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Two lectures, by Mark Hopkins**

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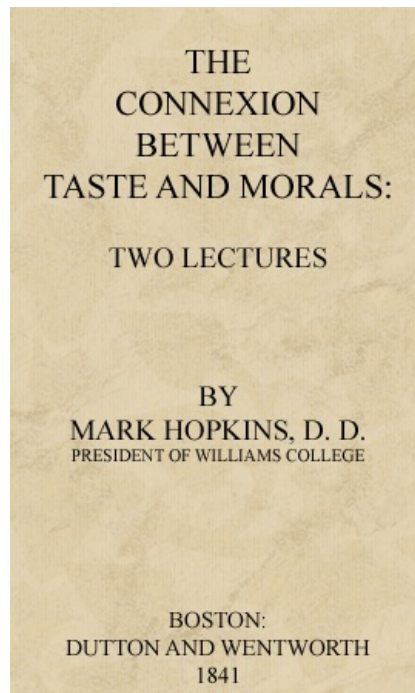
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MORALS: TWO LECTURES ***

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THE
CONNEXION
BETWEEN
TASTE AND MORALS:

TWO LECTURES

BY

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LECTURE I.

Is the prevalence of a cultivated taste, favorable to morals? Is there a connexion, either in individuals, or in communities, between good taste and good morals?

When I began to reflect upon this point with reference to a public discussion of it, I put the above questions to three educated men, as I happened to meet them. The first said, he had not thought of it, but that, at the first view, he did not believe there was any such connexion; the second said he should wish to see it proved before he would believe it; and the third said, he thought there was such a connexion. This difference of opinion among educated men, led me to think that an investigation of the subject might be a matter of interest, and perhaps of profit. As every thing, in this country, depends upon a sound state of morals in the community, whatever bears upon that, deserves our most careful scrutiny.

To discuss this subject understandingly, we must know precisely what we are talking about. What then is taste? This term is sometimes used to express mere desire, as a taste for dress, or for low pleasures. It can hardly be necessary to say that that is not the meaning now attached to it. Taste is defined by Alison, to be, "That faculty of the human mind by which we perceive and enjoy whatever is beautiful or sublime in the works of nature or of art." According to this definition, which is sufficiently correct for our present purpose, it will be perceived that there is, first, a perception of certain qualities in external objects, and then, according to the nature of the object, an emotion of beauty, or of sublimity in the mind. These emotions are, of course, incapable of definition except by stating the occasions on which they arise, and can be known only by being felt. To talk of an emotion to those who have not felt it, is like talking of colors to the blind. And here I may remark, that these terms, beauty and sublimity, have, in common with those denoting sensations, an ambiguity which has often produced confusion. As the term heat is used to denote both the sensation we feel on approaching the fire, and that quality in the fire which produces the sensation, so beauty and sublimity are sometimes used to express the emotions in the mind, and sometimes those qualities in external objects which are fitted to produce them, though there is, of course, in the external object, no emotion, nor any thing resembling one.

[Pg 6]

If this account of taste be correct, it will be perceived that it cannot, with any propriety, be compared, as it often has been, to a bodily sense. The impression upon a bodily sense, necessarily follows the presence of the object, and is uniform in all mankind. A tree clothed in fresh foliage is necessarily seen, and seen to be green by all who turn their eyes upon it. The same tree, when seen, may be pronounced by one individual to be beautiful, by another, from some peculiar association, to be the reverse, and by a third, however beautiful in itself, it may be looked upon without any emotion at all. It is, therefore, a great mistake to suppose, as many do, that those qualities in objects which awaken the emotions of taste, act directly and necessarily upon us, like those which affect the senses.

[Pg 7]

A second preliminary inquiry is, What are the causes which produce these emotions? And here I barely remark, without inquiring after any common principle by which they produce similar results, that these causes differ widely from each other. The emotions may be awakened by natural objects, by sound, by the products of the imagination, by the combinations of the intellect, and by certain manifestations of the affections and moral character.

A third inquiry is, how the taste can be cultivated? This obviously can be done only on two conditions. The first is, that we put ourselves in situations adapted to produce the emotions of taste; and the second is, that we preserve a state of mind that will permit those emotions to arise. This last, a proper state of mind, though less often considered, is quite as important as the first. "It is," says the poet,

[Pg 8]

"The soul that sees; the outward eyes
Present the object, but the mind descries,
And thence delight, disgust, or cool indifference rise."

Upon him whose mind is engrossed by care, or ruffled by passion, the most beautiful objects make no impression. To perceive and enjoy them, the mind must be calm. The beauties and

sublimities of nature are like the stars, which the storm shuts out, but when the heavens are serene, they come out, one after another, to the eye that is watching for them, till the firmament glows with their light. He, therefore, and he only, who, in a proper state of mind, will place himself in the presence of beautiful or sublime objects, and will compare the effects produced under different circumstances, will improve his taste, both in its susceptibility to emotion, and in its power of discrimination.

The question then, which we are now prepared to discuss, is, whether such a cultivation and improvement of the taste, has a favorable effect upon the moral character?

That it has such an effect, I infer, first, because we find in the emotions of taste, to say the least, an innocent source of enjoyment for our leisure hours, and the mind that is innocently happy, is less accessible to temptation. Indolence, mere vacuity, we all know, is the porch of vice, and the great dangers to the young arise from their leisure hours—from the want of some means of innocent mental exhilaration, in which they can be induced to spend those hours. It was said by Franklin, that leisure was a time in which to do something useful; but all are not Franklins. If leisure time can be, as it is by many, usefully employed, so much the better; but he who should provide for our youth the means and the inducements to spend their leisure time innocently, would be a public benefactor. In our cities, where the temptations to mere sensual gratification are so numerous and obtrusive, and where natural objects are very much excluded, this is a point of great importance, and of great difficulty. Until of late very little of this kind has been attempted, unless theatres may be called an attempt. But theatres with us are out of the question, for Miss Martineau says that "the Americans have very little dramatic taste; and that the spirit of puritanism still rises up in such fierce opposition to the stage, as to forbid the hope that this grand means of intellectual exercise will ever be made the instrument of moral good to society there, that it might be made." She says, moreover, so hopeless is our case, that "those who respect dramatic entertainments the most highly, will be the most anxious that the American theatres should be closed." Theatres are indeed out of the question, and I trust it will be a long time before we shall make progress backwards, to that state of morals which is produced by the instructions even of an English theatre.

[Pg 9]

It is in view of the want now under consideration, that the establishment of Associations for literary purposes, and for procuring popular lectures open to all, is not only a new, but a most promising feature in the history of our cities. Man needs, and must have, excitement and mental exhilaration, and our Creator, if we would but see it, has not been inattentive to this want of our frame. No; to supply it, we have the pleasures of rational social converse, the play of the affections, the duties of kindness and benevolence—does a man feel depressed, let him do a good action—and last, but not least, the gratifications of taste: all the pleasure to be derived from the concord of sweet sounds, from the charms of literature, from the forms and colors and groupings of nature, from her sunrisings and sunsettings, from her landscapes of mountain and valley and lake and river, from the stars that roll in their courses, and the flowers that nod to each other by the way-side.—These are the sources of mental exhilaration which God has provided; and they are, to the artificial stimulants of theatrical exhibitions and of gambling, what the cold water that was drunk in Eden is to brandy and gin. May I not here venture to say to young men, 'Beware how you spend your *leisure* hours! your character and destiny in life will probably turn upon it.' Among the means, as I have already said, of spending these hours at least innocently, the gratifications of taste are conspicuous. They seem for this very purpose to have been had distinctly in view in the fitting up of this world; and so far as they lure the mind from the lower gratifications of sense, they must be favorable to morals.

[Pg 10]

The remarks now made respect taste chiefly as a guard against evil; but I cannot dismiss this head without noticing more fully its positive influence, as a source of innocent enjoyment, upon morals. A good taste, and I do not hold myself answerable for its perversions, involves a ready susceptibility to the emotions of beauty and sublimity, and of course a readiness to receive pleasure from the common appearances of nature, and from every free and natural expression of good feeling. It is, in my view, of the first importance both to character and to happiness, that the young should cultivate a relish for those simple and natural pleasures, the sources of which are open to all. It is important to happiness. How much happiness does the young florist secure, who can look upon the common violet as it opens its eye from under the snows of the early spring, with much the same pleasure as upon the choice exotic which is resorted to and exclusively admired by those who have unfortunately been taught that it is vulgar to admire what is common! How much happiness does he secure who is touched by a beautiful action wherever he sees it, who appreciates sympathy wherever he finds it, and however expressed! A mind rightly constituted in this respect, drinks in enjoyment from the objects and occurrences of daily life, as the eye does light. It is also essential to character. How many young men enter life with a false estimate of the advantages which wealth and fashion can confer; who find their happiness, not in the contemplation and pursuit of appropriate objects, but in what others think of them, and to whom the world becomes insipid unless *they* make a figure in it! Let now misfortune come upon such men, and the world fails them. *Their* world is gone; they have no resource; they become, generally dishonest, sometimes inefficient and gloomy, and commit suicide. These persons come to consider the common and truly great blessings which God has given as nothing unless they may possess those artificial and egotistical enjoyments which arise from conventional society. They see not the splendid ornaments and rich provisions which, to adopt, with a slight accommodation, the beautiful language of another, are gathered round the earth for them;—"its ocean of air above, its ocean of water beneath, its zodiac of lights, its tent of dropping clouds, its striped coat of climates, its fourfold year." It is nothing to them, if they have not man for their

[Pg 11]

[Pg 12]

servant, that "all the parts of nature incessantly work into each other's hands for their profit; that the wind sows the seed, the sun evaporates the sea, the wind blows the vapor to the field, the ice on the other side of the planet condenses the rain on this, and thus the endless circulations of the divine charity nourish man." What a change when such a person is brought back to a true relish of the simple pleasures of nature! Even sickness, depriving him for a time of what he had undervalued, if it bring him back to this, is a blessing; and then the result may be stated in the words of Gray:—

"See the wretch who long has tost
On the thorny bed of pain,
At length regain his vigor lost,
And breathe and walk again."

Then,

[Pg 13]

"The meanest flow'ret of the vale,
The simplest note that swells the gale,
The common sun, the air, the skies,
To him are opening paradise!"

Then, though he may hold little property by that title which the law gives, he yet feels that the universe is his for those nobler purposes for which it was intended to act on the spirit:

"His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers;"

and he looks back upon his former discontent as the petulance of a child. The simple beauties and the glad voices of nature have made him a man again.

But again, I infer that there is a connexion between good taste and good morals, because there is an analogy between those qualities in matter which excite the emotions of taste, and those relations on which morals depend. So much is this the case, that some philosophers found morality upon a theory of the beautiful, considering it a sublime harmony. In all beautiful objects in nature, or in art, there is an order, a propriety, a fitness, a proportion; and the impression which these make upon us is so analogous to that which is made by virtuous conduct, that we use the same terms to express both. To me, indeed, it seems that beauty in matter is to moral beauty what instinct is to reason, or what the light of the moon is to that of the sun; containing some of the same elements, but destitute of the highest. Hence, as we should naturally expect, morals furnish that region in the province of taste in which she gathers those flowers that are richest in beauty and sweetest in perfume.

[Pg 14]

"Is aught so fair,
In all the dewy landscape of the spring,
In the bright eye of Hesper, or the morn,
In nature's fairest forms, is aught so fair
As virtuous friendship?"

But I observe again, that as there is the analogy just pointed out between their causes, so there is an affinity between the emotions themselves of taste and correct moral feeling, and the transition from one to the other is obvious. This point requires illustration. That our emotions are associated in groups, is practically known to every body. Even the child does not ask his father for a sixpence when he is in an ill temper, because he knows the transition is not easy from ill temper to generosity. Deep grief cannot pass at once to sudden joy. It must be by a gradual transition, first to a tender melancholy, and then to cheerfulness, and then to joy. "The garment of sorrow," as Coleridge expresses it, "must be drawn off so gradually, and that to be put in its stead so gradually slipt on and feel so like the former, that the sufferer shall be sensible of the change only by the refreshment." It is by understanding well these affinities of the feelings that the orator can continue to control them as they pass over their widest range. The necessity of a suitable state of mind in order that the emotions of taste may arise, has already been noticed, and what I now observe is, that a state of correct moral feeling is more favorable to these emotions than any other. There is between them such an affinity that they readily associate with each other; while there is, between the emotions of taste and a vicious state of mind, no such affinity, but they are to a great extent incompatible.

[Pg 15]

The external world often gives back to us but the image of our own thoughts, and hence may seem almost as variable as the dim forms of twilight to which the imagination gives its own shape. This tendency of the mind to cast its own hue over nature, or rather to receive different emotions from external objects, according to its own state, is well illustrated by Crabbe, in his tale called "The Lover's Journey." In this tale, Orlando, the lover, starts on a pleasant morning with the expectation of finding the object of his affections at a village, where she had agreed to meet him. The first part of his journey lay across a heath covered with furze. But hear him:—

"Men may say
A heath is barren; nothing is so gay;
Barren or bare to call this charming scene
Argues a mind possessed by care or spleen."

And thus he went on, admiring the wholesome wormwood and the vigorous brier, till he reached

the village, and then disappointment came. The lady had gone to a village some miles further on, under circumstances that vexed him, and led him to doubt her affection. He doubted even whether he should proceed, but at length determined to see and upbraid her. Now hear him again, as he passes along by the side of a beautiful river:—

[Pg 16]

"I hate these scenes, Orlando angry cried;
And these proud farmers, yes, I hate their pride;
See that sleek fellow, how he stalks along,
Strong as an ox, and ignorant as strong.
These deep, fat meadows I detest; it shocks
One's feelings there to see the grazing ox;—
For slaughter fatted—as a lady's smile
Rejoices man, and means his death the while."

And if mere disappointment, without a consciousness of guilt and remorse, could produce such effects, what must we expect when the mind is not at peace with itself? Tendencies are shown by extreme cases, and it is in perfect consistency with the nature of things that Milton makes Satan exclaim, on seeing Eden in its united innocence and beauty,

"O hell! what do mine eyes with grief behold!"

Who can imagine a miser, even, to say nothing of a thief, or a drunkard, lifting his eyes from his buried heaps, and enjoying the scene before him, however beautiful? While he who performs a deed of charity at the end of his walk, will find nature wearing a richer dress on his return. The mind conscious of rectitude is at peace with itself, and is in that calm state which permits it to enjoy whatever is pleasing.

But not only, as in the cases now mentioned, is a right state of moral feeling favorable to taste, but the emotions of taste also tend to introduce moral ideas and emotions. It is, as I conceive, chiefly from this fact that nature has a tendency to lead the mind "up to nature's God;" for we must all be conscious that when we view nature as beautiful or sublime, this tendency is strongest. No one can have stood by Niagara, or upon the White Mountains, without feeling this. Hence the groves and the high hills were the first places of worship. Hence the Indian sacrifices to the Great Spirit when he passes through the wild rapids. And as we associate the beauties of nature with the wisdom and goodness of God, so do we, in many cases, instinctively infer from the displays of taste in man, something of his moral character. Who, for example, in travelling through a solitary forest, if he should come, as there are many such, to a neat log-house, with a trellised woodbine at the door, and with every thing orderly and clean about it, would not expect to pass by unmolested, or, if he should call, to be civilly and kindly treated?—whereas, if every thing bore the appearance of filth and dilapidation, and the only signs of taste were those which indicated a taste for rum, he might well quicken his pace for fear he should be waylaid. No one expects to find indications of taste about the dwelling of a drunkard, or of one abandoned to any low vice. I appeal to any one who hears me, whether he has not felt that it was an indication of a good moral character, and an encouragement to charity, when he has entered some poor dwelling and found that there was still kept alive, in the midst of poverty, a susceptibility to the emotions, and a regard to the requisitions of taste.

[Pg 17]

I have just observed, that there is an affinity between correct moral feeling and the emotions of taste. I now observe, that the highest pleasures of taste cannot be enjoyed without correct views on great moral subjects, and especially respecting the being and attributes of God. Whatever may be said of the power of material objects, in themselves considered, to produce the emotions of taste, it is certain that their chief power depends on the conceptions of the mind which they awaken as signs. A single instance will illustrate this. Most of us have probably felt the emotion of sublimity on hearing what we supposed to be distant thunder, which vanished, and perhaps seemed ridiculous, the moment we ascertained that the sound was produced by the rumbling of a cart. In this case, it is obvious that the emotion depended, not on the sound itself, but on the conception of the mind awakened by it. Now this is pre-eminently the case in the works of nature. How different must be the emotions awakened by a view of the evening firmament in the mind of him who should suppose the stars to be mere points of light, set at no great distance above him, and moving around the earth solely for the convenience of man, from those awakened in the mind of him to whom those points of light indicate the existence of an infinite space; and of suns, and worlds, and systems without number, and at distances which cause the wing of the strongest imagination to flag! How different the emotions produced by the comet now, as it returns at its predicted period, from those excited as it fired

[Pg 18]

[Pg 19]

"the length of Ophiucus huge
In the Arctic sky, and, from his horrid hair,"

was supposed to shake "pestilence and war!" As, therefore, he who cannot see beyond the stars as they appear to the sense, must lose by far the highest pleasure which they are adapted as objects of taste to give; so he who knows the physical structure of the universe, and who yet does not see in it, and behind it, an infinite and beneficent Intelligence, cannot have connected with his view those conceptions which awaken the highest emotions of beauty and sublimity.

The relations of man to nature are much less intimate than those of God, and yet our emotions in view of nature are greatly modified by the view which we take of *His* dignity and moral character. It was when Hamlet supposed there was foul corruption and a general want of principle in society, that "this goodly frame, the earth," seemed to him but "a sterile promontory;" "this most

excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament," why, it appeared no other thing to him "than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors." It was when her inhabitants were oppressed and degraded, that the natural beauty, which is still as bright as ever on the shores of Greece, seemed in the eye of the poet but as

"The loveliness in death
That parts not quite with parting breath,
But beauty with that fearful bloom,
That hue which haunts it to the tomb,
So coldly sweet, so deadly fair,
We start, for life is wanting there."
"'Twas Greece, but living Greece no more."

[Pg 20]

We must all have felt that a shade of sadness was cast over the face of nature when we have thought of the passions, and wars, and lust, and rapine of man, in connexion with her quiet scenes. On the other hand, were the moral state of the world what we trust it shall one day be,—did universal purity, and goodness, and love reign,—would not the sun seem to shine with a more benignant radiance; instead of the thorn, would there not come up the fir-tree: would not the mountains and hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands?

And if the emotions of taste are thus modified by our views of man, how much more must they be by those respecting God! How must a blank atheism hang the heavens in sackcloth, and cover the earth with a pall, and turn the mute promiscuous of nature into a mockery, and make of her mighty fabric one great charnel-house of death, without the hope of a resurrection! On the other hand, how must the beauty and sublimity of nature and of the universe be heightened, the moment we perceive them in their connexion with God! Nothing is more common than to hear those, who emerge from that practical atheism in which most men live, speak of the new perceptions of beauty and sublimity with which they look upon the works of nature:—

"In that blest moment, Nature, throwing wide
Her veil opaque, discloses, with a smile,
The Author of her beauties, who, retired
Behind his own creation, works unseen
By the *impure*, and hears his power denied."

[Pg 21]

All our investigations into nature show that man has no faculties to which there are not corresponding and adequate objects. As infinite as he is in reason, yet the works of God are not exhausted by the operations of that reason. No intellectual Alexander ever sat down and wept for the want of more worlds to conquer. As vast as is his imagination, the revelations of astronomy, as sober facts, go beyond any thing that the imagination had conceived. And is it so, that, in the region of taste alone, the faculties of man have no adequate object? But it is only when nature, like the Bible, is seen to be full of God, that she is clothed with her true sublimity. It is only when "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handy work," that they correspond to the highest conceptions either of the taste or of the intellect. Man rests in the Infinite alone, and the universe without a God is not in harmony with his constitution, even when he is considered as endowed with taste only. But if our views on moral subjects thus modify the emotions of taste, it cannot be doubted that those emotions react upon our moral views, tending to elevate and purify them.

I remark again, that the emotions of taste are favorable to morals, because they are disinterested. As admiration becomes intense, men forget themselves, and, in proportion as they thus find enjoyment, they are prepared for that higher enjoyment which a disinterested performance of duty brings with it. Whenever we see excellence in another, we are bound to admire it without reference to sect or party; and admiration, thus bestowed, is almost always connected with a high moral character. The beauty who can truly forget herself in her admiration for another, deserves admiration for qualities far higher and nobler than beauty.

[Pg 22]

I only observe further, that a cultivated taste is favorable to morals, because the cultivation of one of our powers has a tendency to strengthen the rest.—This, I know, is disputed, and it is even supposed that the union of certain powers in any high degree is impossible. Thus, it is often supposed that a remarkable memory and a sound judgment do not go together; and it must be confessed that the memory may be so cultivated as not to strengthen the judgment. But when I speak of cultivating a faculty, I mean cultivating it on correct principles and with reference to the end for which it was given. Those who remember events as isolated, or only as they are connected by the relations of time and place, and who do not see and remember them as connected by the relations of cause and effect, means and end, premises and conclusion, do not, by such an exercise of the memory, strengthen the judgment, though they certainly show that it has great need of being strengthened. Of what possible use can it be, to the forming of a correct judgment on any point, for a good woman to remember the precise age of every child in the neighborhood? It is these walking chronicles, these living almanacs, who will tell you the weather for all time past, if not for all time to come, who get the credit of having great memories and little judgment. But such a memory is, to one cultivated on correct principles, only what a room full of minerals and birds and fish and insects and rubbish, promiscuously tumbled together, is to a well-arranged museum. Who does not know that experience is the best enlightener of the judgment?—And where does experience garner her stores but in the memory? It is obvious that he who has the best memory of past events, in their true connexions, will have the best possible materials for forming a judgment of the future. The same opposition is generally supposed to

[Pg 23]

exist between the imagination and the judgment. But it occasionally happens that an individual, like Edmund Burke, unites the most gorgeous imagination with the profoundest judgment; and then it is seen that the analogies which the imagination suggests yield important lights to the judgment instead of misleading it. I know that the imagination, striking its roots into the hotbed of novel-reading, may overtop the judgment; but, judiciously cultivated, I contend that it is not unfavorable to the judgment. And if, in these cases, a judicious cultivation of one power tends to strengthen the other, much more will the cultivation of taste have a favorable tendency upon the moral nature, since these departments of the mind have never been supposed to be in opposition, but are, as we have seen, closely allied to each other.

But all this time it has probably been objected that, however plausible the reasoning may be on this subject, it is yet contrary to experience. If it were so, it might perhaps be said of it, as was said by Euler of a demonstrated property of the arch, "this is contrary to all experience, but is nevertheless true:"—it is so in the nature of things, but the materials are refractory. But let us see how far it is contrary to experience; or rather, whether we cannot, so far as it is thus contrary, satisfactorily account for it.

[Pg 24]

In order to this, we must make, as it seems to me, three important distinctions. And, first, we must distinguish between taste considered as a power of judging, and as a susceptibility to emotion. This distinction is often overlooked. Mr. Blair, for instance, defines taste to be, "the power of receiving pleasure or pain from the beauties or deformities of nature and of art;" in which, regard is had to the susceptibility only. But afterwards, when contrasting taste with genius, he says—"Taste is the power of judging, genius is the power of executing;" in which the susceptibility to emotion is left out of sight. Can I make this distinction obvious? When an unpractised person sees for the first time a grand historical picture, or reads a beautiful poem, he gives himself up to the emotion; he is absorbed; he takes no note of time; he forgets where he is, and neither knows nor cares why he is pleased. The eye drinks in beauty as the thirsty man the cold water, and it refreshes the soul. He sees the picture, or reads the poem, again and again, and at length sits down to give an account to a friend of that which had pleased him. Now, he wishes to state the reasons why he was pleased, and he begins to inquire what those qualities were which produced the effect. Here is the rudiment of philosophical criticism, and he goes on perhaps investigating, till he discovers those general principles of taste according to which the work was executed. As long, however, as his mind is thus occupied in analyzing, he feels no emotion of beauty or sublimity. But as this is an enticing species of logic, he may follow it till a work of art shall give him pleasure only by its conformity to certain principles, true or false, which he may have established for himself, and till he becomes a cold critic, or perhaps a reviewer by trade. He may become a mere teller in the bank of taste, to pronounce on what is genuine, and hand it over to others to be used and enjoyed. Now, a man who writes a skilful review of a work of genius, and tells us why we are or ought to be pleased, is supposed to be a man of taste; and the writing of the review is considered as an exercise of taste. This is true of taste considered as a power of judging, but not as a power of feeling. If it were so, the mass of men would be in a pitiable condition. God no more intended that the uninitiated should wait to be pleased with the beauty which they see, until its principles are analyzed, and they are told when and why they ought to be pleased, than He intended they should wait to be cheered and warmed by the rays of the sun, till they should see light decomposed into the seven colors of the prismatic image. But it is by cherishing and keeping alive these universal emotions, which belong to the race, and which find excitement everywhere, that I suppose there is a healthful effect produced on the moral character. The power of genuine philosophical criticism; the power of going back, if I may so express it, into the workshop of nature, and seeing how she mixes her colors, is a rare, a valuable and a dignified power; but it is still an exercise of the intellect, and I am not aware that it has any peculiarly favorable effect upon the moral character. Indeed, when literature and the fine arts become fashionable, and much the subject of conversation, there is a vast deal of this kind of criticism, which is fallen into from imitation and vanity, and which can have no good effect upon morals except as it supplies the place of scandal. It is not, then, in an egotistical and vain community, who read works of genius, and look at pictures, not to admire and enjoy them, but that they may themselves talk about them and be admired, that any good effect upon the moral character is to be expected from the prevalence of what they are pleased to call taste. How far this comes to be the case with communities in which taste is said to be prevalent, and morals are corrupt, I leave others to judge.

[Pg 25]

[Pg 26]

The second distinction which I would make, is that between the cultivation of a taste for the fine arts and for natural objects. This I consider a distinction of much importance on this subject; and I propose to give some reasons why the cultivation of the fine arts—as painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry—has less tendency than a taste for natural objects to improve the character. This I am bound to do; because it is well known that certain nations, as the Spartans and ancient Romans, considered a taste for the fine arts as having a tendency to corrupt morals; and some of the sterner moralists of modern times, especially religious moralists, have objected to it on the same ground. It must also be conceded that those nations, as the Greeks and Italians, among whom these arts have flourished most, have been exceedingly corrupt, and that that corruption has co-existed with an advanced state of the arts in question.

[Pg 27]

And, first, I remark, that a taste for the fine arts cannot be general in a community of any considerable extent. If we suppose such a taste, when formed, to have a tendency to improve the morals, yet how few, in a country like ours, have an opportunity to form it! The products of the arts are to be found, for the most part, only in cities; and of the inhabitants of cities, it is only those who have leisure and wealth, who are affected by them. It ought also to be observed that,

as these arts do not come to perfection in the early stages of society, they cannot produce their effect till wealth and luxury have had time to work general corruption.

But I observe again that, as the power either of executing or of judging in these arts is confined to comparatively a few, it becomes a mark of distinction and a ground of ostentation, and thus there comes to be the appearance of more taste than there really is. The artist finds himself a candidate for fame and wealth through his skill, and hence his passions are aroused and his interests are involved. If successful, he is flattered, perhaps almost deified; if unsuccessful, he becomes irritable and sinks back on the proud consciousness of neglected merit. This peculiar position will account for the bad character of many artists. Those also who *patronize* the arts, as it is significantly termed, often do it from ostentation. What better resource has an ordinary person who has money, and who wishes to be distinguished in the fashionable world, than to become a patron of the fine arts? I knew a person who spent several thousand dollars for pictures, and who, to my certain knowledge, knew and cared nothing about them except as they affected her standing in the fashionable world. But of those who have a good degree of taste, there are few whose motives are not mixed. And then it is to be remembered, that a product of art may be viewed in many different aspects. It may be regarded as costing so much, as requiring such a frame, or to be placed in such a light, or as an ornamental piece of furniture, while there is but a single point of view in which it can be regarded as gratifying taste. The moment a picture comes to be considered as an ornament, or an article of furniture, you might as well have a looking-glass or a pier-table. It not unfrequently happens, that the owner of fine pictures thinks so much of them as ornamental or valuable, so much of their framing, or light, or preservation, that he becomes indifferent to them in the only point of view in which they are truly valuable.

[Pg 28]

But again, in order to see this point in its true light we must consider the peculiar rank which is held by the pleasures connected with the fine arts. These pleasures are addressed to the eye and to the ear, and hold a middle rank between the lower pleasures of sense on the one hand, and the higher enjoyments of the intellect and of the affections on the other; and may readily associate with, and promote either. This point is well stated by Lord Kames. It is observed by him, that "in touching, tasting, and smelling, we are sensible of the impression made upon the organ, and are led to place there the pleasant or painful feeling caused by that impression;" but that with respect to hearing and seeing, "we are insensible to the organic impression, and hence conceive the pleasures derived from these senses to be more refined and spiritual than those which seem to exist externally at the organ of sense, and which are conceived to be merely corporeal. These pleasures," says he, "being sweet and moderately exhilarating, are, in their tone, equally distant from the turbulence of passion and the languor of indolence, and by that tone are perfectly well qualified not only to revive the spirits when sunk by sensual gratification, but also to relax them when overstrained in any violent pursuit." "Organic pleasures," he observes again, "have naturally a short duration; when prolonged, they lose their relish; when indulged to excess, they beget satiety and disgust; and to restore a proper tone of mind, nothing can be more happily contrived than the exhilarating pleasures of the eye and ear." Now this is precisely the use, and all the use that many make of the fine arts, and I may add, to some extent of the beauties of nature too. How many wealthy sensualists are there in our cities who give an appearance of elevation and refinement to their low and selfish mode of life, by collecting about them specimens of the arts! These men may be best compared to that amphibious animal, the frog. They come up occasionally from that lower element in which they live, into a region of light and beauty, but no sooner are they a little refreshed than they plunge again into the mud of sensual gratification. It is men like these, who, when their capacity for the lower pleasures is exhausted, drive in their carriages about the cities of the old world (perhaps we are not yet sufficiently corrupt,) and set up to be *virtuosi*. It is easy to see how such a taste must bear upon morals.

[Pg 29]

[Pg 30]

But I remark once more, that the fine arts may be made to pander directly to vice. From the middle rank which the pleasures derived from them hold, they readily associate, as has been said, both with the higher and the lower. Thus, music may quicken the devotions of a seraph, and lend its strains to cheer the carousals of the bacchanal; and poetry, painting and sculpture, while they have power to elevate, and charm, and purify the mind, may be made direct stimulants to the vilest and lowest passions. It is indeed from this quarter that we are to look for danger from the prevalence of these arts. It was thus that they corrupted the ancient cities; and those who have seen the abominable statuary dug from the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii, do not wonder that they were buried under a sea of fire. The same process of corruption through these arts has gone to a fearful extent on the eastern continent, and has commenced in this country. Clothed in this garment of light, vice finds access where it otherwise could not. Under the pretence of promoting the fine arts, modesty is cast aside, and indecent pictures are exhibited, and respectable people go to see them. If I might utter a word of warning to the young, it would be to beware of vice dressed in the garments of taste. The beauties of nature are capable of no such perversion. All the associations connected with them tend to elevate and to purify the mind. No case can be adduced in which a taste for gardening or for natural objects has corrupted a people. While, therefore, I believe that the cultivation of the arts, in their genuine spirit of beauty and of purity, has a tendency to improve the character, it would appear that they are greatly liable to abuse, and that they have been extensively abused.

[Pg 31]

But though I may thus dispose of the general objection from the co-existence in many cases of refinement in the arts and corrupt morals, yet this, I think, will not fully meet the objection which first arose in the minds of some, from those numerous individual instances in which men have been eminent for taste and genius, and at the same time corrupt. What, you have been ready to say, do you make of such a case as that of Byron? Now I would here make an inquiry, how far,

[Pg 32]

and in what sense, those productions of genius which have a corrupt tendency are really consistent with good taste. Take the Don Juan of Byron for instance. To say nothing of principle, such a work certainly is not compatible with a correct *moral* taste. That it is in some sense, however, a work of taste, cannot be denied; but it seems to me to be only as a splendid palace, built in a low and fetid morass, is a work of taste. The palace may be beautiful, but it was in bad taste *to set it there*. Particular rooms may be elegantly furnished, but still there comes up from the surrounding marsh a pestilential miasm, and it may be said of the atmosphere around it, as was said of that around New Orleans a few autumns since, that "all is beauty and all is death." So far therefore as these works have a corrupt tendency, they cannot be said to be in the highest sense consistent with good taste. But still it is said that corrupt men have produced works of the highest genius and of the best taste that have had no such tendency. This is granted, but it is to be accounted for from the fact that men of genius are often men of strong passions and of wayward and unbalanced minds, and from the peculiar temptations in which, as I have already said, they are placed. Taste seems to me to be, to such men, what the music of David was to Saul,—it charms away the evil spirit, but it is only for a time.

But we now pass to the third distinction which was to be made, and that is, between a true taste for natural objects and the fine arts, and what is called taste in the world of fashion. The point of distinction to which I would draw your attention is well stated by Stewart. "It is obvious," says he, "that the circumstances which please in the objects of taste are of two kinds: first, those which are fitted to please by nature, or by associations which all mankind are led to form by their common condition; and secondly, those which please in consequence of associations arising from local and accidental circumstances. Hence there are two kinds of taste; the one enabling us to judge of those beauties which have a foundation in the human constitution; the other, of such objects as derive their principal recommendation from the influence of fashion. These two kinds of taste are not always united in the same person; indeed, I am inclined to think that they are united but rarely. The perfection of the one depends much on the degree in which we are able to free the mind from the influence of casual associations; that of the other, on the contrary, depends on a faculty of association which enables us to fall in at once with all the turns of the fashion, and, as Shakspeare expresses it, to catch the tune of the times." Association is the sole foundation of the value which we put upon some articles, and of the beauty which we find in others. Thus, a lock of hair, valueless in itself, may, from associations connected with it, have a value which money cannot measure; and articles of dress, which would otherwise be to us indifferent, or odious, become beautiful by their association with those persons whom we have been accustomed to consider as models of elegance. It is indeed astonishing what an effect this principle will have upon our feelings; and from looking too exclusively at facts connected with it, some have been led to doubt whether there is any such thing as a permanent principle of taste. It would really seem, that, within the bounds of comfort and decency, both of which are often outraged by fashion, one mode of dress may come to be as becoming as another. The wigs, the knee-buckles, the small-clothes, the long-skirts and cocked-hats of our grandfathers, were as becoming then, as is now the dress of the present day. Says Sir Joshua Reynolds, "If an European, when he has cut off his beard, and put false hair on his head, or bound up his own natural hair in regular hard knots, as unlike nature as he can possibly make it, and after having rendered them immovable by the help of the fat of hogs, has covered the whole with flour, laid on by a machine with the utmost regularity; if, when thus attired, he issues forth and meets a Cherokee Indian, who has bestowed as much time at *his* toilet, and laid on, with equal care and attention, his yellow and red ochre on particular parts of his forehead or cheeks, as he judges most becoming; whoever of these two despises the other for his attention to the fashion of his country; whichever feels himself provoked to laugh, is the barbarian." Good taste with respect to the fashions, then, would seem to consist, not in following them, or in paying them attention, except so far as to avoid attracting notice in any way by dress; for it is a strong indication, when a person seeks notice from that, that there is about him little else that is worthy of notice. The foundation of taste in the fashions, however, being what I have now stated, it is obvious that a quick perception of their ever-varying changes and a ready and careful accommodation to them, can belong, whether in man or woman, only to a mind essentially frivolous; and that such a taste, if not absolutely incompatible with a perception of all that is permanently grand and beautiful in the works of God, is yet seldom connected with it. Such a taste must, of course, rather injure than promote good morals.

I have now considered taste as exercised indifferently upon any objects within its appropriate province. It still remains that I should say something, which I propose to do in another Lecture, on Moral Taste, or on taste having moral actions for its object.

LECTURE II.

It was observed on a former occasion, that material objects produce their effect upon taste chiefly as signs; but it is the opinion of Mr. Alison, of Mr. Jeffries, and others of high authority on this point, that it is solely as signs—solely as suggesting intellectual and moral qualities—that they have an effect. It is quite evident that mere matter in a chaotic state, or in any state which is

not either produced by mind or such as mind would produce, cannot be beautiful; and hence it is said that it can be beautiful only as a means of indicating qualities that do not belong to itself.

The great difficulty which this theory has to encounter arises from the apparent instantaneousness with which the emotion seems to arise when a beautiful object is presented. But this is not a conclusive objection, because emotions which can arise only from association seem to come in the same way. How instantaneous, for instance, are the emotions that throng up when he who has been long on a foreign shore sees, for the first time, the stars and stripes of his country's flag as it enters the port where he is;—and yet, these emotions can be awakened by it only as a link of association with scenes that are past, or as a sign of his country's presence and protection. I have heard the rainbow adduced as an instance of an object which produces the emotion of beauty without a reference to any thing beyond itself. But what was the impression made by it more than two thousand years ago, upon the mind of one who had no theory to maintain?—"Look upon the rainbow," says he, "and praise Him that made it: very beautiful it is in the brightness thereof. It compasseth the heavens about with a glorious circle, and *the hands of the Most High have bended it.*" How apparently instantaneous, yet how different, are our emotions when looking at the cheek flushed by the bloom of health, or suffused by the blush of shame, or reddened by anger, or wearing that hectic flush which is the flag of distress held out by nature when she is sinking in consumption!—And yet no one can doubt, if these indications were reversed, that the emotions would be reversed also. It is conceded by all, that it is the expression, the indication of mental and moral qualities, that gives its highest beauty to the human countenance. There are no features which may not be so lighted up with noble or tender emotion as to be beautiful. But is there, it will be asked, *no* beauty in any combination of features, or of matter, except as connected with expression? I am inclined to think there is what may be called an instinctive beauty on the perception of certain colors and forms; but it is of little value compared with that of which a rational and reflective being can give an account to himself. Even this, however, presupposes the action of mind upon matter, though that action is not recognized by us as the cause of our emotion. It is therefore still true that, as the beauty of the early morning is produced solely by a reflexion from the sun while he is still below the horizon, so the beauty of matter is wholly a reflexion from that great central orb of mind which has never yet beamed upon the eye of man in its direct effulgence—that, to him who views it aright, the beauty of this world is but the morning twilight of heaven.

[Pg 38]

[Pg 39]

But, however this question may be decided, the fact that it can be made a question at all, shows how largely moral ideas and emotions enter into the province of taste, and the intimate connexion there is between taste and morals. What is called moral taste is, in fact, discriminated from taste in general, only as it has the moral actions of free and intelligent agents for its object. When we look at a moral action, there is a plain difference between our perception of it as right, and our perception of it as beautiful. In one case there arises the feeling of *approbation*, in the other of *admiration*, which are entirely distinct, and may exist in very different proportions.

It is, indeed, not always easy to distinguish the point at which approbation and admiration run into each other; and in treating of this subject, I shall first say a few words of that border-ground between taste and morals where the dividing line seems to be unsettled. Where, for example, shall we place that feeling which we have in view of the manner of doing a thing, in distinction from the thing done? Is that feeling merely the result of taste, or are there mingled with it some elements of moral approbation or disapprobation? Where will you place a mean action in distinction from a dishonest one? I have heard it disputed whether neatness is a virtue, a matter of moral obligation, or merely a requisition of taste. Is a man under moral obligation to be neat in his person? It is along this dividing line that all those actions lie which relate to the proprieties and courtesies of life—all those smaller attentions to the convenience and comfort of others, and that delicate regard to their feelings, which have been designated by the French as the smaller morals.

[Pg 40]

In regard to this very extensive, and therefore important department of human conduct, there seem to be two common mistakes. The first consists in disregarding it altogether. There are many men whose characters, in their sketching and outline, are fine, and which, seen at a distance, appear well; but on approaching them, they seem coarse and very imperfect. In all the great duties of life they appear to advantage; but through negligence, or some greater failing, the minor duties, and especially the department of manners, is entirely neglected. They seem like stately trees, in the trunk and main branches of which the sap circulates vigorously, but does not reach and animate the smaller twigs, and give to the leaves their perfect green.

A second, and more common mistake, is the giving up of this department to the control of taste under the guidance of selfishness. The manners are polished, and all the forms of politeness adopted, not for the purpose of making others happy, but of securing to ourselves their esteem, and of effecting our own ends in life. This is the school of manners recommended by Chesterfield, and young persons are often exhorted to pay attention to their manners on this ground. In this case the sap does not circulate at all, and the leaves are painted.

[Pg 41]

But to me it seems, that this whole class of actions falls within the province of morality. Wherever human happiness is concerned, there is room for principle to operate, and the constitution of society will never be sound, and its beauty will never be perfect, till the sap of principle circulates to the extremities of human action. The true polish and beauty of society can result only from the principle of benevolence showing itself in a graceful and practical attention to the minor wants and to the feelings of others. But whatever we may decide in regard to their respective limits in this department, it is obvious that taste, so far as it goes, must be favorable to morals.

We now pass to what is indisputably the province of morals. And here our first inquiry will be, what are the circumstances under which the emotions of taste are awakened by moral actions? In reply to this inquiry I observe, that the emotion of beauty, leaving sublimity for the present out of the question, is awakened by a moral action chiefly, and perhaps solely, when it springs from the principle of duty acting in coincidence with the desires, the affections, or some other natural and inferior principle of action. This point is of practical importance, and requires illustration. Man, as we all know, has various principles of action,—such as instincts, desires, affections, passions. These may impel him to a course of action directly opposed to that indicated by a sense of duty, and they may also lead him to perform the same actions as are dictated by it; and the position is, that moral beauty arises when there is a partial or entire coincidence between the principle of duty and these inferior powers.

[Pg 42]

That this is so is evident, because there are many actions which are right, which are imperatively required by duty, which yet do not awaken in the mind of the impartial spectator any admiration—for we must here keep in mind the distinction already made between admiration and approbation. The simple payment of a debt, for example, does not awaken any admiration, though we approve the act and should strongly condemn him who should not do it when it was in his power. In this case, there can be mingled with the performance of duty no play of the generous emotions. He who performs all his actions solely from a sense of duty, has our approbation, our respect; but he who, in addition to this, is possessed of warm affections, which always coincide in their promptings with what is right, has also our admiration and love. Duty is to the affections, in the conduct of life, what logic is to rhetoric in a discourse. Logic forms an excellent body for a discourse; we assent to it, we approve it, it is good, all good, but it awakens no admiration. It is not till rhetoric sends its warm life-blood to mantle on the cold cheek of logic, and clothes its angular form in the garments of taste, that we begin to admire the discourse. And so it is with duty. It is an excellent body to the course of our conduct in life; nothing else will do, but it may be so performed as to appear unamiable and even repulsive. In order to be beautiful, there must be connected with it some manifestation of natural affection or graceful emotion.

[Pg 43]

And here I may remark, that though we have a right to expect of every man that he will do his duty, yet the display of this beauty is not equally within the power of all, since the existence and manifestation of emotion depend, to some extent, upon the temperament. As there are some who have naturally a meagre intellect, so there are others whose minds seem to be barren of those finer sympathies and affections of our nature which are the verdure of the soul, and upon which the eye always rests with pleasure. The characters of some good men are dry and unattractive. They are harsh, and hard-visaged, and seem too much like wooden men, moved by rule and calculation. Such persons often seem better, and worse, than they really are. Their freedom from extravagancies on the one hand, and on the other, that want of feeling which is wrongly termed by many hardness of heart, is equally the result of temperament.

That the doctrine which I now advocate is correct, appears also from the effect produced upon our feelings when we observe habit taking the place of sentiment in the performance of duty. We have all seen persons enter upon a course of virtuous activity, and continue it for a time from a sense of duty, sustained by ardent feeling; but after a time the feeling has died away, and there has come in its stead habit, or a regard to consistency, to sustain the sense of duty in keeping up the same course of external action. When this change has taken place, we are all conscious that the beauty of the conduct is greatly diminished;—its spirit has vanished; the dew of its youth is exhaled.

[Pg 44]

I said that this was a practical point, and I now wish to show, in connexion with it, precisely how it is that mischief arises from the perversion of moral taste; as was shown, in the former Lecture, how it arises from its perversion in other things. In opposition to the hard and dry characters mentioned above, there are those whose susceptibilities are acute, whose sympathies are quick, whose feelings are generous, whose affections are ardent, who do every thing so promptly and so heartily that impulse seems almost to supply the place of principle. There is something very attractive in a character of this kind; there is an ease and freedom about it which seems to put aside all labor of calculation, and it moreover exhibits our nature in the pleasing garb of natural goodness. It is for this reason that novelists, who draw men as they wish to have them, and not as they are, have almost universally made these fine instincts of humanity the guide of their hero, and the basis of his character. This is, indeed, if I understand it, the basis of this kind of literature, and one chief source of the injury it produces. The exhibition of these instincts, and affections, and emotions, springing up at random and acting without the control of principle, holds out no stimulus to exertion; and their possession and exercise is often in fact, and often too in books, connected with great corruption of moral character.

[Pg 45]

Taking, therefore, as the main ingredient in the character of those who are to make the chief figure in this kind of writing, what Miss Martineau calls *spontaneousness*, and which she and a certain wise friend of hers in Boston thought should by all means be encouraged and *reverenced*, we may mix the other materials somewhat to our taste. An excellent and much-approved receipt for the hero of a novel is the following:—1st. Make him handsome, for beauty is to the body what spontaneousness is to the mind, a sort of physical spontaneousness. Or, if you do not make him handsome, do what amounts to much the same thing, give him an *air*; let him have something about him that is peculiar, so that those who scan him closely may observe, under those apparently indifferent features, a certain something, a sign of the fire that is slumbering within. 2d. If you find it necessary, for fashion's sake, to put him at school, or at any place for study, make him idle, generous, somewhat mischievous, a great hater of mathematics, (for, so far as my

[Pg 46]

knowledge extends, no hero of a novel ever yet knew any thing about mathematics,) give him some whimsical pursuit for the hours when he chooses to do any thing, and then make him speak, as he has occasion, Italian, French and Spanish, which he learned by instinct. 3d. *Make him act from impulse, and not from principle, and get him into difficulty through the influence of these same generous impulses.* It is on difficulties thus created that the plot must turn. 4th. Get him in love. 5th. Make him run a gauntlet of difficulties a volume and a half long, furnishing a new illustration of that old adage, "the course of true love never did run smooth." 6th. Marry him, and let him live many years in perfect felicity.

We commonly hear it said, that the chief mischief of novel-reading arises from the false pictures of life which novels present. This is doubtless a source of no small mischief; but in my view, a much greater evil arises from their holding up, directly or indirectly, false principles of action, and casting contempt upon the true; from their leading young persons to admire that which they esteem graceful rather than that which is respectable and right in the conduct of life. There is in those works an unnatural separation made between the principle of virtue and that which gives to virtue its beauty; and principle is represented as formal and cold, and perhaps ridiculous. Prudence, especially, is a virtue which no heroine of a novel must ever be guilty of. In a recent work, which deserves great credit for avoiding the general fault just mentioned, we are yet told that prudence was a virtue for which the heroine was never famous, and a slight odium is cast upon the virtue itself by making it appear, in the rival of the heroine, somewhat stiff and pragmatismal.

[Pg 47]

It is thus that these works awaken extensively, in the minds of the young, associations unfavorable to the sterner and sterling virtues; and in many cases, these amiable qualities are so associated with vice as to render it attractive. It is thus that we are presented by popular novelists—and in such a manner as I know carries along the sympathies of many young men, while their imaginations are rendered familiar with the haunts of vice—with gentlemen robbers who rob in style; who are so generous that they never rob the poor; who never shed human blood if people will give up their money without it; and if they are occasionally obliged to blow out the brains of some agent of the law, they are really sorry for it, though they do not see how such impertinent fellows could expect any thing better. It is thus that the impression is received, that a certain class of impulses is sufficient to secure success in life, and even to excuse the want of principle; and young men with their heads full of pictures, not perhaps so bad as this, yet fundamentally the same, rush eagerly into life without fixed principles and fixed aims.

To him who is without experience, there is no sight more beautiful than that of a young man of an ingenuous nature entering upon life, and resting upon his own good impulses to keep him from evil. But such a sight, even when there has been no corruption like that just spoken of, now causes apprehension in me; for I have seen him who had every thing, in his person and in his sensibilities, to excite admiration and love, tarrying long at the wine, and seeking mixed wine; I have seen him going to that "house" which "is the way to hell;" and therefore it is that I would utter a solemn protest against any thing which would divorce the beauty of virtue from the principle of virtue, or which would give an impression that there is security without fixed principle. Even "genius," with all these amiable qualities—

[Pg 48]

"Yet may lack the aid
Implored by humble minds and hearts afraid,
May leave to timid souls the shield and sword
Of the tried faith and the resistless word;
Amid a world of dangers venturing forth,
Frail but yet fearless, proud in conscious worth,
Till strong temptation, in some fatal time,
Assails the heart and wins the soul to crime."

Then,

"All that honor brings against the force
Of headlong passion, aids its rapid course;
Its slight resistance but provokes the fire,
As wood-work stops the flame, and then conveys it higher."

With such a basis to the characters presented, it will follow of course, that the emotions and the sensibilities will be chiefly addressed in these works, and thus they become the principal means of promoting that false and selfish sensibility which is so often cultivated in refined society. This is a more refined species of intemperance, and is to the mind what intemperance in strong drink is to the body. It causes excitement for the mere selfish enjoyment produced by it, without leading to any exertion. And as the grosser species of intemperance is more common among one sex, so it is to be feared, that this more refined species is more common among the other; and that for both, circulating libraries, and other libraries, instead of furnishing wholesome entertainment, are too often converted into mere intellectual dram-shops. There are many who seek chiefly for excitement, who have a constant craving for it, whose emotions and mental sensibilities have become accustomed to a set of artificial stimulants till they are sensible to no other, and they become as remorselessly selfish as the drunkard himself. I would sooner apply for an act of genuine kindness, one which should reach actual want, to a woman in a log-house, upon the side of a mountain, surrounded by hungry children, than to the daintiest young lady whose sensibilities have spindled up and wilted in the artificial heat of novel-reading. In order to perform the duties of benevolence and philanthropy, it is indispensable that the sensibilities

[Pg 49]

should be kept alive to the impressions of misery as it actually presents itself in all its squalid accompaniments.

"Sweet are the tears that from a Howard's eye
Drop on the cheek of one he lifts from earth;
And he who works me good with unmoved face,
Does it but half; he chills me while he aids,
My benefactor, not my fellow-man.
But even this, this cold benevolence,
Seems worth, seems manhood, when there rise before me
The sluggish Pity's vision-weaving tribe,
Who sigh for wretchedness, yet shun the wretched,
Nursing, in some delicious solitude,
Their slothful loves and dainty sympathies!"

[Pg 50]

It was this esteem in which mankind hold the sensibilities and impulses, this preference of spontaneousness without its connexion with principle, which gave its popularity to what has been called the sentimental school—the results of which ought to teach society a lesson not soon to be forgotten. Concerning this school, it is justly remarked by Coleridge, that "all the mischief achieved by Hobbes, and the whole school of materialists, will appear inconsiderable if it be compared with the mischief effected and occasioned by the sentimental philosophy of Sterne and his numerous imitators. The vilest appetites, and the most remorseless inconstancy towards their objects, acquired the title of the *heart*—the irresistible feelings—the too tender sensibility: and if the frosts of prudence, the icy chains of human law, thawed and vanished at the genial warmth of human nature, who *could* help it? It was an amiable weakness."

I would here remark, that I have no objection to fictitious writings as such. There are those to which I do not object. Let them cease, first, to present false pictures of life: secondly, to array the sensibilities and associations of the mind against principle: and, thirdly, let them cease to create and feed a morbid craving for excitement, and to destroy the balance between the feelings and the judgment: and I shall not object to them. The mass of these writings, however, do produce each and all of these effects, and are, so far, indisputably pernicious.

[Pg 51]

I have been thus particular in pointing out the evils which arise from arraying what is beautiful and graceful in morals and in conduct against that which is right, because I do not believe that the community are sufficiently warned against the mischief it is working, and in many cases are not perhaps aware of the manner in which it is wrought. Evil gains advantage over man by dividing him against himself, by bringing into collision faculties that were intended to work harmoniously together; and we may regard it as settled, that whoever or whatever would set up mere impulses, or sensibilities, or emotions, in the place of the reason and conscience of man, is thus dividing him against himself. It is with the conscience of man as it is with a king. He may have his prime minister, who is his chief favorite, and next to himself, but he must never abandon his power, or suffer the highest subject to depose him from the throne. The desires and affections are then only truly beautiful, when they are in ready attendance at the court of their rightful sovereign.

Having now spoken of the manner in which evil is done by those who care to please rather than to improve mankind, I cannot leave this part of the subject without suggesting, to the friends of principle and of religion, how much, if what has been said is correct, they may do to counteract this evil by a free, a hearty, a joyful, and therefore an attractive, mode of doing that which is right. Whence have arisen those associations of coldness and formality and gloom, as connected with duty, which haunt the imaginations of many young persons, and which have just as little existence in reality as other spectres of the night? Is it not in part from an unnatural austerity, or from a cowardly and faltering step, a want of freedom and power and beauty in the exhibitions of virtue and principle on the part of those who profess to adhere to them? It is not as it should be, when the glad and the graceful emotions readily spring up by the side of every path that we walk in except the path of duty. He who marches under the banner of principle is not only to feel that he is engaged in a good cause, but is also to see in that cause a beauty which shall be to him what music is to the soldier, giving cheerfulness to his countenance and alacrity to his step. His is not indeed to be the unchastened, and reckless, and merely animal joy that is unconscious of the evil that exists, and that is to be met; but it is to be the joy of him who, though he is travelling in a difficult and obscure path, yet sees before him the bright and steady light of his own happy home. The more those who act from principle are able to combine, with the most perfect rectitude and uncompromising faithfulness, the cultivation and play of all the graceful and tender emotions, the more will they do to promote the cause in which they labor. I know, and here is the difficulty, that most virtue is too feeble for this; and I would not that there should be put on any affectation of freedom or ease. Virtue should move easily and gracefully only as it is strong, but it should become strong that it may move easily and gracefully, and thus become to all men as beautiful as it is obligatory.

[Pg 52]

[Pg 53]

It is not a little that the Christian religion has suffered from the mistakes of its adherents on this point. It had been better if they had more regarded the spirit of its Founder when He commanded his disciples, even when they fasted, not to be of a sad countenance, as the hypocrites were. The impression we get of Paul, notwithstanding his labors and sufferings, is that he was a happy man. If he was sometimes "sorrowful," he was yet "always rejoicing." The movements of his spirit were so ready and free, in view of the great subjects that filled his mind, that he reminds us more than any other man of the "rapt seraph that adores and burns." What is it, indeed, that gives its

perfect beauty to our conception of the worship of heaven? Is it not, that the most perfect law is there fully obeyed, and is yet no restraint upon the highest and freest expansion of feeling? It is when this is so, and then only, that moral beauty is perfect.

We have thus far considered moral beauty only. We now pass to another branch of our subject, the moral sublime. When speaking on taste in general, it was not necessary, for any purposes I then had in view, that I should make a distinction between beauty and sublimity, either as they exist in themselves, or as they are occasioned by outward objects. Indeed, it is the opinion of many writers, that there is no radical distinction between them, but that sublimity is merely the feeling of beauty heightened. This seems to me doubtful, even in material beauty; but in our present department, the occasions on which they arise are so different, that they must be distinguished. It was for this reason that I treated of beauty by itself.

[Pg 54]

It has been observed, that the emotion of moral beauty arises when there is a coincidence between the sense of duty and certain inferior principles of action. I now observe, that the emotion of moral sublimity is awakened, when the sense of duty is opposed by inclination, or affection, or by any or all the inferior principles of action, and triumphs over them. Its principle consists in a power of self-control and of self-sacrifice, in those cases in which they are difficult.

The illustration of this point will lead to a further confirmation of what was said in reference to moral beauty. No sight, for example, can be more beautiful than that of a family in which there is mutual attachment, and in which the performance of every duty is sweetened by affection. How beautiful is the assiduity of a child, who bears with every infirmity, and soothes every care, and anticipates every want, of a parent in sickness or in age! It is beautiful, but not sublime. The conduct of that young man, who labors hard and denies himself the ordinary pleasures of the young that he may support an aged mother, or add to her comfort, is highly beautiful; but natural affection coöperates with a sense of duty, and therefore it is not sublime. No one has ever considered as sublime the conduct of Æneas, when he bore his aged father upon his shoulders from the flames of Troy. But when the ancient Brutus, with a power that was supreme, sat in judgment on his own son who was accused of being a traitor, and when he gave the sign to the lictor to take him to execution, then there was a struggle, then inflexible justice triumphed over natural affection, and it was—not beautiful, it was too awful for that—but it was sublime. That act of our Saviour, (if I may be permitted to refer to such a scene in this connexion,) by which he remembered his mother upon the cross and provided for her wants, was beautiful—how beautiful! His prayer for his murderers was sublime. It is, in general, acts of tenderness, gentleness, condescension, pity, gratitude, humanity, that are beautiful; while it is, on the other hand, acts of magnanimity, of fortitude, of inflexible justice, of high patriotism, and, on proper occasions, of contempt of danger and of death, that are sublime. In all these latter cases it will be seen that the principle is the same, and that the sublime emotion is awakened by virtuous self-control, in union with high resolve.

[Pg 55]

We hence see why it is that periods of difficulty, and oppression, and persecution, are favorable to the exhibition of the moral sublime. They test the amount of attachment to principle which there is among men, and the sacrifices which they are willing to make for it. Accordingly, it has been in such emergencies that men have arisen, who, under the inspiration of the great principles of civil and religious liberty, have been ready to go in the face of every danger, wherever their duty should call them; as Luther was determined to go to the diet of Worms, though he should find as many devils in that city as there were tiles upon the houses. These are the men, who, though they have been opposed, and vilified, and persecuted in their day, have yet received the homage of after ages; who have stood as the beacon-lights of the world, and whose names have been the watchword of those who have rallied and struck for the united reign of liberty and law. Such men have almost always been in advance of their age, and the people of that age have not comprehended them. They have revered the great men of former times; they have built the sepulchres of the prophets, but have persecuted those who were sent unto *them*. It is not therefore surprising that Seneca has spoken so largely of the benefits of adversity, as alone giving an opportunity for the display of the heroic virtues, and has said that a good man, struggling with adversity, was a spectacle worthy of the gods.

[Pg 56]

But it is not necessary to the existence, though it may be to the exhibition, of moral heroism, that we should be placed in circumstances of external adversity. Wherever there is moral combat, there may be moral sublimity, and this combat is necessary for the accomplishment of that triumph which every man is called to gain over himself. The force and grandeur of virtue are then seen when we sacrifice to it our appetites, our avarice, our pride, our vanity, our ambition, our resentments, till every evil passion is brought into subjection to reason and conscience.

[Pg 57]

Such being the nature of the moral sublime, it is obvious that there is much less danger to morals from its perversion than from the perversion of the beautiful. There is here no natural passion to come in as an ally of principle; and which may take the place of it, but it is duty struggling single-handed, and triumphing over all the might of external nature, and all the force of human propensity. Virtue may indeed exist in perfect serenity, and be exercised without an obstacle; but in this world, and it is that which makes it a place of probation, there is little virtue except on the condition of struggling against and overcoming inclination or passion. If we succeed in this struggle, we feel in our own breasts a peace which is not only present happiness, but the promise of future reward; and we awaken in the breasts of others the emotions of moral sympathy, of approbation, of sublimity in its highest forms, till they are ready to welcome us with acclaim, and we find that virtue is not only happiness, but is also "glory, and honor, and immortality."

But though moral beauty and sublimity are so different in their nature and in the occasions on which they arise, it must not be supposed that they do not often blend with each other in actual life. The general course of Howard, for instance, being in accordance with the dictates of humanity, had great moral beauty, and yet the sacrifices which he made were often so great as to cause that course to partake of the moral sublime.

[Pg 58]

If the account of moral taste, now given, be correct, the analysis of the subject is the only argument needed. Its cultivation must, of course, be favorable to morals, since it would lead, in its perfect state, to the same course of conduct as would be required by principle. There is, indeed, a whole school of philosophers, that of Shaftesbury, who have looked upon virtue, and have recommended it, as beautiful rather than as obligatory; who have regarded it as a sentiment rather than a principle; and whose writings have been calculated to awaken enthusiasm in the cause of virtue, but not to give it its proper sanctions. So far, however, as this class of feelings would lead us, it is in the direct path of virtue, and they may, no doubt, be so cultivated, and especially by the young, as to furnish efficient aid to the principle of duty. Perhaps few persons, rightly educated, are aware how many wrong actions they avoid with the greater care because they are also mean; how many right actions they perform with the greater readiness because they are in accordance with the requisitions of a cultivated moral taste. Considered as a principle of action, such a taste provides an effectual security against the grossness connected with many vices, and cherishes a temper of mind friendly to all that is amiable, or generous, or elevated in our nature. While, therefore, we regard taste as an important ally to the sense of duty, we are not to rely chiefly upon it. It would need stability, and would be constantly liable to be led astray by the influence of fashion, or of casual association. We may however do more, we should do more to combine them; to unite taste and principle in the conduct of life; to do, ourselves, and to lead others to do, what is becoming, as well as what is right.

[Pg 59]

Man is capable of forming to himself an ideal model, of embodying a conception of excellence such as he has never seen, and of acting with reference to it. It is this which renders him capable of progression; and one great reason why men are stationary, is, that they have in their minds no fixed and definite standard of excellence after which they are reaching. Young men, to whom I speak, here is the point at which many of you doubtless fail. You are borne on by the current, and form to yourselves no worthy object of pursuit, after which you bring yourselves, by self-discipline, steadily to labor. But without doing this, no man ever yet exerted a high and worthy influence; no man ever can. Permit me then to propose to you, in your capacity as social beings, an object after which you may thus strive. It is the combination of perfect moral principle with perfect simplicity and refinement of manners—the union, in the conduct of life, of Morals and Taste.

There remains but a single consideration which I shall adduce, to show that there is the connexion between taste and morals for which I contend. It is, that we naturally associate with goodness, beauty of form; and that in a perfect state, we conceive of goodness as surrounded by objects that are pleasing to the taste. Perhaps this may not have been noticed by all, but a little attention to what passes in our own minds will convince us that it is so. This natural association of beauty and goodness perhaps arises from the fact, that every indication of goodness as expressed in the countenance is pleasing, and may be heightened into beauty. It is surprising how soon we come to regard as pleasing, the most ordinary features, when we have associated with them a fund of good qualities; or rather, the features soon become like the letters of a book, which we regard only for the meaning they convey. As I have said before, no features are so ordinary that they may not come to appear to us beautiful by the expression of good qualities; and if I may suppose, which I would by no means assert, that there are any homely persons present, I would congratulate them on the inducements they have to cultivate the only beauty that is permanent, or that can be the foundation of lasting attachment.

[Pg 60]

Not only however may homely features become beautiful by their expression, but we have, I think, a natural association of positive beauty as connected with the goodness which we have not seen, and of positive deformity as connected with vice. When we read of good men even, we regard them as having something in their appearance corresponding with their character, and no man, I am sure, can suppose that Benedict Arnold had a countenance that was pleasant to look upon. But what is conclusive on this point is, that no man ever conceived of Satan in his proper form, as beautiful, or ever conceived of an angel, except as clothed in light and beauty.

[Pg 61]

It is this natural supposition of the connexion of beauty of mind with beauty of form, that gives its plausibility and point to a dream of Sir Isaac Bickerstaff, as related in one of the Tattlers. He seemed to himself to be in an open plain, surrounded by an immense assembly of females, in the midst of whom the goddess of justice sat enthroned, and holding in her hand a mirror of such peculiar properties as to reflect the faces of those who looked into it in exact correspondence with their characters. This mirror was held up and turned before the assembly, and the effect may well be imagined. Some beautiful women had the satisfaction of seeing their faces become still more beautiful, while many more were shocked to see themselves converted into perfect frights. Some who were homely before, became still more so; while many unassuming and modest persons, who had never dreamed of being handsome, and so had sought the approbation of their own consciences, were surprised to see how their faces were brightened up. There was however one face, which seemed to beam with a celestial radiance, and was so surprisingly beautiful that Sir Isaac determined at once on making proposals to the lady, if he could but ascertain to whom it belonged. This, by careful attention, he was soon enabled to do, and found that it was a little, grey-headed, wrinkled old woman who stood by his side.

[Pg 62]

There is something ludicrous in the manner in which this is set forth, but it involves a most serious and pleasing truth. It is as much a part of the disorders of the present state of things, that goodness is ever connected with any thing but beauty, as it is that virtue is depressed while vice triumphs. In a perfect organization and state of things, matter would be entirely flexible to the action of spirit, and, of course, intellectual and moral beauty, as well as their opposites, must stamp their impress perfectly on the features. This we believe will be the case when the physical nature of man shall be reorganized, and the good shall not only be beautiful, but, as I have already remarked that we are naturally led to expect, shall be surrounded with all those objects that are pleasing to the taste. That these expectations are natural may be shown from the writings of all the heathen poets, and it is pleasing to observe how perfectly they coincide with the representations of the Scriptures on this point. We are there taught, not only that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun, but their dwelling-place is described as a city whose foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, whose streets are of pure gold, and whose gates are of pearl.

Thus, as we associate with royalty its regalia, so do we associate with goodness, beauty, which seems to be its natural appendage; and not only in the Scriptures, but also in our own constitution, do we find a promise, that Goodness and Beauty shall be finally and forever united.

[Pg 63]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE CONNEXION BETWEEN TASTE AND MORALS: TWO LECTURES ***

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