

the hand, the work is commenced by sopping a brick in the fluid plaster, and placing it against the base and side of one of the irons; and then another and another, filling in the crevices with plaster-mortar. Thus the work goes on, until the body is reached, when it is continued in the same way, except that a cavity is left in the centre, to be closed at the neck—which is made solid—and reopened in the head.

Having the figure (legs, body, and head) up, the chisels are now to be used in roughing it into the general human shape. This done, the arms are to be added. A long brick is sopped at one end in fluid plaster, and placed against one shoulder. It soon adheres, and forms the nucleus of the upper arm. To this is added another long brick, to form the fore arm. Additions are then made to fill the arm out. The whole is now gone over with the chisels, taking off here and adding there, as may be found necessary, until the chisels are no longer required. Then the open files come into play. They act like planes, and soon produce even surfaces, taking off all irregularities. The trowels are still useful in filling up cavities and making slight additions. Small brushes are useful when very little is to be added.

It is necessary to cover the bricks entirely with a coating of plaster, for otherwise they will appear, and disturb the harmony of the surface. The surface, moreover, should be kept quite clean, else the plaster will not adhere. It should always be brushed before putting new plaster on, and, in case the work has been laid aside for a long time, the whole surface must be scraped or filed before beginning anew; otherwise the plaster will not adhere firmly.

If an alteration be desired in the position of the head, the arms, or even the body, it can be made by sawing the parts in two, and then re-uniting them by forcing fluid plaster (with a syringe) into the fissures. The arms can be taken off and finished separately, putting them on from time to time to see the effect.

It is unnecessary to keep the model wet; the dryer it is the better.

There are other details of the process which would require too much space to specify.

The advantages of this process of modelling over the clay process are numerous: I will mention a few of them.

The plastering is unchangeable; it neither shrinks nor swells, and it does not require wetting and covering with cloths or oil-cloths, to keep it intact and in order.

No moulding is necessary to transfer the form from clay to plaster. The model for the marble is not a cast; but the plaster figure, as it came from the artist's hands, is itself the model.

The process is less tedious than clay-modelling, for by means of the *open files* more can be done with plaster in a day than with clay in several days.

A clay model cannot be changed materially after it has once

been commenced; for the iron skeleton which sustains every part of it is a fixture. But in the plaster model, the iron frame-work is only in the legs, all the rest can be cut apart, and varied from the original design in accordance with any afterthought of the artist; and this is a very great advantage.

Modelling in plaster is not new, but my way of doing it is new; at least, I know of none who have done it, if I except such as have been instructed by me. But my method would offer very little advantage over the old way of working in clay, were it not for the open file, an instrument quite new and of my own invention. It is made by a machine constructed by me for the purpose, and which produces them rapidly and with very little manual labour.

In Florence there are models of statues several hundreds of years old, done evidently in plaster, but roughly done. The difficulty always has been to *finish* a plaster model. By my method, and with my instruments, the highest finish can be obtained with ease."

The style of Powers, on which we propose to make a few remarks, is eminently natural. In saying this we are aware of bestowing no ordinary commendation; and yet, it is indefinite. What is natural to one may be apparent affectation in another. By natural, then, in a work of art, we mean the strictest propriety, that which is fit or becoming the ideal creation in all the appropriate circumstances of its being.

Powers has preserved a singular independence in the formation of his style, and in circumstances adapted to make any but an original mind imitative. He did not, as was to be feared, on his arrival in Florence, become the slavish admirer of classic art, and, in his inexperience, mistake the calling of a copyist for that of a creator. He rose superior to the fashionable mannerism and tendency to generalisation that prevailed so extensively in Europe at the time. He dared to be free, and wisely broke through all such restraints. He substituted individual thought for generalisation. Mannerism gave place to sentiment. He turned away, too, from the violence of action, and sought to perfect his art in the repose of beauty—the harmony of spiritual impulses. As a consequence of this freedom from conventional conditions, the art of sculpture, in his hand, dropped much of its specialities, and allied itself most closely to music and poetry, producing a similar effect on the mind of the spectator. The result of this tendency which he gave to his art was, that his style at once became distinctive, combining a simple, intellectual and pure conception with a delicate, skillful, and elaborate execution, and in both presenting alike a truthful adherence to nature. The best proof of its excellence is to be found in its effect upon the mind of the spectator. It surrounds it with a clear tranquillity. It may be too cold. The imagination is pure, but the sentiment seems to be wanting in the glow of consciousness. Such is Hiram Powers, the living American sculptor.

AMERICAN ART.

AMERICAN art, like American literature, is not understood at home or abroad. It is praised too highly by some: it is depreciated too much by others. The artist, with few exceptions, has betaken himself to his easel, and left its vindication to literary amateurs, and in some cases to literary brokers. Critics, wise in its technicalities, have praised or blamed immoderately, and the people, borne on by the heavy pressure of life, have hurried to the marts and thoroughfares of business. Art, in the mean time, has lived in solitude, content with the devotion of a few simple-hearted men, showing herself once a year to the world, while the troubled multitude, busied with stocks or charmed with the doings of the mason and upholsterer, are satisfied to live in ignorance of a class of men devoted to fine art, unless when occasionally startled by a newspaper announcement of the exhibition of the Academy of Design, or some passing criticism on art itself, as genial in most cases as the praise or blame that the sensualist bestows

on virtue. We are not, as a nation, deeply moved by works of the fine arts.

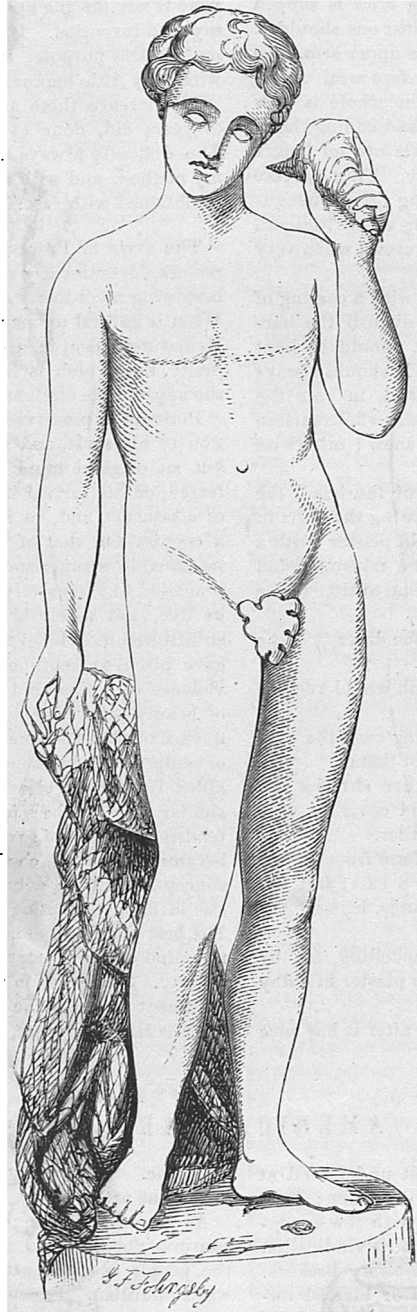
As a natural consequence of this state of things, the people continue devoted to sensuous shows, and the elegant among the people speak of art in the same tone that they praise a waltz of Julien. Even the poet sings of it in catches as fitful as the untimely note of the blue-birds. The artist himself becomes despondent as he sees the multitude running after shows and showmen, while the creations of his heart, abstracted in passionate love from nature, and transferred in living shapes to the canvas, attract only a passing notice.

It is retributive. The artist has overlooked too much the heroism of art—the chivalry of his calling. The artist, either in selfish devotion to his work, or impelled by the general love of gain, giving a jaundiced tinge to his atmosphere, has retired into his own sphere, and lived among the specialities of his art. Ungenerous life! He has, accordingly, neg-

lected the literature of his profession. The works of Cole and Allston are scarcely an exception. He has passed by the duty which he owes to his country, to come forth and educate the popular taste—come forth and be the interpreter of fine art as well as its cultivator.

Recalling the mind from this partial diversion of thought to its first and main intent, we resume the subject in form, and

Earnestness is to become a part of their existence, and the works for which they claim attention must be works that have a name and a place in our civilisation. Art, if it would not be demeaned in an age where *service* is to be the passport to eminence and machines the revolutionary implements, must show itself more daring and better acquainted with nature and humanity, and aid man in reading the works of



THE FISHER BOY, BY HIRAM POWERS.

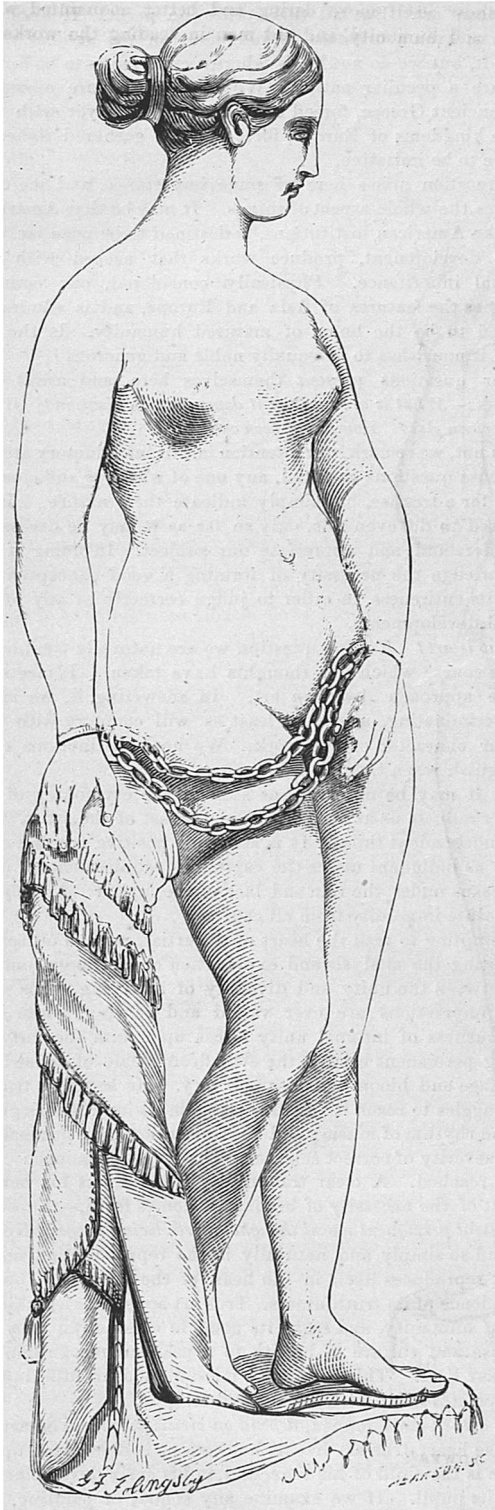
propose, in this article, to introduce AMERICAN ART to the people. Critical Memoirs of Artists and engravings of their chief works will follow in regular succession, and make up our contribution to art-literature. It may be that we shall be successful in the undertaking, and not only educate the popular taste, but also awaken in the breasts of artists themselves a more practical and generous devotion to their art.

God and transferring to his heart the thoughts that breathe in their substantial forms. Then shall art become the liturgy of beauty and ally itself to worship. The painting, the statue and the poem shall be in request even for utility,

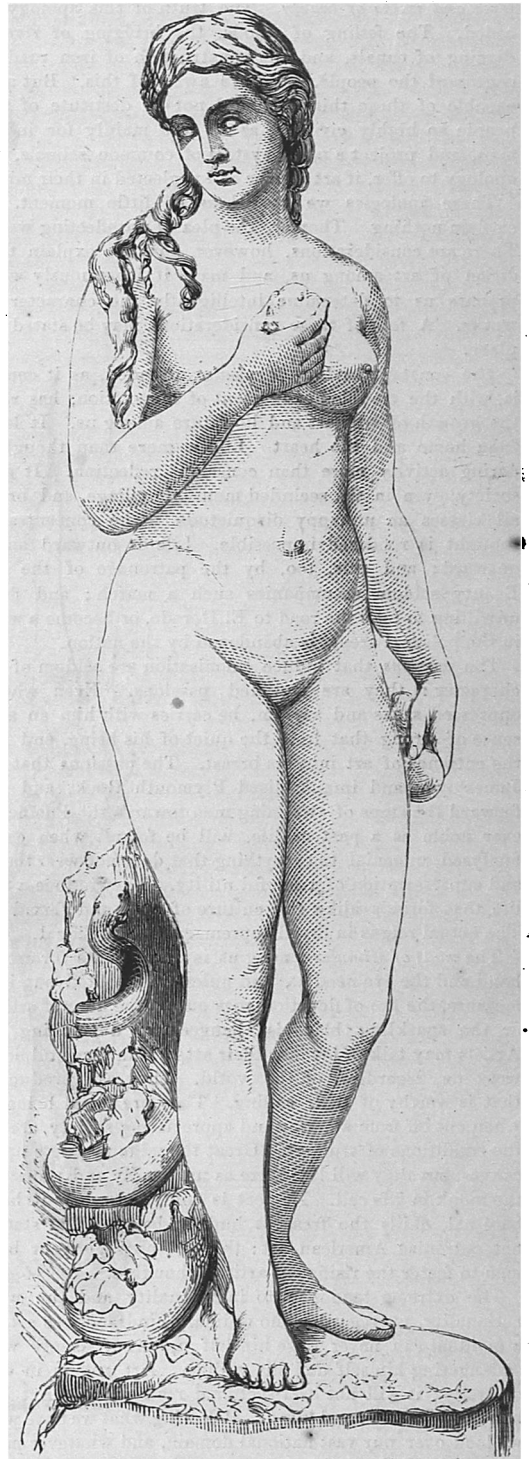
We return to the point of departure. American art, like American literature, is not understood at home or abroad. There is a feeling on the Thames and the Rhine that we have

ot done enough. It seems so from our manner of life. We are accustomed to meet this feeling with apologies, the refuge

We are a young nation. It is true; but we are not a young people. We cannot measure ourselves by the two hundred



THE GREEK SLAVE, BY HIRAM POWERS.



EVE, BY HIRAM POWERS.

of conscious guilt and weakness. And what are these apologies? A few of them may be presented here for counsel and reproof.

years of our existence on this continent, or the eighty years of our independence. Our roots strike into the soil of twelve centuries in England.

The circumstances of a new country are unfavourable to art. There is point in this remark only to the savage. A country cannot be long new, in the strict sense of the term, to a people armed with machinery. The artizan soon makes a pathway for the artist.

The excitement attending the establishment of our national existence and institutions has drawn off the public mind from the loves and walks of beauty. The truth of this apology is conceded. The felling of woods, the bridging of rivers, the digging of canals, and the construction of iron roads, have engrossed the people. We are aware of this. But a people capable of these things should not be destitute of art. A people so highly civilised as to care mainly for individual man, and project a noble system of common schools, has no apology to offer, if art is poor and neglected in their midst.

These apologies we regard as of little moment. They explain nothing. They are the plea of unreflecting weakness. There are considerations, however, that do explain the condition of art among us, and may, if ingenuously weighed, prepare us to determine intelligently the character of its works. A few of these considerations may be stated in this place.

The constant *tendency to colonise*, attended, as it commonly is, with the troubled excitement of annexation, has retarded the growth of true art and literature among us. It leads us from home and the heart. Life is more than thought, and daring activity more than conscious reflection. It agitates society, even in the secluded mountain village, and breeds in all classes an unhappy disquietude. The concentration of thought is rendered impossible. Life is outward and ever outward; and this, too, by the patronage of the nation. Beauty seldom accompanies such a march; and fine art, unwilling to take the road to El Dorado, or become a wrangler in the political arena, is abandoned by the nation.

The *passions* that induce colonisation are seldom of a pure character: they are troubled passions. Even when the oppressed seeks and asylum, he carries with him an agitated sense of wrong that frets the quiet of his being, and forbids the entrance of art into his breast. The passions that settled Jamestown, and immortalised Plymouth Rock, and carried forward the steps of swarming men towards the Pacific, however noble as a part of life, will be found, when carefully analysed, ungenial to everything that does not wear the image and superscription of a careful utility. They induce a form of life that forbids alike the culture of taste and fervid fancy. The actual reigns in dread supremacy over the ideal.

The *want of stimulus* among us is unfortunate for art. The hand and the eye need it, and unless it is meted out in some measure, the fire of devotion goes out on the altar of artist-life, or the sparkling blaze is changed for a smoking brand. Artists may talk of love for their art, and in very stubbornness work on, regardless of the world. They can produce little that is worthy of their calling. They are social beings, and when cut off from a happy and appreciating society, are denied the conditions of true art. Great thoughts may live upon the canvas, but they will live there as unfriendly and unnatural as the monk in his cell. Neglect is cold, and when it becomes habitual, chills the freshest buds of being. The state does not patronise American art: there is no society or body of men to foster the risings of artistic thoughts.

The extreme tendency to individuality and the want of nationality, we regard as no ordinary hindrances to art. The individual can never raise himself up out of society without endangering himself and his calling. Art suffers in endless diversity; it will not bear sectional restrictions. Art has its habitation in a general mind. Believing what we have written, we look over our vast national domain, and whatever political or ecclesiastical creed warms its members, or rouses them into unnatural antagonism, the democratic element, an element essentially sectional, works endless diversity and destroys that unity which is necessary to nationality. In such a jarring state of things, how can art flourish—art, whose aim and mission are to be found in the harmonious embodiment of all our true impulses?

In view of these considerations, we see that the American artist has much to contend with. His life is shadowed in Beattie's Minstrel. Still, we see no reason why he should be impeded. Has not genius in all ages been heroic, and forced itself into notice by its triumphs? There may be a noble American art. But all this settles no point. It does not afford us even a criterion of judgment on the subject. We know it, but we do not know where a criterion is to be found. We are a peculiar nation. We cannot compare ourselves with ancient Greece, forced to be original; nor yet with any of the kingdoms of Europe, forced by the gathered riches of Greece to be imitative.

A question arises here of some importance, and one that changes the whole aspect of things. It may be that American art, like American institutions, is destined to be peculiar, and in its development, produce works that accord with our national inheritance. Physically considered, our country combines the features of Asia and Europe, and is admirably adapted to be the home of matured humanity. Is the art which it nourishes to be equally noble and generous?

Four questions present themselves here, and await our answers:—*What is art? Does it depend on civilisation? What is American Art? How has it been cultivated?*

It is not, we remark, our intention in this introductory article to discuss questions in detail, any one of which is sufficiently broad for a treatise, but simply indicate their nature. It is proposed to do even this, only so far as it may be necessary to understand and appreciate our subject. In doing it we acknowledge the necessity of forming a good conception of art in its entirety, in order to judge correctly of any of its special developments.

What is art? To this question we are naturally conducted by the course which our thoughts have taken. It meets us as we approach *American art*. In answering it, we must be discriminating, as far as at least as will comport with the popular character of our work. We need distinctions that distinguish when there is a difference.

Art, it may be observed, as seen in the etymology of its name, conducts us at once within the breast of the artist. It is an independent thing. It is above all positive conventions, and is as indignant under the capricious requirements of men as Pegasus under the rein and lash of the farmer. Art enjoys an absolute immunity from all caprice.

Attempting to read the heart of the artist, we find ourselves attempting the analysis and explanation of a strange contention between the unity and diversity of his being. His sensuous impressions are ever varied and varying, while the consciousness of internal unity forces upon him the duty of seeking permanent beauty, the ever-fleeing pole of artist-life. Its leafage and bloom are unsatisfactory. He seeks its truth. He struggles to reach it. In this struggle his impressions grow into the rhythm of music; and his conceptions ally themselves to the severity of correct science. The object is gained: the end is reached. A clear tranquillity floats about his being, and out of the necessity of beauty art comes forth,—*the power to represent permanent moral thought in free living shapes*. Noble art! and so simply and naturally is the representation made that it reproduces itself in the heart of the people. This is the evidence of its truthfulness. True art appears as a development of humanity, and seeks its good in conducting man by the sense and culture of beauty to a peaceful recognition of the FIRST FAIR. This is its lofty mission, and in fulfilling it, art associates itself with science and religion.

Does art, as thus defined, depend on civilisation? The artist in whose heart true art has its habitation, is dependent upon it. He is the child of his time, and, in his early development, is also its pupil. If we examine any school of painting, we find that all that is distinctive in it had its external origin as much in the national life as in the hills and woods and climate that made up the national inheritance. Sir Edwin Landseer, the favourite painter of the English, "has fortunately," says a writer on art, "chosen a class of subjects eminently national and in harmony with the pursuits and tastes of the people."

The moral atmosphere which the artist breathes, and the institutions among which he lives, exercise an enslaving or liberating influence over him. His creations are debased or ennobled. Accordingly, we find art flourishing only under the reign of freedom. Greece alone produced art for the ancients. And why? She was free. Europe has imitated her. And why? Not because Greece exhausted the province of art. No. Europe was not so free as Greece to create for herself. The state, it must be admitted, is the grand representative of humanity to its citizens, and when despotic, corrupt or imperfect, must exert an unhappy influence on art. "Civilisation," to use the language of Schiller, "far from placing us in freedom, only unfolds a new want with every power that it educa tes within us." Nevertheless, it is the duty of the true artist to carry his art beyond his time, and, in a measure, lead civilisation by borrowing from the infinite that which is noble and permanent, that he may express it in art. Cast the work forth. It will outlive states and statesmen.

We proceed now to the third question, the one in which we have the most interest:—*What is American art?* In asking this question, we evidently look for something distinctive. We are led to do so by the genial character of our institutions, and the place which each individual has taken in our civilisation. We are not constrained, like Europe, to be imitative. We are freer than Greece. Art need not for ever repeat itself, simply varying its tone, like the pitch of Eastern music.

But we said that art was somewhat dependent on civilisation. This dependence is readily traced in American art. Owing to the nature and circumstances of our national existence, it has never raised itself into a state of pure freedom. The artist is forced to bend his neck to the servitude of the times, and to some extent live the life of the nation, painting or chiseling for existence. The prominence of the department of portrait-painting and bust-making in American art we regard as a confirmation of this remark.

From this view of the subject, it will be naturally inferred that we regard utility as one of the features of American art. To a limited extent we do. The artist is forced, by the necessity of his times, to forego the ideal, and lend himself to the service of the actual. Faces are more in demand than landscapes: the old homesteads and millseats, where industry lives in the clank of machinery, are more highly prized than the mountain and lake sceneries, where beauty has her haunts. The tastes and habits of the people are of the actual: the whole course of legislation is in the direction of power. Wares and chattels have, accordingly, a value which draws the multitude away from the exhibition of art, and compels them to forego the charms which beauty lends to life. A freight of California gold stirs the popular heart to a depth never reached by "Cole's Course of Empire."

As a natural consequence of this state of things, art evinces a strong tendency to eclecticism. It becomes dependent, even for patronage—dependent too on foreigners. It would please, and in doing so, would take to itself what is good in the various schools. Would it form a new one? A composite one? The tendency of artist-life in this direction is little better than an aberration; for never can genius submit to the task of culling flowers of beauty, when it is its work and pleasure to create them.

From this direction it has been partly withdrawn by the freedom of our national life, and partly by the distinctive features of our climate. Genius could not long be content in the service of utility. Genius could not long be eclectic, when there was so much to kindle and restrain its impulses. In opposition to all enslaving influences, it has come forth and asserted its own free nature. There are indications of independent art.

If we examine it carefully, and in the light of its works, we shall find much in the departments of painting and sculpture to command respect and awaken high hopes. Architecture, music, and poetry, have scarcely raised themselves into noticeable mediocrity.

American art, as far as painting makes a part of it, allies itself closely to the English school, and in this gives indication

of the prevailing and permanent character of the Gothic mind. There is, in general, a faintness of tone; unhappily, too, a timidity of execution. But the distinctive features are to be found in a prevailing *harmony of colour and truthfulness of conception*. The execution, although in many cases admirable, is by no means our peculiarity. American art excels more in conception than in skill of colouring. Our best pictures are not so much scenes, or even thoughts, as *sentiments*. Contemplating them, we are led to believe that the destiny of art among us is not tending to the production of mountain and lake scenery on canvas, that rival that of our country, so much as to the production of sentiment in the mind of the spectator. The mere transference of the peculiar ideas of the artist is lost in this noble and generous purpose. In confirmation of this judgment on American art, we can confidently point to the lives and works of Cole and Allston. As an illustration of what we mean by sentiment, we refer to the "Sabbath Morning," "The Fountain and the Old Man's Reminiscences" by Devaid. Those pictures are not so much scenes, or even thoughts, as hallowed and hallowing sentiments. As a further illustration of this point, we are induced to quote a passage from Mrs. Hemans, and refer the reader to Cole's "Cross in the Wilderness." Poetry and painting, in this instance, reflect each other's sentiments.

" Silent and mournful sat an Indian chief,
In the red sunset, by a grassy tomb;
His eyes, that might not weep, were dark with grief,
And his arms folded in majestic gloom,
And his bow lay unstrung beneath the mound,
Which sanctified the gorgeous waste around.

For a pole cross above its greensward rose,
Telling the cedars and the pines that there,
Man's heart and hope had struggled with his woes,
And lifted from the dust a voice of prayer.
Now all was hushed and eve's last splendour shone
With a rich sadness on the attesting stone."

If we look over the history of art, we shall find that it is incomplete, and that never, in the old world, have the most favourable conditions of pure art existed. Greece, when she betook herself to the easel and chisel, was too analytic; the clear, cold air of philosophy fanned her walks. Modern Europe, less free than Greece, has also been less inventive; the state has unduly influenced the creations of the artist. If Greece carried form to an extreme, modern Europe has done the same to sensuous impressions. It remains for America to reconcile them, and mark the last era of art—ideal sentiment.

The conditions for the noblest works of art, if we overlook the incidental character of society, are found in our country. The physical features are impressive: the outline and contour of our inheritance unite in a remarkable degree variety and unity of design. The haunts of beauty are numerous; the forms of grandeur are found in mountain, lake, and stream. The state, instead of being an oppressive and enslaving institution, is little more than the servant of the individual. With these conditions, the artist can afford to dispense with galleries of art, and patiently instruct the people in their waywardness. He will not attempt, like Greece, to give us beauty-in gods and goddesses, nor, like modern Europe, labour to express the idea of humanity as exhibited in the state or favoured by patronage; but resolutely strive to give us humanity itself, as reflected in the repose of his own heart. As a heroic disciple of truth and beauty, he will seek, in the free and chastened impulses of his soul, to shape most delicately and lovingly his materials, until they become significant of the *good*; while, in the harmony and stillness of his being, he will strive to conceive truth that intellect and sense will alike lovingly embrace. American art is to show itself in *free living forms* that represent sentiment—forms in which the warmth of sense pervades the embodied thought, and over the whole is thrown that harmonious repose which wedded love sheds upon the happy man. It must be so. As art has its birth and seat in the bosom of the artist, American art has its home in the breast

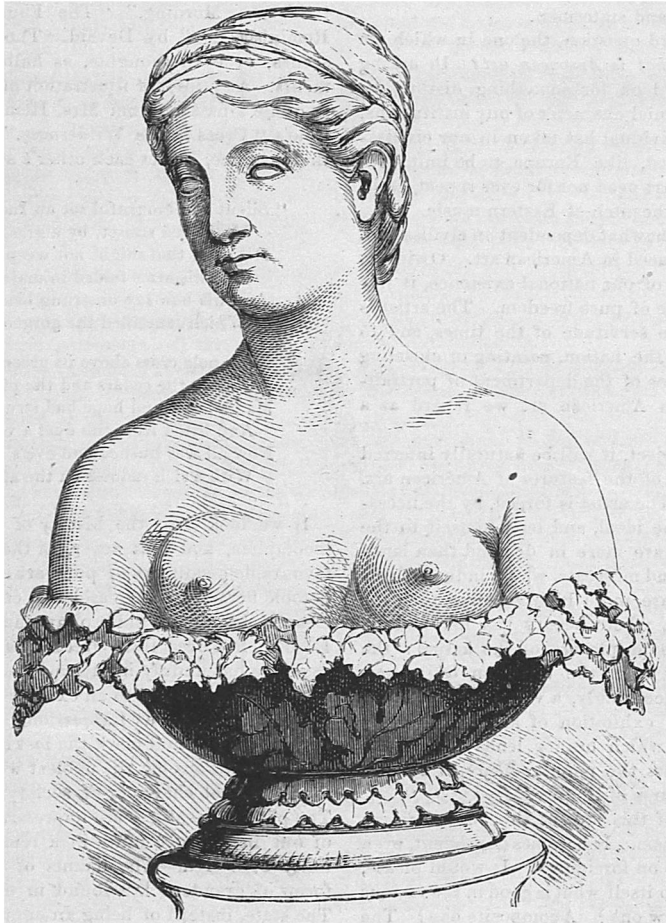
of the American artist, and must show its distinctive features in the greater freedom, fulness, and tranquillity of his being. It may be that beauty will appear as the rhythm of life, and as soon as we are ready to give to our world a direction towards the good.

The last question proposed remains to be answered: *How has American art been cultivated?* The full answer to this question is to be found in the lives and works of American artists, which we propose to present in successive monthly articles, in which one of our distinctive artists will be introduced to the people, and his culture of American art submitted to review. Yet there is something to be done in this place. The question demands a general answer, and it must be given.

How has American art been cultivated? In too fragmentary a way. It is somewhat remarkable, that while our political

that of geography—on the basis of philosophy. The French Italian, Dutch, and English schools express little more than national existence, and are, consequently, too local for the highest conditions of art. We can, it is true, trace the Roman and Gothic civilisation in them. The Celt and the Teuton may be readily distinguished by their characteristics. Is America to repeat them? Or, adopting a nobler classification of art—a classification that will be to it what Becker's is to language—will she attempt the school of humanity by a free representation of its sentiments?

This is a noble mission. Will American art fulfil it? The artist awaits the existence of the conditions. He awaits in hope the circumstances that favour so generous and ambitious a culture of his art. Let the nation, then, give us a true nationality, the church a holy brotherhood, and the family a



BUST OF PROSERPINE, BY HIRAM POWERS.

plans are vast, our self-confidence and daring giant-like, and even many of our individual enterprises stupendous, fine art and literature are only beautiful and fragmentary things. To question the truth of this observation is to undervalue the resources of our artists. They are able to attain to an entirety of artistic development in keeping with our civilisation, and subject sensuous impressions to the grand unity of moral truth. They have shown remarkable devotion to their calling. Witness the lives of Allston and Cole: they have given much promise. Durand has much of the quiet rhythm of life, and happily domesticates nature. Powers has much of the pure and delicate beauty of ideal conception.

As yet, however, American art has not been cultivated so as to form a school for itself—the school of the New World. Its destiny, if we do not misinterpret the past, is far nobler. It will create a school, if it creates any, on a nobler basis than

free and close union of power and love, and American art will fulfil its destiny. The school of sentiment will soon exist. It will arise out of the warmth and repose that mark the style of some of our artists; and, unless marred in its early state by some illusive form of pantheism, or a deceptive sentiment that leads the artist himself to mistake the sense of beauty for the presence and recognition of a personal God, may prosperously attain its goal, and claim the noble palm. Religious faith is an essential element of true art.

In the mean time, let us study the lives and works of artists: let us seek them among the colonies, in the gloom of the revolution and in the times of our independence, and gathering up the distinctive works, present them in fine engravings to the people. A more generous reception of such works by the people, may be one of the conditions of a full development of American art.