

NIGHT AND DAY.

"WHY finish it," exclaimed the sculptor, as he flung from him into a corner of the studio, his large chisel and heavy hammer; "why attempt to finish this figure of Day? The Day of Manhood has not yet broke."

And standing back, with folded arms, he gazed at the monstrous block, half hewn, upon which he had been dealing his prodigious strokes, splintering and chipping the marble, with an eye that never wavered, and a hand that never missed, the whole night through.

The lamp, hung in the roof of his studio, glared down upon the artist, and with broad light and shadow brought out in bold relief the expression of his grand head and face. Half a century of noble passions and stern will, of meditation and disappointment, of glorious plans, and constant toil, and rich experience, had inspirited with lines of feeling his massive countenance. It had the firmness of a mountain, the depth of a sea, and was eloquent in every feature with calm strength. As the light fell on the matted hair thrown backward, the wrinkled forehead, the hanging brow, beneath which shone liquid and bright the profoundly thoughtful eye, the wide-dilated nostril, the compressed mouth, half-hidden in the beard, that hung heavily beneath the chin, — on the broad chest, across which were grasped the arms, with tense and swelling muscles, and on the whole figure, that, pliant at once and sturdy, rose like a bronzed statue from the floor, he seemed an incarnation of Force.

It was Michael Angelo; and the form which he had been softening from stiff rock into vigorous life, was the famous Day, that now leans his colossal, half-wrought trunk and limbs upon the sarcophagus in the chapel of the Medici.

"Ay!" continued the sculptor, in his deep-muttered tones, "why finish it? Is it not now the fit symbol of humanity in this age of savage crime? Let it lie there, brawny and stiff with life's unmeaning drudgery, unsmoothed and rough. It were mockery to give it roundness and polish. Let the head, with its air of stubborn resolution, mutely look out upon the slaving field of time, with half-marked features, like a morning in the mist. Ready, though hopeless art thou, thou Samson! ready for care, and toil,

and burdens. Work enough is there for thee, thou uncouth Hercules! labor, countless, to slay earth's monsters and cleanse her filth. Lie there, thou unborn angel! as a protest against a senseless, wretched, false, and wicked age. Man is not yet, nor man's beauty; what is he but a half-formed giant? The God, that is in thee, shall one day step forth in his young symmetry, to grace redeemed earth in an age of Truth, and Beauty, and Peace. Then shall it be Day."

"But now is it Night," murmured he, with a sense of pure, indignant greatness, as the thought of the corruptions of his time and land, of the luxurious idleness, and petty tyranny, and rotten hypocrisies of prelate and noble, of the vexatious obstacles cast by envy in the path of his brave endeavors, of the eight precious years wasted in the stone quarry, of the corruption and quarrel all around, and above all, of the crushed people of his loved Italy, came over him, "now is it Night."

And he turned to look at the female form, which, in rounded beauty, was sunk in sleep at the opposite end of the sarcophagus, — a sleep so profound, that it seemed as if the jar of elements contending could not rouse her.

"Wake not, wake not, beautiful one! In thy still heaven of dreams shine worlds of loveliness, whose light has never reached us here. There all is purity and joy and peaceful triumph of unchanging good. Far shine in mellow splendors the stars of that Eternity. Veiled are thy eyes, with their deep life; the music of thy hidden thoughts sounds not on our dull ears. Shadows of doubt brood over us; the groans of earth, like the voice of a sleep-walker amid phantom-fiends, drown the soft melodies of heaven. Wake not, oh, wake not."

The walls of the apartment seemed like a prison in his choking emotions, and dashing open the door, he plunged into the free air.

It was morning, cool, balmy morning. Softly up the deep, deep blue skies spread the golden flush; softly over the girdling Appenines, with their snowy peaks, mantled the rosy lustre; the waking earth was blushing to greet the sun. Far beneath in silver winding was his loved Arno; and on its banks swelled up into the flooding light, the stately Rome, the airy Campanile, the sombre tower of

the palace. Florence, his Florence, dear amid her errors, magnificent amid her woes, glittered before him in the valley, with her massive edifices and her shining walls. In her glory, had not a dawn already broken upon slumbering man? As the crowds of his prophets and sybils, the images of his Moses and his Christ, and the countless forms of embodied poems, yet sitting in silent dignity in the chambers of his mind, like princes prisoned in their own palace homes, rose up in memory, there came over his spirit a dim anticipation, like rays of breaking light, of the future greatness of the human race. The future greatness? Yes; and were not these very majestic presences reflections, in his grateful reverence, of the greatness of the Past now sunken? In the full prophecy of the hour he conceived his Morning and Twilight. Man had been once; man again should be. The darkness of the present fled away before the blending splendors of Ages gone and Ages coming.

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