in the case of France, particularly serious; for it is by her hold on ideas that France supports herself. That the English aristocracy of the Georgian reign was inaccessible to ideas did not greatly matter, since, the English genius being practical, the hold of our aristocracy on the national life has always consisted in the active part played by it in party politics and the government of the country. The French aristocracy had long lost any such hold as that; but another hold, the participation in ideas, still remained possible for it, and constituted its last chance of salvation. It was not taken. The dilettante interest in the new philosophy which titillated the curiosity of French society stopped far short of active participation. The reality of that interest was tested by the Turgot Administration. Himself perhaps the greatest example living of that spirit at once philosophical and practical which animated the thought of the age, Turgot, as a desperate remedy, was made Minister of Finance in 1774, and the only really sincere and heartfelt utterance of the Court on record is the storm of protest with which it met his suggestion that it should abandon the separate and

artificial system of life and shoulder the common burden of the economic crisis.

That protesting storm and the dismissal of Turgot which followed it signified the rejection by Versailles of the ideas of the age, and is another remarkable proof of the impossibility of getting a thoroughly artificial class to face reality. For all Taine's deceptive industry it is clear that the new philosophy, the philanthropic craze, the return to nature, were never more to the Court party than toys and poses. Into the confines of the enchanted circle the advice and warning of Turgot and the reasoning of Diderot and Voltaire came with the same dull and unmeaning sound as the booming of the Rosbach cannon. The impression left upon one's mind at last is a sense of separation amounting to total severance between Court life and real life. That severance from reality we distinguish as the *note* of the Versailles section of the community, and we shall surely be not far wrong if we discern in this the necessity and justification of the oncoming Revolution. The law of nature is inevitable that the thing cut off from use is cut off from life. A class whose splendour and luxury are the decoration on solid services performed may be yet secure. But a class whose splendour and luxury are their own sole justification and aim in life is heading dead for the guillotine.

Perhaps the reader will smile if, turning from these great affairs of state once more to the Hertford House galleries, I suggest that the spirit we have been observing in matters of government is the spirit which reigns among these tables and

cabinets. And yet, for those quick at seizing the character and significance of such things, I doubt if there exists in history, literature, or anything else, any such effective help towards a complete realisation of the French Court and society as is provided by an exhibition like the Wallace Collection. Let the student who would really appreciate the causes of the Revolution leave for an afternoon his journals and memoirs, and, instead of building up laboriously an intellectual conception of those causes, lay himself open here to an æsthetic conception of them. Let him note the agreement and unanimity of all that he sees in these rooms, and then go on to seek the reason of this unanimity in the common meaning and intention which all these things share. Let him ask if this meaning does not consist in the essentially decorative purpose of every object present, in the fact that they one and all strain after show and splendour, and turn their backs on reality and the uses of everyday life. Is it possible to conceive a better expression of that spirit which the aristocrats of France, shorn of their civic duties and feudal responsibilities, brought to Versailles, with which they inoculated the ruling principle, and which, from that hour on, marks every act not of society only but of the government? Henceforth take any transaction you like, private or public, and the spirit animating them will be the same. Always the enthusiasm displayed is for the unrealities at the expense of the realities of life. Children are turned into toys, marriage is broken up by fugitive intrigues, the colonies are abandoned in favour of an Austrian Alliance, endless discourses on Court

punctilio occupy men's minds to the exclusion of the burning thoughts that are spurring France on to deeds. On all sides and under all circumstances the Court and the Court party, with an infallible instinct, select the unreal and forsake the real. Their genuine preoccupations, those into which they throw their serious effort, are purely frivolous. To eclipse the last mad freak by one still madder, at all costs so to sparkle as to make jaded fashion stare, these are the things worth living for. In every crisis the test we learnt in the Hertford House galleries, "a decorative rather than a useful purpose," applies to the conduct of society and the government.

These are, it seems to me, considerations which should be borne in mind by lovers of this furniture. They endue it with additional interest. Of its many other attractions there is the less need to speak, since these are nowadays appreciated at even more perhaps than their legitimate value. But its historical interest has been unaccountably neglected, and of the large number of people to whose sympathies it appeals so forcibly and who admire it so enthusiastically, few, probably, see in it a representation of the spirit which for fifty years dominated the French Government and the French aristocracy, and which led up finally to the catastrophe of 1789.

SUMMARY

IN a concluding page or two I would ask the reader to cast an eye back on the ground we have traversed and consider what kind of significance and value we have found in art. We have surveyed the Egyptian people and their ancient immovable civilisation. We have perceived in them a race mentally archaic, that is to say, a race not inspired and goaded forward on the path of progress by intellectual curiosity but fixed in a smooth-worn rut of usage and mechanical routine, having some relation, it would seem, to the physical conformation of the country and circumstances in which they lived. In Egyptian art we have seen a replica or image, as it were, of this mental condition. The sausage-shaped columns of Egyptian temples and the squat and shapeless entablatures, so blind to all structural purpose, so intellectually unconscious of their relation and proportion to each other, have seemed the mere expression of the state of intellectual insensibility in which they were conceived. And so too the conventionally sculptured figures, unreal and insensible of the ideas and emotions expressible through the human form, were equally significant of a state of being in which the power of conscious observation and analysis was altogether dormant. Here was an

art which spoke to us of the mental condition of the Nile-dwelling people and brought that condition home to us, an art, in short, which helped us to *know* those who created it.

Then we turned to the Greeks, and directly we turned to them we realised that we had to do with a people who were intellectually alive, a people in whom the intellectual faculty had become sensitive and awake. We saw the awakened faculty declaring itself in a quite new vitality and flexibility of thought in literature and philosophy and all ideas connected with the right ordering of life and conduct. The note which makes all intellectualised races kin is first struck by the Greeks. And simultaneously with this we saw Greek art shaking off the old mechanical routine and gradually animated by a full intellectual conception of its functions. We saw the shapeless Egyptian columns realised as actual columns and the stereotyped Egyptian figures realised as actual figures, each with all the possibilities latent in it intellectually developed. Here again the art gave us an indication of the genius of the race that called it forth and helped us to *know* the race.

And when we went on to consider, in the case of S. Sophia, the Greek treatment of Roman principles of construction, this knowledge became clearer and more vivid. We found the arch and lintel principles, which in Roman architecture had been forced into unwilling combination, separated from each other and, in Justinian's great church, as full and perfect an exposition of the arch principle given as in earlier days, in the case of the Doric temple, had been given of the lintel principle. Such examples

must familiarise us with the character of the Greek genius and help us to realise its function and the part it played in classic thought. We have added elements to thought since the Greek days, but still the intellectual lucidity of the Greek mind has the power to correct and instruct the intellectual side of our own nature. This intellectual lucidity was, I suppose, the most precious thing in classical life, and its power and influence, when manifested in works of art, touch us with a singular intimacy. Greek art, I repeat, looked at in this way, helps us to *know* the Greeks.

And again when we passed on to Arab art the same kind of insight was accorded. We found ourselves dealing, in the Arabs, with a people of an extraordinarily strongly marked and peculiar temperament; a people ardent, restless and volatile as flame; a people instinctively impatient of steadfastness and stability in all its forms. The broad gap between classical civilisation and the civilisation of modern Europe is occupied, as mist occupies a valley, by the fantastic exhalations of Arab science and Arab philosophy and Arab divinity. And, as was easy to see, all these manifestations of Arab activity, all the thoughts of the desert race, all its efforts in learning, in governing, in campaigning, were penetrated by that light, whimsical and fiery impulsiveness which, to those who know the Arab in his native haunts, seems so evidently an outcome of the desert itself. This character, so impulsive, yet so fickle and unstable in all its impulses, is precisely the character given back to us by the whimsically shaped arches, the ingeniously tangled designs and all the

medley of fantastic notions and experiments, tossed together in the flimsiest manner of construction possible, which constitute Arab architecture. An architecture like this I say, as we get to understand its point of view and enter into the spirit of it, helps us likewise to understand its builders. It is a means given to us to know the Arab.

Well then, leaving the Arab, we came on to the style of the Northern nations; and this, too, we looked at from the same point of view, the point of view of life. We glanced back into history. We realised that the decrepitude and decay of the Roman Empire were due to the lack of human vitality and individual initiative. We saw those qualities supplied and reinstilled into the West by the Gothic invaders. We recognised this as the contribution of our race to the sum total of human ideas. In due course we saw the barbaric nations forming and the barbaric communities assuming definite shape. We looked at these mediæval societies and at once we recognised in all their institutions, guilds, corporate rights and ideals of citizenship the manifestations and working out of the old Gothic leaven of liberty. This was new in society. We turned to art. In the Gothic minster the spirit of democratic freedom and initiative seemed embodied for the first time. The very stone seemed animated. Here was something new in art, yet how graphic of the life of the age! The tall battling vaults hold the spirit of seven centuries of racial strife. The keen spire that crowns and stills them quivers with the same emotional fervour as the great crusading pilgrimages in which medi-

æval energy found its safety-valve. Down in the shadows of the aisles capital and corbel are carved with illustrations of the popular life of the day: sowing and reaping and ploughing, the blacksmith's craft and the carpenter's and the mason's, the fears, the superstitions, the fancies beautiful or grotesque that had caught the popular ear. All these are the themes and motives which animate the new style of building. Let the reader accept the clue. What is it that signalises this architecture as unique among the styles of the world? Its spirit of democratic energy, the tide of human vitality that runs through it. Turn to the race that built it and ask the same question: what is it that signalises that race among the races of the world? And the answer comes back in the same words again—its spirit of democratic energy and the human vitality which animate it. Can any one fail to feel the insight into human character afforded by an art like this?

We came to the Renaissance, to the age of intellect's awakening. In human society, in Italy first, then spreading over Europe, we recognised the intellectual influence; we recognised its temper, its spirit of calmness, its disinterested and wide survey. This was lacking in mediæval society. But it was not lacking in classical society; no, it was the thing of chiefest value in that society, the note which distinguishes classic thought. Here was the inward, mental bond between the modern Renaissance and Rome and Athens. And how was it in art? The old classical architecture had developed and preserved one thing of value, the sense of spaciousness and aerial amplitude which

belong to horizontal expansion. That had quite gone out of fashion in mediæval architecture. The Gothic point has no knowledge of the quality of breadth any more than Gothic society has knowledge of the intellectual temper and survey. But with Renaissance art the old quality comes back. Breadth is once more esteemed ; spaciousness again takes rank as an æsthetic motive. Why? Because that force is once more active in life which thus voices itself into art. Because intellectualism with its calm and luminous outlook always will clothe itself in an amply proportioned art and make itself a home in an architecture of horizontal expansion. This is intellect's perpetual endeavour ; and who, feeling the natural affinity which exists between intellect in man and breadth in architecture, can watch and follow throughout Europe the change from vertical to horizontal without feeling that a light is being thrown for him on the mental changes that are going on that it is these changes which the changes in style portray, and that, here again, art is fulfilling its function of an interpreter of human thought and character?

Then with sculpture. What is it that prevents Renaissance society from being really and serenely classical, from being secure and content in the sphere of intellectualism? The Western mind has received into itself the spiritual idea, and its own spiritual faculties have been quickened and stimulated by the appeal. It can never again retrieve the old classical standpoint. It can never be satisfied again with a merely human ideal, nor ever succeed again in limiting man's thoughts and

aspirations within the definable bounds of the understanding. There is a seething spiritual discontent underlying the Renaissance, and spiritual whisperings and admonitions distract its intellectual calm. What could this do but come out in the art of the period? Once before the same thing had happened. Classical thought in its later stages had been impregnated with spiritual ideas, and immediately, as thought passed from the definable to the indefinable plane, the sculptured creations of the artist exhibited the transition in their own inarticulate struggles and half-vain efforts at expression. The Renaissance revealed in life the combination of the same conflicting motives—the intellectualism that had revived and the spiritualism that would not be quenched; and immediately in art the same symptoms reappear and the inexpressible emotions in the marble betray the conflict that is going on in the minds of men. Who that inclines to summarise the Renaissance as the age of Reason and have done with it, can enter into the testimony thus afforded by art without feeling his consciousness of that age deepen and expand? Hidden motives come to light, spiritual depths are revealed, a combat betwixt inward and outward is visibly depicted. There dawns upon his mind a different, a completer conception of the spirit of those centuries, and history itself and the types and characters and acts of men take on a new significance and render up a fuller meaning. Such are the consequences of accepting art as an expression of life.

And then, from the brief glance we took at the course and development of painting, the same

results were forthcoming. The intellectual awakening of the Renaissance was, in life, gradual. It began, as always, in the study of man himself—the discovery of man by man as it has been called—and it extended gradually into all the departments of science and a zealous analysis of all the phenomena of nature. Art followed the same course. The domains which intellect conquered were yielded successively to art. Would the reader realise what the nature and feeling of the intellectual awakening was like? Let him stand before some half-way Renaissance picture and observe what things have come under intellect's survey and what have not· Some zones are still wrapped in obscurity; others are fully illuminated. To the end the wild haunts of nature maintain a degree of inaccessibility and remain unpaintable; and indeed, as we often say, it is only quite lately that the wild and rugged kinds of scenery have come to possess any attraction for man, these being the most remote of all from human sympathy. Perhaps the effort at comprehension which art always makes of us is harder in this instance than in the others I have attempted. I believe we have next to no idea what seeing with the brain, or intellectual realisation, really means, or in the least appreciate the difference between that and the mere physical act of seeing. We would admit that a cow's vision of a landscape is not our vision. Yet the difference is not in the seeing. The image of the landscape on the retina of the cow's eye is, I imagine, the same as our own, but its elements are not distinguishable to the cow because they are not mentally appreciated.

In the same way primitive races and savages often do not distinguish at all differences in things which do not immediately concern them. Never having taken a mental interest in such things, the significance of their shape, or even that they have a distinctive shape, has never struck them. That realisation, when it comes, imparts to the mind a sensation of delight, for it is more than the recognition of an outward phenomenon ; it is a discovery by the mind of a faculty of its own. The Renaissance is full of this delight of the mind in putting forth its own power of recognition. We feel that delight in the life of the age, in the kind of breathless expectation which hovers over society, in the keen mental excitement which prevails. Yet how hard to realise the feelings that prevailed. What gives the excitement, the expectation is precisely the fact that things are undergoing before men's very eyes a metamorphosis. What we want is some kind of evidence that shall catch the metamorphosis half way. The reader has seen in picture-cleaners' shops canvases half black and obscured, half clean and clearly defined. The visible universe in the age of the Renaissance is making this change from obscure to clear before men's eyes. In Italian painting we have as nearly the evidence we want as it is possible to get it. We have the unrealised, obscure side of nature given in all its dull opaqueness and the realised side given in all its clearness, while passing from canvas to canvas we see the vision extending and one thing after another coming out of darkness into light, thereby giving us an actual representation of the very process which was the inspiration of the

Renaissance. What other instance, I ask, can do this as art can do it, or aid us as art can aid us to a comprehension of the mind of that epoch ?

Finally we came down to a time comparatively recent and cast a glance at the French life and art of the eighteenth century. I need not here recapitulate those reasons and arguments which led us to recognise in the art of the age an image of existing society and, as it were, a commentary on the conditions which were sweeping France onward to the rocks of the Revolution. My object in this brief recapitulation is to leave the reader, if I can, with a clear impression on his mind of the point of view from which we have been considering art, or rather of the purpose and use to which we have been endeavouring to put it. The proper study of mankind is man, says Pope. Certainly of all earthly studies it is the most engrossing and permanently interesting. The wish of every historian is to make real to our mind's eye past generations. The secret hope, whether we know it or not, which drives us to histories and all memoirs and old records of the past, is the hope of getting a little closer in sympathy and understanding to those vanished ones, who yet, we blindly feel, have a share in us to this day; so that in seeking to know them it is after self-knowledge, perhaps, that we are groping.

Such is the strong appeal of the past, and it is in this connection that I want the reader to think of the view of art I have been suggesting. How are we to obtain the desired knowledge ? Usually only the help of literature is invoked. We can read histories, or we can read romances. The objection

to the first is that what we get are not real men and women, but only evidence to the effect that certain men and women acted in a certain way. The objection to the second is that while real men and women are represented, their reality is no proof that they ever existed. The reality of Bois Guilbert and Front de Bœuf in Scott's pages is no proof that they ever existed as Norman barons. In short, what the historians give us of the past is usually the truth with very little life in it, and what the romancers give us is usually the life with very little truth in it.

But art's testimony is both living and true. How living it is those who have thought themselves into the forms of Egyptian and Greek art, or have felt in their own blood the excitement of the Arab attack on ancient structural features, or lived through, in art, any of its great crises and transformations, can best tell. The forms of art are wrought out of the living spirit of their age. And they are true, they are to be trusted. It is no question, in their case, of one man's thoughts, or one man's imagination. Art in its great creative phases is an utterance, an embodiment, of the ruling thought and prevalent conviction of that age. It is an expression of life registered at the moment when life is most capable of articulate utterance. This is what I want the reader to feel; this is what I would attempt to indicate to him. To be one with our kind is a human instinct best realised through the study of art, for it is through the study of art that we enter into the thoughts of mankind.

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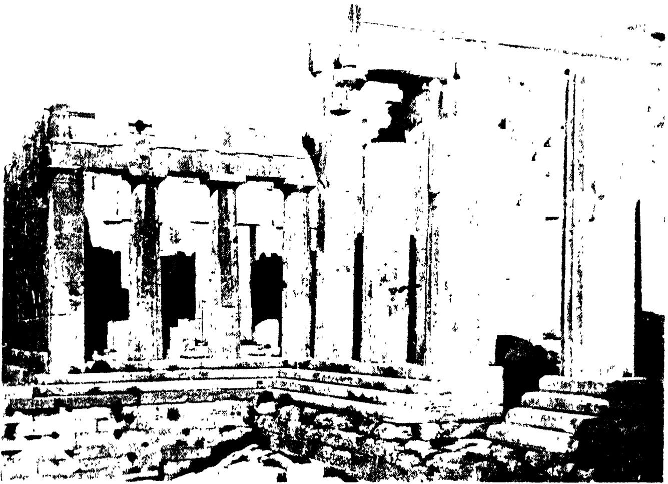
GREAT COLUMNS IN THE HYPOSTILE, KARNAK

From Statham's Short History of Architecture (Batsford)



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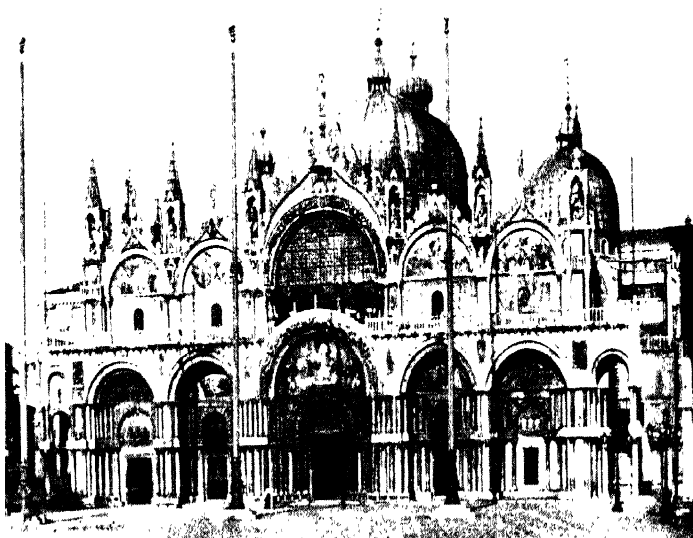

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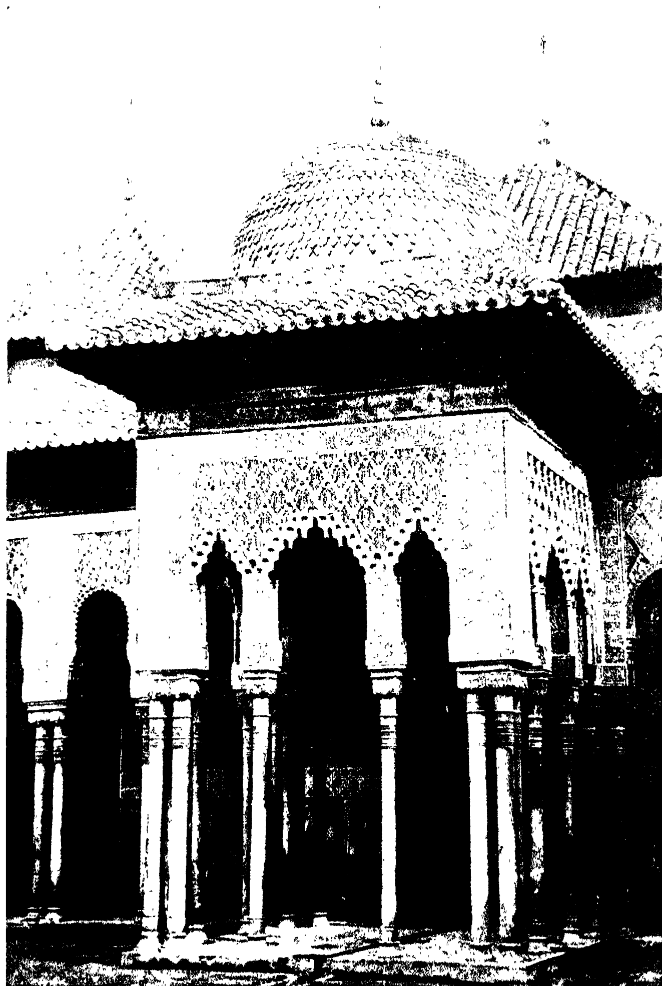

PART OF THE ALHAMBRA

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ST. PETER'S, ROME SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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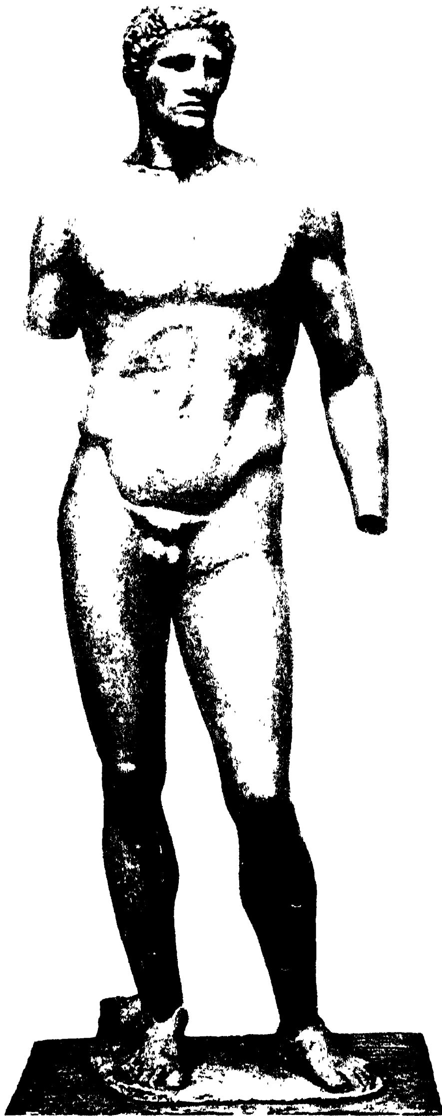
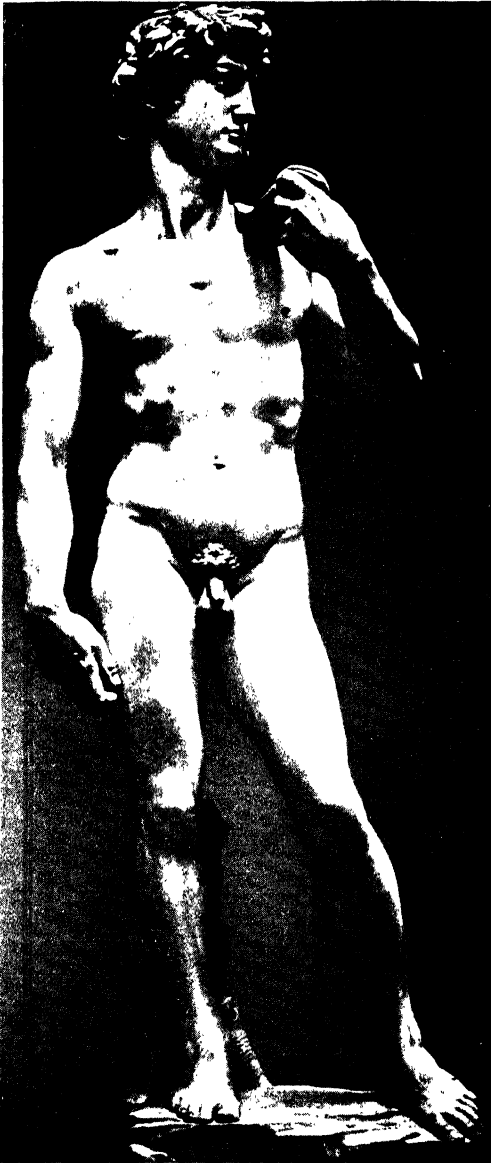
ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL FROM THE WEST



STATUE OF AGIAS, BY LYSIPPUS, AT DELPHI

CHARIOTEER. SCOPAS



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