

Written for this Paper.

## TWO ASPECTS OF SOCIETY.

Every man may have his own standpoint from which to view the life that is, that is if he wants the view or cares for the standpoint. The majority are in the swirl and care little about knowing or understanding. They are borne onward, outward or upward, with very little consideration as to the how, why or where; they cannot stem the current, tell its velocity or gauge its depth. Jocund as a bubble, iridescent as its surface, they float a moment—beautiful perchance, then break and are engulfed forever. On the great and open sea of life, subjects of its sunshine and amorous with its spicy odors, they know no tempest, they fear no storm. A passing cloud, a gentle breeze, but lulls them into idle phantasm and repose as luxurious as that of the Sybarites—one endless, placid dream of bliss. These "toll not, neither do they spin." They are the ephemera of summer, the glowing insects of the tropics, the fireflies of an evening's warmth; of as little value perhaps in the economy of God as those in the economy of nature. And yet they surely have their uses; they must have value somehow, somewhere, if the philosopher only may find it out. Somehow also many of these are "glad in purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day;" yet they have neither earned nor created; they have, and use, and enjoy, and assume; calling themselves "society," they close their perfume-laden homes save to members of "their set," while the press, monomasked, tells of the brilliant time, the elegancies of dress, the witchery of form, the inanities of converse, the daintiness of the menu, and the realized beauty of the "color scheme" so exhaustively and elaborately carried out! There is adulation—to the giver of the feast; there is worship—to Mammon and success; there is a triune recognition, to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;" the demons of rivalry, ostentation and envy constitute the three-headed Cerberus which guards the portals of many a dainty—a so-called fashionable and stately home.

No doubt there is a meaning in all this, in every little coterie, spinning, gyrating, or sweeping in grander spirals; colliding, crashing, reforming, blending, then individualizing again as the craze for this, or that or the other takes on its illusory preeminence, and then gives way to the bold, low mockery of its successor. Literature is made the vassal of society; amusement is its handmaid, while its sedate dudes and unsophisticated butterflyes are willing to be the "hoobies" at high fives, low fives or any other "fives" at the behest of Oberon, Titan, Puck, Bottom or other masqueraders in our modern Mephistophelean "mid-summer society's dream." Even the sacred angels of Religion and Charity have to be garbed in the flaunting colors of hypothecated "society;" those harmonious sisters who are the vestal virgins of the loftiest heavens, have to be fashionably arrayed ere they use the conjurer's wand; and their smile of sisterhood and peace must take on the leer of sensuous beauty and worldly hauteur ere the

ducate can be gathered for the worthy poor.

"Society" arrogates to itself all the virtues, it claims all intelligence, wealth, power, love of beauty, and its dictum as to "what is good form" is as remorseless as a Persian edict. It boasts of its "400," its 100 or 10, as though they were moulded of superior element and should be labelled as "Royal Worcester" or from "Limoges." They are more flawless than Parian marble, and even Delty is assumed to rejoice at having made of rarer material the aristocracy of wealth or birth.

After all, that which is deemed of itself to be the corruscating brilliancy of the diamond is but the tinted opal with its significant luster, opaque and clouded, changeable and subject even to the loss of the little fire it has. This might be different; for the use of powers and appliances, the misdirected love of beauty and display, the lavish use of means to foster self, to win adulation, and to make culture and intelligence the synonyms for exclusiveness and practical contempt of lower (?) humankind is the damning sin and crime of this our surface age!

It may be that "society" is so money-combed with fraud, so rotten with pride and superciliousness, so self-inflated and intolerant of correction, so offensive to Delty, and so much of a stumblingblock in the way of peace, that its removal by inevitable violence is already foreshadowed. Time alone can tell; but "when ye see the fig tree already putting forth its leaves, then know ye that summer is nigh." It is asked if redemption is not possible for this frivolous, this superficial segment which leads obtrusively from the gilded centers of our nation's life to the upper crust of our local loaf? Can a loftier ideal of life and duty be transferred into mentality so poverty-stricken, into social life so vain and sensuous; into religious life so pharisaical and anti-Christian; into charitable life so ostentatious in its forms of giving; into political life so clamorous for the idea that "to the victor belongs the spoils?" Good authority once asserted, No! It declared that "new wine could not be put into old bottles, nor new cloth onto an old garment!" This involves a work of strange magnitude, and the unerring selection of unsophisticated material. There must needs be a new foundation for a grander superstructure, and workmen who will not dare to use "untempered mortar" in the raising of those enduring walls! Wisdom is needed more than man's; supervision beyond the ken of human intellect; motive purer, loftier than that of the world; unity more complete than that of old and effervescent "society;" and pertinacity which with all will not only hand down this inspirational idea from sire to son, from faith to faith, from Priesthood to Priesthood, but "from generation to generation!"

"The stone rejected of the builders is surely going to be the head of the corner," for "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it;" already "the wisdom of the wise perisheth, already the understanding of the prudent is hid." "Men's hearts are failing because of the things which are coming on the earth;" confidence is an unknown quantity in the world, and all the

divine bonds of "society" are being loosened for "the great and terrible day of the Lord," the "day of controversy" predicted of Isaiah (see 34th chapter) by Jeremiah (25th chapter) by Hosea (4th and 12th chapters) and by Micah (6th chapter) which includes Judah, Zion, His people, the wicked, and "all nations," so that none may claim excuse or seek the reversion of an assured decree.

There is nothing sensational in this. It is simply the consummation of the inevitable, when men forget God—when they ignore Him, and "pervert the right ways of the Lord," and each "seeketh but his own." Prominent among all people, trepidation should be unknown in Israel, save among those who from the combinations of "society" have become inveigled or led captive by this superficial, this illusive and delusive spirit, which works mainly "in the hearts of the children of disobedience." The humble worker, the unknown of Israel, when they "see these things come to pass, may lift up their heads and rejoice"—it is the divine intimation that "the day of their redemption draweth nigh." The good seed of the Kingdom sown three score years ago, and that which from then to now has been persistently scattered by "all waters," is maturing slowly but surely, for a prolific, a glorious harvest. New conceptions of Fatherhood, Christhood, Manhood, Brotherhood, are developing with a rapidly unrecognized of "society," and but faintly hoped for by many of the house of Israel. See, however, how their history teems with the sublime evidences of self-abnegation and sacrifice for a threatened world! Count the tens of thousands who have gone at the bidding of duty under the inspiration of faith, and that "dread spirit which has been from everlasting," to lead them to those who like Simeon were "waiting for the salvation of God!" Then estimate the gathering of the poor; the creation of a nation; the founding of its institutions, sacred, secular and industrial; note the "highways in the desert," the building of homes, the practical interest in each other, the increase in population and homogeneity of its elements, the new aspects of an original "society," filled with one hope, working for one end, looking for one destiny—and then say if this is not phenomenal, suggestive, inspiring, prophetic? Is not the end as significant as the means? Is not "wisdom justified in her children?" Or is there a sentiment of self-glorification even in the heart of the most successful, save that enunciated by one of old, "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes!" Has not the beneficent spirit of this work been one of "pure and undefiled religion?" Have not all its charities been saturated with the spirit of the Master? Has not the intent of its workers of both sexes in every degree been to lift, to refine, to improve, to enlarge and to make the sublime theories of the Gospel of the Man of Nazareth an all-potent factor in the establishing of a better civilization—the founding of the prophetic Zion or the Kingdom of God, to make that dream of all the Prophets a substantial reality on the earth?

Is there not already an approximation in social life to a tender solicitude