

A BASKET OF FRAGMENTS

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A Basket of Fragments by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

**A BASKET
OF FRAGMENTS**

A BASKET OF FRAGMENTS.

BY

A QUONDAM AUTHOR.

"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

JOHN vi. 12.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

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PREFACE.



THE accompanying pages are the original thoughts of the author, and whatever resemblance, either in idea or language, may possibly be traced to the published opinions or writings of any other author, either known or anonymous, not a thought or line which follows is a plagiarism.

January 1864.

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THE principal consideration in the estimation of the value of Time, is how much of it remains for the accomplishment of the main purpose of existence. This, if rightly considered, will lead us to clear the decks for action. Very laudable pursuits in themselves may be very ill-timed; for instance, how absurd it would be for a naval commander, in the presence of an enemy, with a decisive victory in his power, to be employed in the study of the theory of naval warfare.

It should be matter of serious reflection to all,

that few die after a slow and lingering illness, but most by a short and sharp attack of disease; and in both events, it generally happens that the immediate prospect of death is only a few hours, or, at most, days, before actual dissolution. People pass from active life, or retired, unsuspecting leisure, in a very short time into the arms of death, and no one probably is so much surprised, nay, thunderstruck, as themselves, to find the dread period has at last arrived. We hear of one and another being carried away without reflecting that it might, from all appearances, just as likely have been ourselves—perhaps much more likely. “Be ye also ready, for in an hour that ye think not, the Son of man cometh.”

Spring is the time for blossoms and flowers, autumn for fruits. It is just so with the human mind. In youth, we are demonstrative, and we judge our own writings and actions, as well

as those of others, by their efflorescence. Our life consists, then, mainly in giving and receiving impressions. We are in the subjective condition, and treat everything (and this is particularly observable in young poets) subjectively. As we get older, we become careless of appearances, and look for results; we go by a more direct road to every purpose; we become more real—more objective—the ideal merges in its highest fruit, which is the real. We make, however, a great mistake if we overlook the fact that the more profuse the bloom, the greater the promise of the vintage. A young writer will generally discourse on the abstract virtues, and paint them in all their brilliant colour, as beautiful abstractions: the old and experienced writer will show one or all these virtues in action in some person or persons, with a thread of facts and circumstances to connect them together. The young writer sighs for perfection, and is often harsh in his

judgments; the old one rejoices in good wherever he finds it; seeks to extract it out of apparent evil, and is more charitable and forgiving. Here, again, it must never be forgotten that the higher the ideal and practice of virtue when young, the greater the capacity for the extraction and appreciation of all excellence when old. When true, the most fiery and impassioned youth will settle down to the most venerable, loving, and tolerant old man.

An excrescent democracy both pious and impious has been found to end in military despotism. The one amongst ourselves, under the Puritans and Cromwell; the other in France, under the worshippers of reason and Napoleon. It remains to be seen whether an indigenous democracy in America will not lead to the same result.

Have you never observed how a powerful

company embodies its independence in every petty official in its employ? They act each in his department as though they were the company itself, and backed by all its authority; they are almost as little respecters of persons as the law itself.

There are many apocryphal and untrue incidents related of great persons so characteristic and well contrived, that one feels a pleasure in relating them, whether true or not: they are a sort of literary property, in which a copyright should exist, as in novels: if they are not true, they ought to be.

Little events and little things are like the rudders of ships,—they decide the direction of great events.

Far too little attention is given to the moral effect of public criticisms of works in literature