

Charles Sumner.

It is feared that Charles Sumner is passing away. Newspaper paragraphs speak mysteriously of nervous prostration, sleepless nights, and physical suffering. His seat in the Senate is vacant. This distressing condition has yielded at last to the necessity for rest, which a shattered nervous system absolutely demands. He does not do this gracefully, for of his life work has been the constant condition, and a state of rest can be to him, at best, but unrest.

Learning that Mr. Sumner was a visitor, I went with a party of friends to call upon him. Being out of working harness, he is not jealous of his time, and it is a delight to feel that the moments are not counted when in conversation with him.

We found him in his study, surrounded by the creations of genius and art belonging to all the ages. Works of ancient and modern masters, the shelves of his library, the tables and the floor. The walls are covered with choice engravings of great and earnest men. Two small, square, metal plates hang over the mantel, and every nook and corner is filled with interesting studies of the artist and scholar.

Easy chairs and lounges are scattered through the room, for Mr. Sumner is no ascetic. He does not despise the creature comforts of life, but altogether subordinate them to the intellectual pleasures. His house throughout bears marks of culture and artistic taste seldom rivaled. His collections of paintings and engravings are wonderful, both in numbers and value. Among them is an engraving of one of the great paintings of Paul Veronese, "The Feast of Cana," in the gallery of the Louvre. There is a two hundred-years-old copy of one of Guido's Madonnas. The mantels of the parlors are filled with the most exquisite bronzes and statuettes. A marble bust of himself, by Crawford, fills one corner of the room.

To fully inventory and describe the works of beauty and art collected by Mr. Sumner, and with which he has adorned his house, would take a volume, and one could not then do the subject justice. The inspiration of the scene would be wanting in any poet's picture that could be drawn. The light and warmth of the living presence which pervades this world of beauty, his genius and culture have created a world in his necessary to round and complete it.

Mr. Sumner made us welcome with a genial smile. He was dressed in a soft gray woolen dressing gown, the color harmonizing with his hair, and his general grave and dignified manner. He showed signs of suffering, either in his face or the tones of his voice, which are strong and vigorous as when in perfect health. His difficulty being of a nervous nature, does not leave its impress on his countenance.

Mr. Sumner entered pleasantly into conversation with us upon his recent visit to Europe, and charmed us with reminiscences and personal descriptions of Thiers, Gladstone, and other prominent men of Europe.

He was particularly interested in his opinions of Thiers, whom he said he was surprised to find mercurial in temperance, vivacious and quick, gentle and mild. Judging from what he had seen of him in the public prints, he had expected to find him pugnacious—almost violent in his manner, and was delighted to know quite the reverse to be true of him. In answer to the question, what he thought of his character as a whole, he answered that he considered him a man of rare ability, and unwavering patriotism and desire for the good of his country. After describing him twice, and going through the world of politics with him in conversation, he had returned to his tranquil in mind about France.

Once, after dining with him, Mr. Sumner said he directed the conversation upon art, knowing Thiers to be one of the greatest connoisseurs in art living. He had his elegant collection of works of art, costing three and a half millions of francs, destroyed during the last war. Mr. Sumner was anxious to hear him talk upon the subject of the world's great artists and their works. After having gone through this realm, discussing the great painters, Michael Angelo, and Raphael, Mozart and Beethoven's rhapsodies, Goethe's Faust, and Giovanni, he said he reviewed his evening with a deep satisfaction that he had not wasted it in useless political discussions.

He dwelt particularly, in speaking of both Gladstone, who he says, is England's greatest premier, and Thiers, upon the pride England and France should feel in second such men at the head of their governments. They are, said he, partners for the youth of the rising generation—patterns in culture, in refinement of manner, in knowledge of affairs in industry. Education, he said, had fitted them for the position they occupy, as well as ability and genius. He seemed to dwell upon the subject of these qualifications, as if the comparison he did not wish to make between them and General Grant might be seen and inferred from them.

Thiers, he said, has patriotism; he loves and wishes to serve his country; he is 70 years old; and other thoughts he has now than the good of France. Mr. Sumner returned, not only tranquil in his mind about France, but convinced that a republic for her is inevitable.

In speaking of his impression of England, Mr. Sumner said that it had never seemed to him so beautiful as during his visit. "The other day," as he styled his flying trip last summer, "England is like a finished painting," he said, "complete in all its parts, and seems to have been made to order." Of London, Mr. Sumner thought it required an educated taste and experience to get beneath its beguiling and degraded smoked surface, sufficiently to appreciate its wealth of architectural beauty.

Mr. Sumner was as charming in his conversation as when the tides of his life were full and flowing healthfully. One would not imagine from his general appearance and clear bright eye that he was a victim to a "complete battery of poisons," as he himself expressed it, administered from vial, by powder and pill, and to end all by injecting into the veins the stuff to make sleep come. He says he is implicitly obeying the commands of a physician, one of which is absolute rest from all work.

Mr. Sumner has a passion for curiosities in literature, and has collected a large number of printed volumes. Among them is a Bible, one belonging to John Bunyan, with his autograph on the fly leaf; a poem of Voltaire—"The Tragedy of Mahomet," with corrections and interlineations in his own hand-writing; a small elementary work on geography, written in Latin, the author of which lived in Lorraine, that disputed territory between Germany and France, west of the Rhine. Mr. Sumner read to us from this volume, which has proved to be the charmingest of this country by its author, and said it seemed eminently proper that since a man named Americus Vesputius discovered this land, it should be called America, or America—American being the German pronunciation of the name.

The more so should this be done, says this authority, since Europe and Asia were named for women. Mr. Sumner has also the original manuscript of Burns—"Scots, wha hae w' Wallace bled," a volume once the property of Alexander Pope with his autograph, "A Pope," on the title page; and a volume once belonging to Madame Pompadour, which has her coat of arms, engraved by the most celebrated engraver of the age, on the title page. This volume contains the army rolls of France. These only constitute a small portion of the quaint and interesting volumes found in his search for pleasures of friends, who, knowing his love for the unique, have put them in his way.—Washington Correspondent Cincinnati Gazette.

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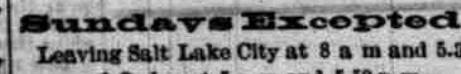
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