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## MISS HOSMER'S STATUE OF ZENOBIA.

IN the Great Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations, held at London in 1862, the United States, singularly enough, contributed, not, as might have been expected, the most remarkable specimens of mechanical ingenuity, but three or four works of Art which, even in that splendid collection of pictures and statues—unprecedented both for its extent and its completeness—attracted a very large share of public attention.

Nothing could possibly have been more bleak, uninviting or cheerless than the look of the American Department. And yet there was, even in that very Department, dreary and barn-like as it seemed—and elsewhere in the great building—work that showed to those who could discern, that, even in the field where we were thought hopelessly barbarian, there was promise of our producing good fruit. Not that the work was the best, not that it was satisfactory; but it showed independence and freshness, although produced under unfavorable circumstances, in the very hot-bed of dilettanteism and convention—produced in Rome, in the studios of Americans. These works were, Mr. Story's statues of "Cleopatra," and the "Libyan Sibyl," Mr. Page's portraits of himself and his wife, and Miss Hosmer's "Zenobia."

A singular and inexplicable reticence on Mr. Story's part has seemed to keep studiously out of the reach of Americans at home all means of judging of the real merit of those remarkable statues which, we may safely say, attracted—with, perhaps, the exception of Gibson's tinted

"Venus," and Magni's "Reading-Girl"—more interest, and excited more enthusiasm, than all the rest of the sculpture in the Exhibition put together. Placed so disadvantageously that no good light could reach them, and it being, besides, impossible to examine them from more than one point, and from that only with discomfort, they yet arrested the stream of apathetic, satiated people who passed languidly through the Roman Court, with its Nymphs and Ganymedes, and Christs and Fauns, and St. Peters and Venuses, and greeted their unexpectant eyes with the sight of work which really seemed to have some purpose and sincerity behind it. Here, at last, where there was so much that was wholly conventional, academic, insipid or affected, were two statues which—though they fell short of the achievement of genius, and had not wholly escaped, in minor points, the contagion of the schools, the almost fatal influence of classical models—yet showed that the sculptor had a clear and definite aim, and that he had given to the task set before him the conscientious devotion of an intellect, penetrating, schooled and cultured, if not creative nor profound.

The pictures of Mr. Page—an original but erratic genius, led away from the noble work he might do, by the idolatry of a great school, and the vain attempt to rival it—were, to our thinking, the best he has ever painted; indeed, we trust that when the foundations of our National Gallery of Art are firmly laid

—built up solidly from the past on the good beginning of the Jarves and Bryan Collections—the American Department will be enriched with these two portraits, as solid, worthy works as have ever been painted on this side the Atlantic. They were treated, in the Great Exhibition, with the same studious disrespect which everything American instinctively received in England at that time, and were left to shiver by themselves in the gloomy American Department, shut out from the light and space and ample justice of the magnificent upper galleries—in a place where probably not a hundred people out of the thousands who thronged the building ever saw them; and yet, had they been hung in the Great Picture Gallery, among the splendid achievements of English, French, and Flemish Art, these portraits could not have failed to hold their own and to command respect. We should be glad to know the name of a single painter in England to-day—Hunt and Millais excepted—who, if we may judge by what the walls of the Royal Academy, in the Exhibition of 1862, had to show, could paint a portrait to which even this apparently moderate praise might justly be awarded.

Miss Hosmer's statue of Zenobia was treated with the slight additional modicum of respect which an Englishman feels bound to pay to a woman, and was, therefore, honored with a place at the back of the small Greek temple designed and decorated by Mr. Owen Jones to serve as a setting for the celebrated tinted Venus of Gibson. This statue, of which the untravelled public has heard so much of late from travelled people, was thought interesting enough and precious enough to command a place and setting such as was awarded to no other work of art in the whole rich collection. And yet it is safe to say that, so far as its intrinsic merits were concerned, there was no

marble in the Exhibition, of any pretension, that less deserved such distinction. Her heavy English limbs, stained, as was currently reported,—whether in jest or not, we cannot say,—with tobacco-juice, to suggest the rosy-tinted Aphrodite; her hair, a pale straw-color; the pupils of her eyes, a light blue; golden ear-rings in her ears, and a golden collar about her neck; with a face of a commonplace, house-keeping type, and an attitude devoid of character or intention—it was, to us, a work of unmitigated vulgarity. It is but fair to say that it seemed to meet with very little approval; the verdict appeared to be that it was a piece of spoiled marble; and that, after all, so timidly and weakly were the tints laid on, that the much-disputed question, as to polychrome or no polychrome, was still left open—Gibson's statue being only a feeble compromise offered to the disputants; an abandonment of the cause of pure marble, and a failure to come up to the true standard of the wax-doll school.

At the back door of this temple, then, stood the master-work of Gibson's pupil, Harriet Hosmer's "Zenobia," fortunate in having secured even so much light and space as that somewhat ignominious position gave. We trembled a little for our countrywoman—for any woman, standing to receive the award of such a multitudinous throng as surged past that temple, day after day. Gladly, we thought, had we been the sculptor, would we have crept into Story's dusky corner, and pushed his Sybil or his "Great Fairy" of Egypt out into the light which he could stand, but which she, alas to say it! could not. And yet it was brave in her to dare the trial; brave, not to shrink from the stern ordeal, but walk boldly out from her studio, to seek as the great, stern Florentine advised, the light of the public square. "There," she may have

said, and she deserves well of women and of men for her courage, "let me stand, among men; first, by my master's side, and under the same roof with his darling work—let us both be judged together; then, among the works of men from many lands, and here in this England, cruelly unjust to my native land, scorning, and mocking, and taunting her in this hour of her deadly peril, let me stand up, an American woman, and ask for judgment, sure that, if I am allowed a single leaf or berry of the crown I crave, it will be awarded by no friendly nor partial hand, but will be indisputably mine."

Well, the statue stood there and waited for the crown; waited patiently for leaf or berry of it; waited all those long Summer weeks for the first murmur of praise from judge or people, and waited in vain. And now it has been brought to us, and we are called on for our verdict; and how can we refuse, with fairness or honesty, to acknowledge that the praise was righteously withheld?

The art of sculpture has in these days come to be so almost hopelessly degraded—utterly at a loss for subjects, and incapable of treating those it chooses, with truth or dignity—that whoever can interest the world in a statue to-day must have more than ordinary gifts. We speak within bounds—do we not?—when we say that there are not three men living in England, France, Italy, or America, who can produce a great or greatly noble statue, whether a portrait or a work of invention. There are great painters in our time, men whose works are as sure of fame and memory as any of the great Italians; and great writers, whose names are already touched with the morning light of immortality—but the great sculptors are dead; there is no Orpheus in these days to make the stones of the quarry

stir as if the life were in them. And if men fail before the task, and give up, with their strength and culture and opportunity, nothing worthy, nor smacking of the time, what should a woman do with her feeble hands, her powers unfledged, which, if they seek to try new paths and find out a field for their free play, run counter to so many prejudices, and meet so many faithless, sneering, hostile eyes, that, ten to one, if they develop at all, they develop in a grievously one-sided, awkward, defiant way, and use up half their strength in fighting for the right to use the other half.

Miss Hosmer, then, is to be judged leniently, not because she is a woman, but because, being a woman, she has failed only where all, or very nearly all, the men who have tried the same experiment before her for the last three hundred years or so, have failed almost as decidedly. The only good things that have come from under the chisels of the sculptors in all that time are a few clever busts; not a statue that the museum of the thirtieth century will give standing-room to; and we are, therefore, of opinion that Miss Hosmer has made a mistake in her choice of a profession, unless there is some department of it which does not call for great inventive power, for imagination—for genius, in short—in which she may still prove her ability to excel.

The "Zenobia" is a colossal statue, and professes to represent the Queen of Palmyra, walking in the procession of her conqueror, the Emperor Aurelian. In our judgment, the subject is a poor one. Zenobia was, it is true, a remarkable woman, but she never filled a large space in the world's eye; she is a mere episode in history, and her name recalls nothing worthy of lasting remembrance, or gratitude, or large respect. It is true that she held her throne in defiance of the Roman, and that she piqued

Aurelian by her prolonged resistance to his hitherto victorious arms; but her submission at last, though politic, was base, and her sacrifice of Longinus an act of detestable selfishness. Her empire, while she ruled it, did nothing for mankind, and her life left no permanent results upon the good or ill fortunes of the race. However this may be, certainly it is asking too much of this busy nineteenth century, which has its own conquests, defeats, and successes to interest it, to trouble itself about a fine woman who lived some fifteen hundred years ago, and did nothing more worthy of remembrance than to govern her kingdom with absolute sway, and get into trouble as life wore away; ending her days, too, in the tamest and most ignominious fashion, eating and drinking and sleeping like ordinary mortals, in her stylish villa on the Tiber. Plainly, it is not the real flesh-and-blood Zenobia whom Miss Hosmer's admiration has led her to put into marble, but some fancy picture—Mr. Ware's, for example, which is just as little like flesh and blood, we opine, as could be imagined. But, neither the real Zenobia nor the Unitarian one is worthy of being "set in Parian statue-stone" in this pains-taking fashion. Pray, was there no other woman worthier to be remembered—drawn out of cloud-land and given an enduring shape to? No Judith, no Miriam, no Joan of Arc, no Countess Marguerite,

— that arm'd

Her own fair head; and sallying thro' the gate,  
Beat back her foes with slaughter from her walls"—

no Jane Grey, no Elizabeth of England?

But, granted the subject—and if it had been plain Mrs. Jones the poet-artist would have made us all worship her—once having chosen it, or been drawn to it, the mere fact of the historical name should have held the sculptor to the truth of history. Miss Hosmer was

bound to conceive Zenobia according to the recorded facts, and not to make a fancy piece, nor to accept, in lieu of the plain history, Mr. Ware's somewhat diluted statement of it. Of course, nothing would have been lost by this, for the more facts the artist could have got hold of, the clearer would have been the picture in her mind, and the freer her imagination would have been to act. Zenobia, we are told, walked in the procession weighed down almost to fainting with jewels and chains of gold. Bracelets of gold held the fetters which bound her arms, and a slave supported the heavy collar of gold and jewels that encircled her neck. The daughter, according to some accounts, of an Arab chieftain, accustomed to fatigue, delighting in the chase, often killing antelopes, bears, or wolves with her own weapon, a fearless and splendid horsewoman, but often walking miles on foot at the head of her armies; an Eastern woman, and yet chaste and frugal, but sometimes, in her manly fashion, carousing with her officers, we ask, with all respect, whether it is this woman whom Miss Hosmer's marble brings before our eyes? Her face is without expression of any kind, a classic mask, "with chiseled features, clear and sleek." She is neither weary, nor despondent, nor despairing. Her face is bent down, it is true, but, what for, no one can possibly imagine who has not learned her name, or who does not see the chain that hints, of course, at some misfortune. The picture drawn by the Roman annalist might have been turned to sumptuous use in skillful hands, and by an artist brought up under freer influences than those that rule the coldly-classical and artificial studio of Mr. Gibson; and the wealth of antique ornament that has descended to our times from the jewel-boxes of Rome, Egypt, Etruria, and Pompeii, might have been drawn upon to bring more vividly to our eyes the Zenobia of

History, fainting under her costly splendor—than has been accomplished by this extremely attenuated chain which confines her wrists, or the clumsy tiara which crowns her brow.

But, as Miss Hosmer has not chosen to put the facts of her history into marble, and to weigh Zenobia down with chains and jewels, how are we to account for the heavy figure, the plodding gait, if, indeed, she moves at all, or can move; the arm that hangs and does not hang; the foot that drags along the ground and refuses to be lifted? Plainly, this is physical ponderousness, not the weight of grief or sorrow; it is a block of marble that stands before us, not a woman, who walks a queen.

The truth is, that Miss Hosmer has undertaken a task far beyond her powers; and he only is her friend who tells her so, plainly and frankly. Nothing is gained, for her, for art, or for the cause of woman's work, by shirking the matter, or mincing it; still less for any cause, woman's or man's, by flattery, or commendation however feeble. Hers is essentially an imitative talent, without originality, without invention. Her "Puck" was Sir Joshua Reynolds' picture, cut in marble, and with much of the spirit lost in the translation; and her "Zenobia," while it is perhaps no imitation of any other statue, is without any special individual character. It is no excuse, that we have admitted that few men could have accomplished what she has failed to do; she had no right, no beginner has a right, to take a subject demanding so much knowledge, skill, and clearness of imagination as this, without long training, and arduous labor, and ample preparation. What has Miss Hosmer done to prove her right to attack such a subject as this? Surely, nothing.

As human nature happens to be constituted, no advice is commonly more resented than that which recommends

a person to try his hand at something less imposing than the work he has selected, and for which he has perhaps been flattered to the top of his bent by ignorant or interested people. But, the question of final success or failure may often depend upon the acceptance or rejection of such advice, which, if given in a good spirit, and founded upon arguments that address themselves to the reason rather than to the feelings, ought not to be lightly treated. It would have given us great pleasure to have been able to acknowledge in Miss Hosmer's statue a tenth part of the excellence which her enthusiastic friends in Boston find in it—granting that such persons as the author of the absurdly extravagant article in the "Atlantic" are friends, and not most hurtful enemies—but, we believe we pronounce the verdict of the world of disinterested people; we know that we speak our own impartial conviction, when we say that Miss Hosmer has shown in what she has done, but little taste, or sentiment, or fancy, to say nothing of imagination or the creative faculty, to the possession of which she has not, of course, the least claim.\*

Is there, then, no field in which Miss Hosmer, or any other woman who feels drawn to modelling—and, judging by Miss Hosmer's own account of the processes of herself and her brother artists, there is no longer any "art" of sculp-

\* The reader will find an opinion confirmatory of our own from a source which challenges respect wherever the author's name is known, in the "Descriptive Handbook to the Fine Art Collections in the International Exhibition of 1862, by Francis Turner Palgrave. Second Edition, revised and completed." . . . "We must point out," he says, "that where the artist aims at individuality, and fails, this failure is fatal to high rank in art. \* \* \* Take Hosmer's 'Zenobia,' where beside the conventional treatment of drapery, so little like nature, and the display of polished ornament in the tasteless modern Italian style—neither attitude nor expression appear expressive of more than a proud, indolent woman, where we are led to expect a likeness of the gallant Queen of Palmyra."

ture—can worthily employ her time, and use her talent? We should be sorry to think it, and, so far from there being no field, there happens just now to be one which calls for all the taste and skill that can be supplied either by men or women; we mean the decoration of buildings with sculptured flower-and-leaf ornament. The Oxford Museum has set the example, drawn of course from the best period of Gothic architecture, of using leaves and flowers, and even animals, modelled as closely after nature as the laws of decoration will admit, to make beautiful the capitals of pillars, the spandrels and mouldings of doors and windows, and all other parts where such ornament would be suitable. And in this country, in our own city, the architect of the new building for the "Academy of Design" has used this mode of decorating freely and with excellent result; and other architects, since Mr. Wight led the way, have shown a disposition to discard the old, conventional, thousand-times-copied, and worn-out inventions of a tasteless period, and replace them with the fresh, living, and ever-varied designs supplied in profusion by the woods and fields to any lover of nature who will seek for them.

The difficulty in the way of the architect who wishes to wreath his capitals and windows, and fill his panels with natural ornament, lies in the scarcity of workmen able to execute the work without the necessity of previous modelling, or even to model gracefully and truly from nature. For one peculiarity of this ornament is, that it cannot be measured and "drawn out" in an architect's office, as most so-called Gothic, Moorish, Renaissance or other ornament is, but to secure individuality, freedom, freshness, and truth, must be struck out as directly as possible from the living flower, the just-plucked leaf.

Now, if some of the young girls and boys who are dabbling in clay and

chipping away at marble in the hope that they may one day take their place among the sculptors, would modestly consent to help the architects by cutting in stone the flowers whose habits of growth and characteristic beauty they had carefully studied, they would not only find abundant and rewarding work, but they would be doing some real substantial good in the world, more than they will ever be able to accomplish by adding to the number of such statues as come out of most studios now-a-days. Not only would they increase their own knowledge of nature, and deepen their love for her still and serious beauty, but they would interest the world of men and women in their work, and lead the way to fit statues of men and women in the future.

We do not know why this advice should be considered belittling to those to whom it is offered. Suppose Miss Hosmer, or Mr. Palmer, had carved the capitals in the lower story of the Academy of Design with ivy, and fern, and blood-root, and pitcher-plant and gentian; suppose they had brought their intelligence, their education, their skill to bear on the work; should we not have had something more productive of lasting gratitude than the "Zenobia" and the "White Captive?" It would have been a public possession, shared and enjoyed by every man, woman, and child that passed it in his daily walk; keeping fresh in their minds the memory of their summer strolls by field, and wood, and brook, and smiling away the sternness of winter with glad anticipations of the spring.

For it is a question we have asked and answered before in the pages of the "New Path"—"what is the use of modern sculpture?" The greater part of it—and the exceptions are so few that we might almost say the whole of it—is utterly useless. It is expensive lumber, little else; and puts us almost out of

patience to think of the time that is wasted in the long, tedious process of modelling and carving it—to say nothing of the time wasted in looking at it when done. Isaac Newton, who perhaps was a poor judge of such matters, called the Earl of Peterboro's statues "stone dolls;" it would be hard to tell what he would have thought if he could have seen in vision such a collection as that in the Roman Court of the Exhibition of 1862. The truth is, that modern sculptors must find something to say that the world wants and needs to hear; and must be able to say that something in a way to make the world listen to them, if they do not wish to see their art come to be looked upon as hardly worthy of the name of art at all.

One word more and we have finished. There is a work which needs to be done, and which it surely cannot be considered derogatory to the claims of any living sculptor to propose that he or she should undertake; we mean the full-length, faithful portraiture of the great men and women of our time, in their habits as they live and move among us. Perhaps, in the case of many of the men who will make the century memorable, this duty has been done, although, even with them, the bust is nearly all that we have by which to remember them. Let Miss Hosmer, or any sculptor who will do the world service, make a marble statue of the woman who, more than any other single person, has helped to rid this land of the curse of Slavery—Harriet Beecher Stowe; let her seat her, pen in hand, and her great book in manuscript on her lap, and give her to us and the next ages; first, an exact portrait of head and face—most pre-

vious; then, from collar to shoe, hand, foot, and every fold in her dress, just as they are; nobly subdued, if you will, to the marble's law, but losing no truth thereby—and we will thank her more warmly and cordially than if she had made Zenobia perfect from top to toe, and all Aurelian's triumph from end to end. Then, let her, humbly but proudly, write "Hosmer fecit" on the hem of the garment, and be thankful that she has accomplished a task for which the faithful doing might alone be fit reward.

This, then—without feeling that we are proposing anything in the least derogatory to Miss Hosmer's talent, or that we are deserving less than the thanks which are due to the giver of well-meant, honest, and, we believe, good advice—is what we recommend to her and to other women who feel the desire for work stirring within them; work other than house-keeping, sewing, cooking, and mending, which are no more the only tasks for women than farming, wood-chopping, eating, and drinking are for men. Women have genius—their own characteristic gift, and as precious as that of men; women have talent, as varied and as fine as men have, and the same rule is set for the obedience of both—that they should serve that genius and use that talent. Also, the same inexorable law—inexorable, but full of grace—sits guardian over the work of man and woman, that they should not mistake their powers, nor misuse them; and it is in the belief that our countrywoman, in whose fame we feel a respectful interest, has mistaken her powers and is misdirecting them, that we have written these very frank, but very, friendly, words.

#### OUR FURNITURE; WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT IT SHOULD BE.

YEARS ago Edgar Poe published an essay entitled "Philosophy of Furniture,"\*

\* Collected Works, New York, 1861, Vol. II. pp. 299 et seq.

in which he asserted and undertook to show that the Americans did not understand furnishing their houses. He began by assuming that the English