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Posthumous Glory.

C. C. Jackson.

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Posthumous Glory.

There is a nobleness and dignity in human nature, which is almost incomprehensible. But it is too often sought in the wrong direction. It is not exhibited among the intrigues and conflicts of ambitious demagogues, but rather among those truly-aspiring heroes, whose lives are but the practical application of their noble sentiments. The one class of individuals exhibits the artificial man, contaminated by the vicious influences of society, and the other, the real man, as he springs full-fledged from the hand of his Maker. He, who thus fans into a cheering flame the spark of divinity within his breast, only follows the promptings

of his immortal character.

To complete the ennobling influence, which attends the individual on his entrance into the arena of life, he is impressed by a firm and unmistakable conviction, that the nearer he approximates to the original, sinless character of his race, the more deserving will he be of that ever-blooming crown of olives, whose leaves shall distil their fragrance among the most remote generations. The spirit with which universal man contemplates the lives of departed greatness, fully confirms this sentiment. While beauty and loveliness of character are preserved on memorial tablets, long after he who pressed them has gone to his eternal home; oblivion's veil is unconsciously allowed to fall

upon the frailties, which might have left
a blot upon this otherwise beautiful relic.
The virtues and glories of the noble Genius
are related in the simple, but brilliant,
narrative of the historian, chanted in
the glowing numbers and thrilling
strains of the poet, pictured in living
metaphors by the sublime appeals of
the orator, and, above all, cherished
as a monument of everlasting remem-
brance in the hearts of a devoted
people.

But while the beauties and per-
fections of noble heroes thus thrill the
national mind, where are the errors
and imperfections, which must by an
irrevocable law of man's existence,
attend the steps of the most perfect
mortal, who breathes the contaminating

atmosphere of life. Behold they are forgotten! The tomb covers the obloquies of humanity, but sheds an increasing lustre round its glories. Those defects, which give point to the foul slanders, which the cowardly "they say-ers" of society, herald forth, to embitter the life of the philanthropic Genius, are one by one buried in his tomb, until instead of the conflicting elements of truth and error, nobility and imbecility, which compose the character of the man as he was, we view the ideally perfect man. Take, for example, that hero whose deeds adorn the proudest pages of the world's history, and with a cool, dispassionate eye trace out the varied events of his life. While you note here and there the record of a shameful

deed, which seems for a moment to cast a shadow upon his glories, yet such thrilling evidences of ^{true} greatness and magnanimity greet you at each successive step, that the remembrance of his follies is completely engulfed in the overwhelming majesty of the nobler man.

These considerations, then, clearly indicate, that the gems, which bedeck the most glorious crown, that can adorn the human brow, must be sought among the most exalted propensities of human nature. It is only by a strict adherence to just and virtuous principles, and in pursuit of noble and philanthropic ends, that the individual can hope to gain that talisman, which will fulfill the ardent longings of his

immortal spirit. If, then, in obedience to all that is good, glorious and God-like in his nature, he showers blessings and benefits in rich profusion upon the world, like the majestic King of Day, who sheds forth beams of light, in ceaseless radiations, to warm and illumine this cold, dark Earth he mounts up, up to the meridian of his existence, and when he has sunk in radiant beauty, behind the western hills of life, he reflects his glory-beams upon the western skies, in a beaming halo, which dazzles the gaze of Earth's poorest sons.

True, man may lose sight of this primary principle of his nature, in the vortex of passion and ambition which foams in fury about him, and seek unfading renown in the bloody battle, among clashing blades and mangled corpses; true, he may trample

under his accursed foot the flowers of
hope, which bloom in other breasts,
and strive to purchase glory's emblems
at the expense of the tears and groans of
tender and sympathetic hearts, but sooner
or later - perhaps alas! too late - the dread
truth will flash before his vision, and in-
stead of the flattering applause and loud
huzzahs for which he has bartered his
soul, he will meet only heartfelt curses
and bitter deprecations.

But although virtue
and Philanthropy, are the evident antice-
dents of a glorious memory, yet there are
many powerful influences, which tend directly
to seduce man from the flowery paths,
through which these twin-sisters of Heaven
would fain conduct him to a goal of
unfading Glory. There is a certain erratic

propensity in him, which, if allowed free scope among his passions, draws him from a contemplation of the truly good and great, to revel amid ambitious strategies, which seek to obscure their infamy behind the insignia of regal power. The dross and refuse, which enter into the composition of human character, glittering and sparkling with a borrowed lustre, seem too often to hide from human view the rich gems, which impart their brilliancy to the whole constitution.

The historian seduced from the unswerving rectitude of his calling by party prejudice or personal feeling, too often lends a helping hand in lowering the standard of worldly glory. He often seeks to palliate and even justify dark and hellish deeds, by straining over

them mementoes of a nobleness of character, which can but find a sympathetic response in every heart. Lured on by the delusive glare, which flickers round the heroes of such a historian, the blooming youth, upon whose dimpled cheeks are graven in sunny smiles, the emblems of innocence and joy, is transformed into the hardened wretch, who pursues his glory-god over the desolate hearths and smouldering ruins of a once happy land. Oh! it is a dark day for the rising hopes of humanity, when the distinction between virtue and vice, honor and dishonor, glory and infamy is thus rudely wiped out from the chronicles of the world. But when History, true to her heavenly mission, seizes the pencil of Genius and with the analysis of the perfect

artist, delineates in separate groups, the variegated tints of human character, from the darkest to the most spotless white, then indeed can man draw inspiration from the glorious beauties, which the dark and ominous back-ground only serves to set forth in all their resplendent loveliness.

What a field for contemplation is here presented to the world. Under the sublime influence of such exalted meditations the spirit of humanity is raised "above the smoke and stir of this dim spot, which men call Earth,"

to vibrate in unison with the great Archetype of truth, purity and glory. The holiest feelings of our nature cluster round old Westminster Abbey, Mount Vernon and other Meccas of national glory

and, at their shrine, the world sweeps
tears of love and gratitude. Tell me
not, that the silent influence which
comes up from the tombs of buried greatness
to expand, adorn and beautify the
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Let the cold-hearted cynic, who grovels
on, with his eye fixed upon the earth
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~~the~~ rainbow of promise, which bedeckes
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"Let fate do her worst, there are relics of joy,
Bright dreams of the past, which she cannot
destroy;

(turn over)

which come in the right-time of sorrow and care,
And bring back the features that joy used to wear,
Long, long be the heart with such memories filled,
Like the vase in which roses have once been distilled—
You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still."

Junior Prize Contest Oration of Clarence Gearhart Jackson, Class of 1860
Transcribed by Michael M. Geduldig, June 14, 2006
Edited by Don Sailer, October 2009

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