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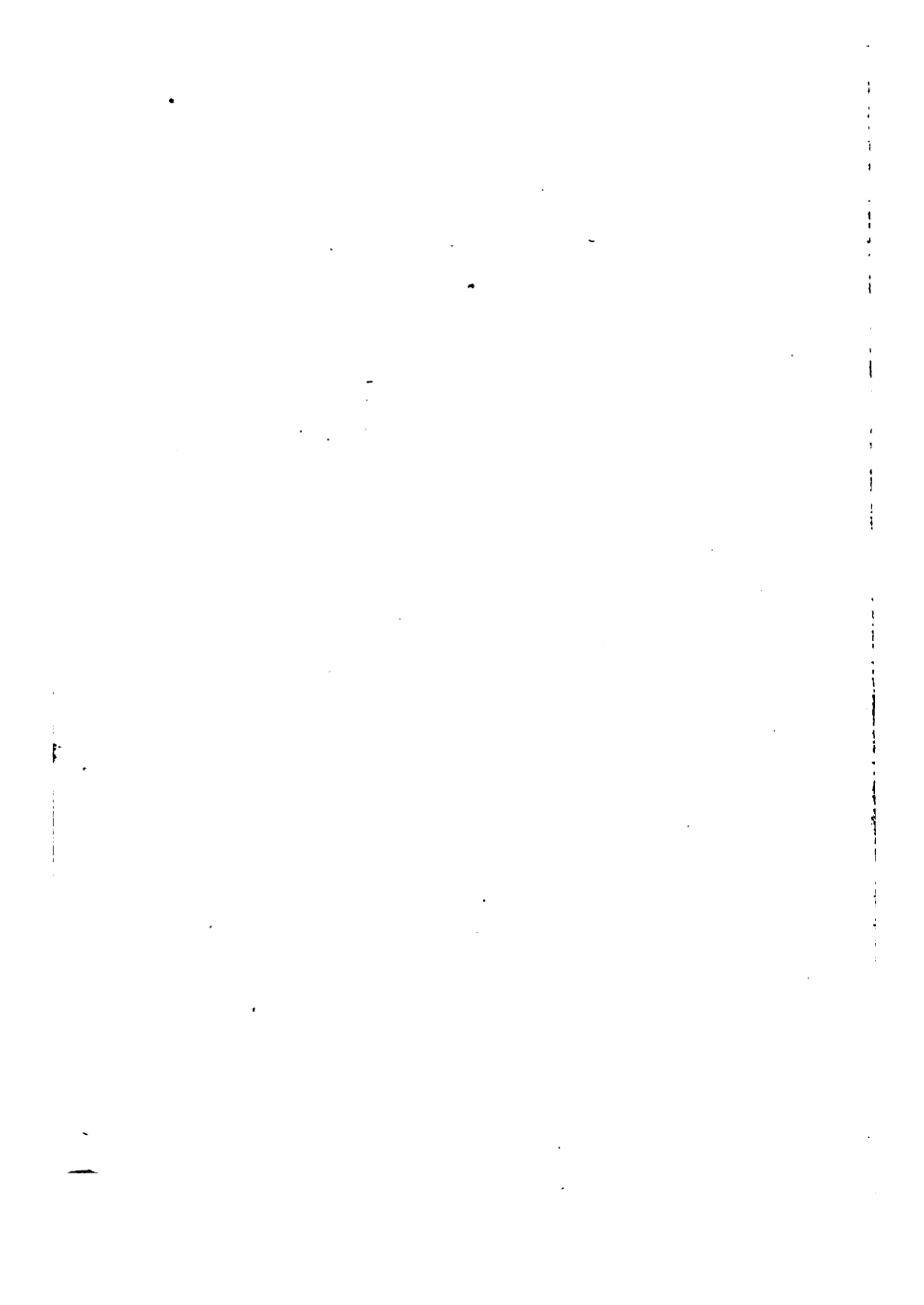
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A

THEORY OF FINE ART.

BY

JOSEPH TORREY,

LATE PROFESSOR OF MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL PHILOSOPHY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT.

NEW YORK:
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PREFACE.

THE author of the following pages, during nearly the whole period of his connection with the board of instruction in the University of Vermont, was accustomed to deliver lectures to the students on the subject of Fine Art. These lectures were associated with the philosophical studies of the senior year, after the plan pursued in some of the European Universities. Not only was he drawn to the subject by natural taste and inclination, which led him during his visits to Europe to study with much enthusiasm, and with careful attention, the great works of Art contained in the principal galleries of Germany, France, and Italy ; but he considered, that, in any comprehensive survey of the powers and energies of the human mind, this important phase of its activity was by no means to be passed over in silence. He may have been impressed, at the same time, with the great importance attached to the subject, in its theoretic aspect, in the Uni-

versities of Germany, where it has been for many years regarded as forming a legitimate part of a philosophical course of instruction. The lectures were generally regarded by the students as forming a very attractive feature of the senior year.

The results of the author's studies and thought on this subject, studies which he continued through his life, are contained in the following pages. It will be seen that the method of treatment is historic in its spirit, and proceeds upon the fact that, in connection with the successive periods of time, there arises also a development in the department of creative power, corresponding with the interests and activities proper to each epoch. The spirit of the work is seen to be historic also, in the presentation and discussion of the views of many writers who have made the subject of Art the theme of special study, and who are entitled to respect, either on account of their experimental acquaintance with Art, or because of the wide range of their genius and knowledge.

In preparing the work for the press, the object has been to offer it to the public in the exact form in which it was left. This has been effected, with the exception of some slight and necessary altera-

tions. The principal work done has been in the verifying of citations and references. The references at the bottom of the page are nearly all by another hand.

It is hoped, that, at a time when the subject of Art seems to be awakening new interest everywhere, the present volume may prove a not unacceptable contribution to a view of it which, in this country, at least, has as yet received but little attention.



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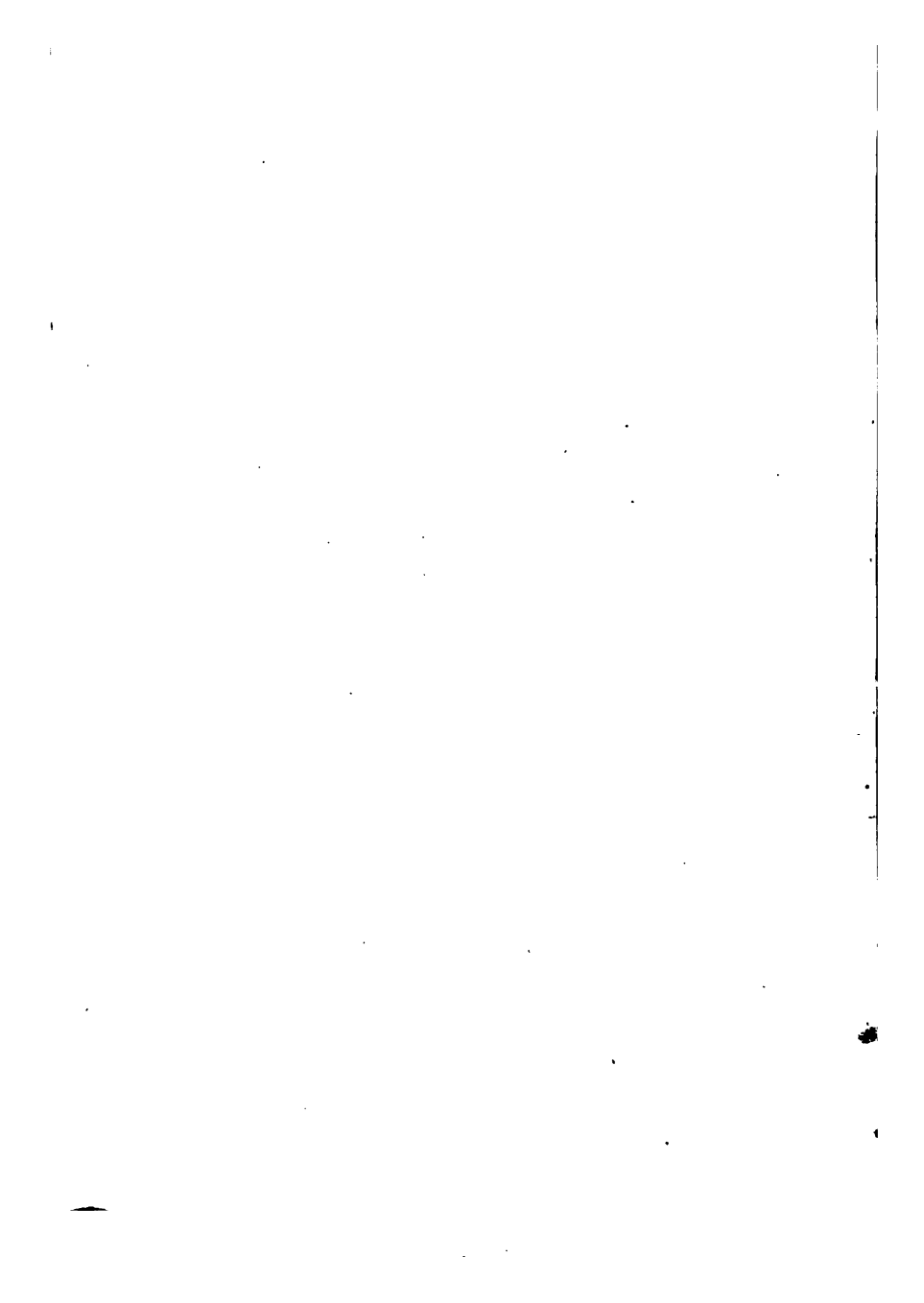
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1.

A THEORY OF ART.

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A THEORY OF ART.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE are three ways in which ideas preëminently manifest themselves as living powers in the practical life of mankind, namely: in Art, in Ethics, and in Religion. To the province of Art belong, generally, those productions of the imagination which are capable of calling forth the sentiment or emotion of the beautiful; to that of Ethics, the striving of the individual will after worth and dignity of character, of communities of men after the right organization of society, and of a state after its true constitution; and to that of Religion, the striving after the restoration of that fellowship with God and harmony with nature which alone can place man in the position he was originally destined to occupy. In all these ways, ideas, either æsthetical, moral, or spiritual, become to some extent, though most often, it must be confessed, very feebly and imperfectly realized. The first of these ways for the realization of ideas, and

also the lowest, since it can never rise higher than to the completeness of being on the side of its form, is the subject I propose to treat of in the following pages. The general subject, therefore, is Art ; not, however, in the restricted and limited sense in which this word is very commonly understood. The Art which I wish to consider embraces whatever works — whether they be the works of Nature, or of man ; and whether of the common man, or of the man of genius — excite the imagination to that peculiar kind of activity which is the necessary condition of our perception of the beautiful. For in a certain sense, each individual for himself, in the very perception of beauty, may be said to create it. Our imagination, in exact proportion to our sense of a beautiful work, copies that of the original producer. Each man plays the part of an artist for himself. He does over again what is already done to his hands, and reproduces the embodied idea. He forms for himself those “intellectual images,” as by Bishop Butler they are not inaptly called,¹ which cause the pleasurable emotions he very naturally, though not altogether correctly, supposes to arise from the merely passive susceptibility of his nature ; for in this whole order of perceptions —

“ We receive but what we give,
And in *our* life alone, does nature live.”²

¹ Ser. 14. ² “Dejection. An Ode.” Coleridge’s *Poems*.

It is first when we are made clearly aware of the function and agency of the imagination, as vitally concerned in the excitement of that emotion which the beautiful in Nature and Art produces upon us, that the possibility of a true theory of Art begins to dawn upon the mind. For if in Ethics the will may be free, at the same time that it is subject to law, and can be truly free only so far as it freely conforms to its true law, — the great point in that science, — so too the imagination may be free in its subjection to law, and can have, indeed, the true freedom which Art requires, only so far as it freely or spontaneously enters into the law which should govern its operations in each specific case of production. And as the felt sentiment of approbation or of disapprobation is the form in which the judgment as to whether the will is acting in obedience to its true law or not, expresses itself to our immediate experience, in the moral sphere; so the felt sentiment of complacency or disgust, of delight or aversion, is the immediate judgment which we are constrained to pass upon the conduct of the imagination. In both cases, this instantaneous judgment in the form of an approving or condemnatory feeling is the *à posteriori* empirical element, which should never be disregarded or thought lightly of, whether in morals or in art, while the will and the imagination, acting independently of our whims and caprices, and in free conformity with that rea-

son which is their true law and basis, are the *a priori* element and principle, never to be lost sight of in a philosophical system of Morals or of Art.

To drop the subject of Morals, which I have introduced here only for the sake of the analogy, and to revert wholly to that of Art; if the question were put, which one of the two elements just mentioned — which may be distinguished as the active and the passive elements in Art — is the most important, we cannot doubt that that is the most important one upon which the other is wholly dependent; and as the passive feeling stands in the relation of dependence on the intellectual activity, the latter is more important, and more carefully to be considered, watched over and cultivated than the former, which necessarily follows its lead. If this feeling, divorced from the imagination, is that which is really meant by the modern word *Taste*, a term which seems to have been first introduced by the French, and was certainly unknown to the ancients, — if this merely passive, æsthetical faculty of judgment, so liable to be warped in a hundred ways, and to become altogether conventional, should be made the supreme arbiter over the imagination, it is difficult to see how genuine Art could long survive such a change in the true order of things, — what could save it from losing all its vitality, and degenerating into absolute tameness or something worse.

I may here bring in a few words on this point

from the poet Wordsworth, naturally a most indignant observer of the false school of criticism which grew out of this instalment of taste over creative power, and from which he suffered so much and so unworthily. "Taste," says he, meaning the taste I have just described, "like Imagination, is a word which has been forced to extend its services far beyond the point to which philosophy would have confined them. It is a metaphor, taken from a *passive* sense of the human body, and transferred to things which are in their essence *not* passive — to intellectual *acts* and *operations*. The word Imagination had been overstrained, from impulses honorable to mankind, to meet the demands of the faculty which is perhaps the noblest of our nature. In the instance of Taste, the process has been reversed; and from the prevalence of dispositions at once injurious and discreditable, being no other than that selfishness which is the child of apathy, which, as nations decline in productive and creative power, makes them value themselves upon a presumed refinement of judging. Poverty of language is the primary cause of the use which we make of the word Imagination, but the word Taste has been stretched to the sense which it bears in modern Europe by habits of self-conceit, inducing that inversion in the order of things whereby a passive faculty is made paramount among the faculties conversant with the fine arts. Proportion and con-

gruity, the requisite knowledge being supposed, are subjects upon which Taste may be trusted ; it is competent to this office, — for in its intercourse with these the mind is *passive*, and is affected painfully or pleurably as by an instinct. But the profound and the exquisite in feeling ; the lofty and universal in thought and imagination ; or, in ordinary language, the pathetic and the sublime, — are neither of them, accurately speaking, objects of a faculty which could ever without a sinking in the spirit of Nations, have been designated by the metaphor — Taste. And why ? Because without the exertion of a coöperating *power* in the mind of the reader there can be no adequate sympathy with either of these emotions ; without this auxiliary impulse, elevated or profound passion cannot exist.”¹

¹ *Essay supplementary to the Preface to Lyrical Ballads.* Ruskin, who is generally a good negative authority, whatever we may think of his positive opinions on Art, makes the following remarks on this subject. “Wherever the word ‘taste’ is used with regard to matters of art, it indicates either that the thing spoken of belongs to some inferior class of objects, or that the person speaking has a false conception of its nature. For, consider the exact sense in which a work of art is said to be ‘in good or bad taste.’ It does not mean that it is true or false ; that it is beautiful or ugly ; but that it does or does not comply either with the laws of choice, which are enforced by certain modes of life ; or the habits of mind produced by a particular sort of education. It does not mean merely fashionable, that is, complying with a momentary caprice of the upper classes ; but it means, agreeing with the habitual sense which the most refined education, common to those upper classes at the period, gives to their whole mind. Now, therefore, so far as that education does indeed tend to make the senses delicate,

I find a strain of remark altogether similar to this in a spirited essay of Goethe on the same subject.¹

and the perceptions accurate, and thus enables people to be pleased with quiet instead of gaudy color, and with graceful instead of coarse form ; and by long acquaintance with the best things, to discern quickly what is fine from what is common ;— so far acquired taste is an honorable faculty, and it is true praise of anything to say it is 'in good taste.' But so far as this education has a tendency to narrow the sympathies and harden the heart, diminishing the interest of all beautiful things by familiarity, until even what is best can hardly please, and what is brightest can hardly entertain ;— so far as it fosters pride, and leads men to found the pleasure they take in anything, not on the worthiness of the thing, but on the degree in which it indicates some greatness of their own (as people build marble porticoes, and inlay marble floors, not so much because they like the colors of marble, or find it pleasant to the foot, as because such porches and floors are costly, and separated in all human eyes from plain entrances of stone and timber) ;— so far as it leads people to prefer gracefulness of dress, manner, and aspect, to value of substance and heart, liking a well *said* thing better than a true thing, and a well-trained manner better than a sincere one, and a delicately formed face better than a good-natured one, and in all other ways and things setting custom and semblance above everlasting truth ;— so far, finally, as it induces a sense of inherent distinction between class and class, and causes everything to be more or less despised which has no social rank ; so that the affection, pleasure, or grief of a clown are looked upon as of no interest compared with the affection and grief of a well-bred man,— just so far, in all these several ways, the feeling induced by what is called 'a liberal education' is utterly averse to the understanding of noble art ; and the name which is given to the feeling, — Taste, Gout, Gusto, — in all languages, indicates the baseness of it, for it implies that art gives only a kind of pleasure analogous to that derived from eating by the palate." — *Modern Painters*, vol. iii. ch. v. § 6.

¹ *Einleitung in die Propyläen ?*

But I should not feel myself moved, even by these great authorities, to dismiss altogether the word Taste from the vocabulary of Art, simply because the faculty which it stands for has, not by its own fault, been made to usurp a place to which it is not entitled. I should prefer rather to restore it to its union with the Imagination, refusing to consider its decisions as infallible, except where it plainly acts in concert with, and in subserviency to that rightfully magisterial faculty. But I shall have something further to remark on the subject of taste, and of the æsthetical faculty generally, in another part of these lectures.

We are perhaps least sensible how much the activity of our own imagination is concerned in producing our perception of the beautiful, when we feel it in the presence of the beautiful objects of Nature. And yet undoubtedly the sense of beauty is first awakened, in the experience of nearly every one, from the contemplation of natural objects in a fit and predisposing temper of mind. In general, it is the grand spectacle of Nature spread out before the eyes of all, which, in its ever varying aspects, supplies the chief sources of their æsthetical enjoyment to the mass of mankind. And indeed, the principles of beauty in Nature are so essentially the same with those lying at the ground of all beauty in Art, that to sin against one is inevitably to fail in the other. Still, it is evident, that in a

philosophical theory of the beautiful in general, it is the productions of human Art in particular, and taken in distinction from those of Nature, which must constitute the special object of inquiry; and for this good reason, that in Nature beauty is never the essential thing — is not that which Nature specially aims at and works after. It is rather an accident; or it is a quality coexisting with so many other qualities which address themselves more directly to our interests, as to be either altogether shut out of view, or else so confounded with them as not to be clearly distinguishable. But it must be quite evident to every person who reflects, that in making out the scientific theory of a matter, the object of inquiry should be separated and detached, to the utmost degree possible, from all other matter not belonging to its own proper essence. The object, then, in our present inquiry, is to make out what it is, in essence and principle, that constitutes the beautiful wherever it appears, and wherever it produces those effects by which we recognize it: and as to realize such effects, alone, and separate from all disturbing accidents, is the express end of Art, and an end which Art constantly realizes, — so far as it is what it professes to be, and is not a mere pretension, — it is manifest that a true Theory, while it ought by no means to neglect or overlook the Beautiful in Nature, must, after all, be mainly directed to the consideration of those productions of the hu-

man mind where Beauty—a quality which only the human mind finds in Nature—being the sole object aimed at, would be likely to find its purest realization.

Having taken this general view of the subject now before us, let us next proceed to examine why it should be studied, what constitutes its worth and importance as an intellectual discipline, what grounds there may be for presuming that it can be contemplated under a scientific form, and what method should be observed in the treatment of a science of this nature.

I take up the two first of these heads chiefly with a view to relieve the subject of certain difficulties and objections which are apt to present themselves to some minds. An objection felt, and often expressed, by men whose judgment is not to be despised, is, that the subject wants substantial interest and dignity; that it is not connected with any really serious end of human life. Life, it is said, is earnest; Art is but sport. It is at best but a relaxation, which is the very opposite of a discipline. Its natural tendency is to enervate and enfeeble, and such has been its actual influence on individuals and on nations. This is one objection.

It is said, again, that Art cannot be studied as a science, or in the manner of a science; it cannot be reduced to any such form. The arts are all of them addressed to our sensuous nature, to the feel-

ings, to the imagination, rather than to thought. It is not scientific thought, but the most wayward and capricious of all our powers which is called into exercise in contemplating the arts of taste. Moreover, it is the very essence of Art to be *free*. It will not be shackled by rules. It belongs wholly to the free world of fancy and imagination. Art soars beyond Nature, beyond real life, beyond the region of actual things, and revels in the inexhaustible kingdom of possibilities. How is it conceivable that scientific thought can fully compass and reduce to the order of a system the mode of working peculiar to a faculty of such boundless, unfettered activity ?

Another objection, akin to the foregoing, arises from the great difficulty, not to say the impossibility, which many find, of arriving at any common standard of taste in a case where it is so obvious that the *judgment* must be left free, or rather that each must judge according to his own emotions, which neither will nor can be controlled by any outward rule. And as the imagination itself can give to particular forms of the beautiful an endless diversity ; as it works among one people, and in one age, in a way quite different from what it does among another people, and in another age, — so it would seem that there must also be an equally endless diversity of tastes, and therefore no common rule of judgment in matters of this sort. Moreover

such a rule, if conceivable in theory, would be undesirable in practice, since it would only lead to a lifeless uniformity, or a monotonous elegance, against which both Art and Nature equally protest.

To take up these objections in their order, it may be remarked, first, as to the claim of Art and its theory to be considered as an important branch of intellectual discipline, that, though artistic pursuits are often regarded as a mere pastime, an elegant amusement, one of the better modes of increasing the sum of human enjoyment ; while their worth is measured simply by the degree in which they contribute to the means of private luxury, or to the splendor of national character ; though art is thus commonly considered in the light of a means to something else, and its importance estimated merely by its utility, — yet, rightly considered, according to its true conception, it will present itself in quite another aspect, and challenge our respect and attention by its own independent and intrinsic dignity.

¹ Art has its foundation in man's dissatisfaction with the finite, the imperfect. It is a striving after the absolutely perfect, grounded in the infinite longings of the human soul. In its highest and true meaning, it belongs to the same circle with the other high, practical interests and needs of a free, self-conscious being, and of the life of the spirit, — morals, the social state, religion. It is one mode, the first, perhaps, which would naturally occur to the

human mind left to itself, of seeking to answer the need, which man, as a rational being, must ever feel, of bringing distinctly out to his own consciousness certain truths already involved in his spiritual nature. There has been a time in the history of our race when men strove to embody their ideas of the universe, and all their notions of religion, in works of art; in which they strove to make distinct to themselves, in this particular way, — in outward determinate forms of sense, — the ideas of those matters of which they were dimly conscious in their own minds. Thus they endeavored to express in the finite the infinite, which, indeed, cannot adequately be so expressed. That time has long since passed away; nor can Art now furnish the same satisfaction from the sense of having realized its object as it formerly could. But the essence of Art is still the same. Man is capable, now, it is true, of a better realization of what is spiritual, — of what belongs to the pure truth of ideas, — in other ways than by Art. But Art belongs still to the same great circle of human endeavors and activities. It belongs to the free domain of man's spirit. We still feel ennobled, exalted, — we are still impressed with a sense of the inherent worth and dignity of man's nature, — in contemplating a great work of art.

As to the moral objection drawn from the enervating influence which the arts of taste have been supposed to exert on nations and individuals, much

may be, and much has been said, on both sides. Plato, it is well known, was for banishing all poets from his republic. It is singular to remark, that the most devoted friends of Art have not been the least ready to admit, and even to illustrate by examples from history, this most serious and fatal of all objections which could be urged against Art, as belonging in any true sense to the essence of humanity. It is a remark of Schiller, in a work which he wrote with the very purpose of recommending Taste as a fundamental principle of education, that in almost every epoch of history in which the arts have flourished, and taste has become supreme, man has degenerated. "As long," says he, "as Athens and Sparta maintained their independence, and an inbred reverence for law upheld their civil institutions, Art was still in its infancy, and the love of the beautiful as yet far from asserting anything like a sovereign sway over the heart. But when, under Pericles and Alexander, the golden age of the arts commenced, and the dominion of taste became absolute, the energy and freedom of Greece were already gone. Eloquence falsified the truth, insulted wisdom on the lips of a Socrates, and virtue in the life of a Phocion. The Romans, we know had already bowed to the yoke of a fortunate dynasty before the arts of Greece could prevail over the stern severity of their character. And in modern Italy, it was not till the

glorious confederacy of the Lombards was broken, — till Florence became subject to the Medici, and the spirit of independence in all those brave cities gave place to an abject submission, — that the era of the fine arts fairly commenced.”¹

The truth, however, would seem to be this. There is nothing in the fine arts, grounded and rooted as they are in the very essence of our human nature, which can be supposed to have any necessary tendency to results which would be hostile to the best interests of that nature. No such contradiction can exist between essential principles of our mental constitution, rightly developed and employed; but, as beauty, truth, and goodness are one in essence, so they must necessarily harmonize and mutually sustain each other in all their various modes of manifestation. This seems evident of itself; nor can there be the least doubt it would be found confirmed by all experience of the fine arts within their own proper sphere, and unmixed with other influences with which, by the perversity of our passions, rather than by their own fault, they are too often found combined. It is not the fine arts themselves, but their abuse, which leads to corruption. Such being the fact, the objection at most amounts only to this, that Art is liable to abuse. But the same may be said of every most

¹ Schiller. *Ueber die aesthetische Erziehung des Menschen, in einer Reihe von Briefen.* Zehnter Brief.

excellent thing. And the greater the mischief resulting from a thing when abused, the higher, we often find is its real worth in itself, and the more important, that its true nature should be well understood.

Next, to the objection that Art addresses itself to our feelings and imagination, and not to thought, and hence is no proper object for scientific investigation, it may be replied, generally, that, as Art is a product of the human mind, and the mind, by reflection upon itself, may contemplate all it does and produces, and also understand its own law of working, even when it works with freedom, it must be able, too, to contemplate and understand this mode of its activity. Art takes its beginning from the mind, the spirit, though it clothes itself in forms of sense, and speaks chiefly to the feelings. The spirit merged in the sensuous form, which it completely pervades, is not lost there. The thinking mind recognizes *itself*, in the shape of sense which affects the feelings, and in which, so to speak, it has embodied itself. It does not there recognize, indeed, its highest form, but it recognizes its own form. Every true work of art is full, to overflowing, with thought, under some form of sense, addressing itself to the feelings.

As the beautiful in Art, and Nature, must ever be presented to us under a sensuous form, and address itself primarily to our feelings, some writers have

been led to consider the beautiful wholly on the side of the emotions excited by it. Thus Burke endeavors to resolve the whole subject into a theory of emotions, — emotions of terror, or such as partake more or less of that passion, constituting the sublime; emotions of love, or those which belong to that general class, constituting the beautiful. But it is obvious to remark, that, by contemplating the subject thus exclusively on the side of the affections moved by the works of Nature, or of Art, we are in danger of losing sight of the main thing, which is evidently the power, whether in Nature or Art, which produces such emotions. What belongs properly to Art is, that it produces feeling only in a certain way, and through a certain medium; only through the medium of that which we call the beautiful. The beautiful, then, is the main thing to be considered, and the emotions it awakens only, in so far as they serve to reveal the nature of that which excites them. But, as the productive cause of a certain class of emotions, there is certainly no reason why the beautiful should not be considered a very proper object of scientific examination.

Again, it is true that the great fountain of the fine arts is the free activity of the imagination, and this faculty possesses an inexhaustible fullness of productive power. But, although the imagination is free to produce whatever it pleases, and although it is freest of all in the highest productions of Art,

which bear, as the very stamp of their perfection, the character of entire freedom from all formality and constraint; yet the imagination in art is not free in the sense of being capricious. In the first place, as we have seen, Art has its problem, its purpose, which is ever but one, namely, to bring to consciousness what already lies deeply hidden in the recesses of the spirit. Art is not a mere play of fancy without an object. Infinitely various and diversified as may be the ways in which the deep things of the spirit are capable of being expressed in works of art, yet this infinite diversity is after all confined to a certain range of forms. Not every sort of form and shape is fitted to express ideas. Art, in its playful and sportive moods, may, it is true, occasionally descend to objects extremely trivial; but if these have no connection with higher things, if they are not a mere *part*, contributing to the effect of some greater whole, but are considered as something of themselves, they fall immediately below the province of art, or of that kind of art which alone it is our present purpose to consider.

And in the second place, when it is said that the imagination is free in art, it is meant that it is free inasmuch as it is not governed by outward empirical rules, but has its law within itself. I shall have to say more on this point hereafter, and therefore shall not dwell on it here. The imagination in art, then, is a rational, discreet power, in its

freedom. It is not free to wander from its object, to indulge in meaningless vagaries ; or to be extravagant, and inconsistent with itself.

Having answered these objections, and, in so doing, presented some views of the nature of the subject in general, which, as I conceive, prove its title to the rank of a philosophical discipline, and its capability of being treated in the manner of a science, it will be my next object to point out briefly the method of inquiry which should be pursued in order to arrive at satisfactory results. Two methods, directly opposed to each other, have been adopted by different writers on art. One of these, and, until lately, the only one which seems to have been regarded with much favor in our English schools of philosophy, is that which attempts to construct a theory of art on facts and rules derived from experience, and particularly from works of art already extant. But it is easy to see the difficulty, if not utter impossibility, of establishing a satisfactory theory of art in this way. Such facts and rules, under the most favorable circumstances that can be conceived, must, after all, be drawn from a comparatively narrow range of observation, falling vastly short of what the human mind has actually accomplished in this immense field of its activity, through all the various epochs of art ; and hence the theory must necessarily fall short of the facts, — must be insufficient, I will not

say to explain, but even to touch, many of them. But suppose it were possible to take account of all that has hitherto been done, still it would be necessary, in order to erect a perfectly reliable theory on any such foundation, to assume that the human mind had now at length exhausted itself, — that the human imagination had run through all its possible phases.

The other method is that which aims to arrive at the fundamental principle of a theory of art by the way of pure speculation. In this case, of course, it is presumed to be possible to arrive, without aid from experience, at the knowledge of the beautiful, as it is in itself, in its pure idea. But the peculiarity of the case here is, that essence and existence, that the form and the matter, are one and inseparable. The beautiful necessarily requires the actual expression of the idea in a form of sense. Separated from this, its necessary substantial form, its concrete expression, the idea is simply an impulse, an unknown power, something striving for utterance, it may be, but what it is, the subject himself whose mind it possesses and fills, finds out only so far as he bodies it forth in some shape of the imagination. Such being the case, it seems to be quite evident, that speculation, independent of experience, could, on this subject, lead to no satisfactory results. The true method, as it seems to me, is the one hinted at by Mr. Coleridge, where he

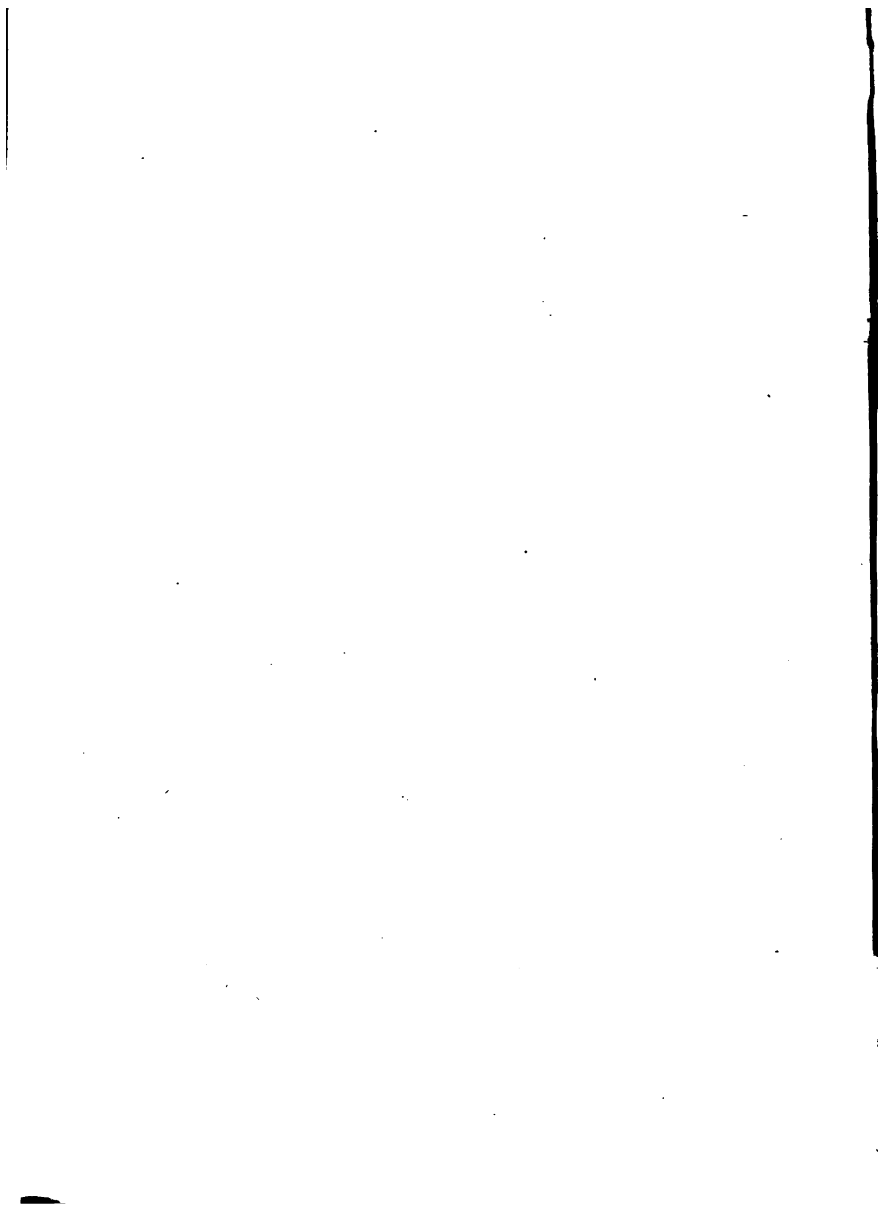
says, that it lies between the method of law, and of that theory which depends on experience. It will not answer to trust sense and experience alone, nor pure reason alone; but neither is the one or the other to be at any moment neglected, or lost sight of; but both are constantly to be taken together, the one as a necessary complement to the other.

The faculty or principle of judgment which is called into exercise both in the production, and in the contemplation, of the works of Art, is by common consent called Taste. Various definitions have been given of this power. The most general is that which simply assigns to it its sphere of operation, and which describes it as that faculty of the mind whereby we judge of what is beautiful, or the reverse, in nature, or in art. This is a mere nominal definition. The following aims to express the *essence* of the thing. "Taste is the intermediate faculty which connects the active with the passive powers of our nature, — the intellect with the senses, — and its appropriate function is to elevate the images of the latter, while it realizes the ideas of the former."¹ The active intellectual power more especially brought into exercise in judgments of taste is the Imagination; the passive powers are those of Feeling or Emotion. Not everything that calls into exercise the activity of

¹ Coleridge's "Essays on the Fine Arts," in the Appendix to Joseph Cottle's *Early Recollections*.

the imagination is beautiful, but only that which so exercises it as to awaken emotions attended with complacency and delight. Not everything, again, that excites emotions of delight is beautiful, but only that which awakens such emotions through the free activity of the imagination. The proper office and function of Taste is to elevate the sensuous, — whatever is presented to us in clear and well defined images of sense, and, for this reason, would only be pleasing and agreeable, — to elevate this, and to raise it to a higher power, by making it the vehicle of the supersensuous, the medium of expressing ideas. Taste then, finally, might be defined as the intuitive faculty or sense, either original or acquired, and rendered instinctive by habit, which in each case perceives what is befitting, discerns that just proportion, that union and interpenetration of the universal and the particular, which alone, and everywhere, constitutes excellence in Art; and which, whenever perceived, invariably produces that complacency and satisfaction which grows out of the reconciliation and harmony of sense with reason.

II.
THE BEAUTIFUL.



CHAPTER II.

THE BEAUTIFUL.

HAVING thus defined taste, let me next speak of its object, the beautiful, and more particularly of the beautiful in Art. According to one theory, what constitutes the beautiful in Art is the *characteristic*. Let us endeavor to understand what is meant by this. It is assumed by this theory, that the beautiful is the perfect of its kind. That is perfect of its kind which has in it all that it ought to have, and nothing that it need not have. In the things, persons, and actions of our actual experience, we find no such perfection, no such completeness. They are imperfect, not on account of their natural limitation, not because they are finite, but because the laws of that natural limitation by which the kind of each thing is determined are not allowed to operate freely, but are checked and obscured by causes foreign to themselves, or by their mutual interference with one another. Hence the necessity, in science, of observing a case in many different circumstances and situations, in order to separate from it all that is non-essential, and thus to arrive at its simple law. Now, what science

strives after by a laborious process of analysis, art effects synthetically and intuitively. It seizes upon the essential, and neglects the circumstantial. A drama, or a painting, for instance, confines itself to a single action. Such an action in real life would be complicated with a thousand circumstances, of no importance, because throwing no light on motives or character. In Art, these useless adjuncts are weeded out, or rather, they are ignored. Now if, besides this negative merit of neglecting the non-essential, the positive side — of seizing the whole essence — were the thing really meant by the characteristic, I see not how any valid objection could be made against this theory of the beautiful. But by the characteristic is evidently meant, not the whole essence, but only the more striking traits and outward manifestations of the essence of a thing. And in truth, a power of seizing with intuitive certainty upon those points, and those alone, which at once bring before us the true type, the real motive, of an object or of an action, is one which, beyond almost any other, distinguishes that creative imagination which gives birth to the beautiful in art. But although this is a great power, it is not all that is needed, and it is liable to become one-sided.

In the first place, the characteristic may be made too prominent, too glaring. The real type and essence of a thing is, after all, that which lies deep-

est in it. It will not bear, therefore, to be brought too much to the surface. We thus see but one side of it, at the expense of that completeness of expression which beauty demands. Burns may be cited here as a poet who possessed this power in an extraordinary degree, and used it well, too. "No poet of any age or nation," says Carlyle, "is more graphic than Burns; the characteristic features disclose themselves to him at a glance; three lines from his hand, and we have a likeness. And in that rough dialect, in that rude, often awkward metre, so clear and definite a likeness; it seems a draughtsman working with a burnt stick, and yet the burin of a Retzsch is not more expressive or exact." He then proceeds to point out an instance, where this poet "by a single phrase depicts a whole subject, a whole scene. Our Scottish forefathers, in the battle-field, struggled forward — says Burns — 'red-wat-shod'; in which one word," remarks Mr. Carlyle, "the poet gives a full vision of horror and carnage, perhaps too frightfully accurate for art."¹ This, no doubt, is as good an example of what is meant by the characteristic as could be found. But it is a high example of the force of language rather than of art,—of its capability, as compared with that of the pencil or the chisel, of flashing upon the mind's eye, at a stroke, what could not be portrayed on canvass, what could

¹ Essay on Burns.

scarcely even be presented, in its full reality, to any outward eye. But if this image answers its purpose, if it not only sets the action vividly before us, but its motive and its meaning, what more could we ask? Nothing more, for effect, — something, perhaps, a little different and less glaring, for a perfectly beautiful whole.

In the second place, the characteristic is apt to run into caricature; and it is difficult to fix the limits. The characteristic is, in its essence, opposed to the ideal. Shakespeare, the greatest master of characteristic, individual beauty, sometimes, it must be admitted, verges towards that extreme called caricature, though generally his own consummate judgment leads him unerringly to stop short of all excess. In the Greek poets, on the other hand, particularly in Sophocles, character is subordinated to the colder, but nobler proportions of ideal beauty. I shall not stop here to discuss the question which should have the preference, but only remark that, if each of these great poets is beautiful, wonderful, in his own peculiar style and manner, we should hardly be warranted to conclude, that it is the characteristic which constitutes the very essence of beauty.

We may consider next the theory of an American artist, Greenough, who defines beauty as "The promise of function."¹ This principle seems di-

¹ See Tuckerman's *Memorial of Greenough. Essay on Relative and Independent Beauty*, etc.

rectly the reverse of the one just considered ; for character is the development and result of function, rather than its promise. It may be, however, that we have here fundamentally the same thought ; and perhaps with some improvement, some nearer approach to completeness. Beauty, according to this artist, is always a relative quality, and is proportioned to the relation of promise with action and character. Action may not come up to promise, and character may prove to be a very imperfect realization of it. But, in the promise of a thing, at least, there is all that can ever be realized by it. We have everything in the promise of a function, though we may be disappointed in its performance. But suppose the function to go on unimpeded until its end is accomplished. Still, it will be more beautiful in its promise than in its result. The result of a true function will be *good*, which was simply beautiful in its promise ; as the budding blossom has a charm which is wanting in the full-blown flower, and when its office is completed, we have no longer a flower at all, but, what is better, the fruit. So I interpret this theory, which is not very clearly explained by its author. Several maxims follow naturally from these premises, the truth of which can hardly be disputed. 1. It is impossible to make a thing beautiful by embellishment. 2. Beauty cannot be borrowed, cannot be transferred from one thing to another, but must grow

wholly out of its own root. 3. To represent an object or an action at its highest stage, is to choose the moment of least advantage.¹ It is to leave nothing for thought, nothing for the imagination.

Perhaps the most striking and instructive part of this theory is what relates to embellishment, — the reasons for rejecting it. Since a very popular writer, and, with some, the highest authority of the present day on the subject of art, Mr. Ruskin, holds that ornament is the only thing that deserves to be called art, in architecture,² it may be well to hear

¹ "If the artist can never avail himself of more than a single moment of ever-changing nature, and even of this single moment except as looked at from a single point of view ; and if his works are produced, not to be glanced at merely, but to be contemplated over and over again ; then it is certain that this single moment, and the single point of view of this single moment cannot be chosen with too much regard to *significance*. But only that is significant which leaves full and free play for the imagination. The more we look, the more we should be led to think ; and the more we think, the more we should believe. But in the whole duration of an affection or passion no moment has this advantage less than the highest stage of it. Beyond this there is nothing further ; and to show the utmost to the eye is to tie up the wings of fancy, and force her, since she cannot go beyond the expression manifest to sense, to occupy herself with feebler images beneath it, where she may get free from the visible fullness of expression which limits her. Therefore, when Laocoön sighs, the imagination may hear him cry out ; but when he cries out, she can neither take a step higher nor lower without beholding him in a contemptible and consequently uninteresting situation. She hears him gasp, or sees him already dead." — *Lessing's Laocoön*, pp. 42, 43.

² See Ruskin's *Lectures on Architecture and Painting*. Addenda to Lectures i. and ii.

what a practical artist has to say on this general subject. First, then, through all nature, Greenough sees nothing done for the sake of mere embellishment, — nothing in flowers, in shells, in the higher animal life, or in man. “The tints, as well as the forms of plants and flowers are shown to have an organic significance and value;” it may be taken for granted, “that tints have a like character in the mysteriously clouded and pearly shell.” It cannot be believed “that the myriads are furnished, at the depths of the ocean, with the complicated glands and absorbents to nourish those dyes, in order that the hundreds may charm an idle eye, as they are tossed in disorganized ruin upon the beach.” In the structure of the eagle, and of the lion, are beheld “the most terrible expression of power and dominion, and we find that it is here, also, the result of transcendental mechanism.” Next turn to the human frame, — “Where is the ornament of this frame? It is all beauty; its motion is grace, no combination of harmony ever equalled for expression and variety, its poised and stately gait.” “The savage who envies or admires the special attributes of beasts, maims unconsciously his own perfection, to assume their tints, their feathers, or their claws; we turn from him with horror, and gaze with joy on the naked Apollo.” Next, with regard to architecture. Everything here, he maintains, should speak of adaptation, and nothing else.

“If we compare the simpler form of the Greek temple with the ornate and carved specimens which followed it, we shall be convinced,” he says, “that they were the beginning of the end, and that the turning point was the first introduction of a fanciful, not demonstrable, embellishment ; and for this simple reason, that embellishment being arbitrary, there is no check upon it ; you begin with acanthus leaves, but the appetite for sauces, or rather the need of them, increases as the palate gets jaded. You are tired of Aristides the Just, and of straight columns ; they must be spiral, and by degrees you find yourself in the midst of a barbaric pomp, whose means must be slavery, — nothing less will supply its waste ; whose enjoyment is satiety, whose result is corruption.”¹ Enough has now been said on this principle of beauty as related to function. In this rapid survey we have seen about the whole extent of its indisputable application. But there are two objections to it as a universal principle. While it may hold good as expressing the true law of the imagination in relation to all the plastic arts, it will not be found to apply so naturally and readily to music and poetry. Organic unity, it is true, is no less required in these departments of art than in the others. But it seems out of place to be looking, in them, for the promise of function. The second objection is, that in all really universal

¹ Tuckerman's *Memorial of Greenough*, pp. 174-176, 179.

propositions, the converse should hold true. But if it should be admitted that, in all the plastic arts, beauty is the promise of function, still the converse surely cannot be maintained, that wherever there is promise of function, there is beauty.

Again it has been held, that the highest principle of art, that to which everything else must be subordinated, in order to reach the beautiful, is *expression*. This has ever been a favorite theory. I find it nowhere more explicitly stated than in the following language of Sir Charles Bell. "Beauty," he says, "is consistent with an infinite variety of forms; and this alone appears sufficient to convince us, that its cause and origin is to be found in some quality capable of varying and accommodating itself, which can attach to different forms, and still operate through every change. This quality I conceive to be expression; and although it may be said that beauty is chiefly excellent where there is observed no character of passion, yet in these cases the form we admire is calculated for expression, and has in our secret thoughts a relation to the qualities of mind."¹ Thus far the author. That there is always a moral or intellectual element concerned in what fascinates us, whether in the human form, or in brute and inanimate natures, the indefinable glance of which we call expression, it

¹Essays on the *Anatomy of Expression in Painting*, by Charles Bell. Essay vii.

would be useless to deny. But the word is much too vague. All expression, even of moral qualities, is not grace. Affected, exaggerated expression, is positively disagreeable. So is the expression of all strong passion, as the writer intimates. Hamlet's direction to the players, that in expression they should "beget and acquire a temperance to give it smoothness," is of universal application in the arts. All exaggeration is distortion. But, it is evident, that which itself constantly needs to be measured, cannot be the measure of anything else, — cannot be a rule or principle of judgment.

A peculiar modification of this hypothesis, — that beauty consists in expression, — is the theory of Mr. Alison. According to him, there is nothing really beautiful in the object we call so; the word expresses nothing which is really in the object itself. The qualities of matter, or of any mere object of sense, "are in themselves incapable of producing emotion, or the exercise of any affection." But "they may produce this effect from their association with other qualities; and as being either the signs or expressions of such qualities as are fitted by the constitution of our nature to produce emotion. Thus, in the human body, particular forms or colors are the signs of particular passions or affections. In works of art, particular forms are the signs of dexterity, of taste, of convenience, of utility. In the works of nature, particular sounds and

colors, etc., are the signs of peace, or danger, or plenty, or desolation. In such cases, the constant connection we discover between the sign and the thing signified, between the material quality and the quality productive of emotion, renders, at last, the one expressive to us of the other, and very often disposes us to attribute to the sign, that effect which is produced only by the quality signified." ¹ Such, in general, is the theory of Alison. The fatal objection to it is this, that it not only represents what we do actually refer to the object, as residing wholly in ourselves, in our own minds, and casual associations; but that it makes it to depend on a subjective and private interest, the interest of the individual, an element, the absence of which, rather, as we shall see hereafter, is necessarily implied in our conception of beauty.

Finally, let us consider another, more recent definition, that of Mr. Coleridge. "The *Beautiful*," says he, "contemplated in its essentials, that is, in kind, and not in degree, is that in which the many, still seen as many, becomes one." ² According to this, it should seem that every object of sense must, of course, from the very nature of it, partake more or less of the beautiful; for of what object of what

¹ *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, by Archibald Alison. Essay ii. ch. i.

² Coleridge's *Essays on the Principles of sound Criticism concerning the Fine Arts*. Appendix to Joseph Cottle's *Early Recollections*. Essay iii.

sense may it not be said that the many properties, though seen, or capable of being seen and contemplated, as many, are yet perceived as one in their substantial ground? Or, if it be said that we do not see the many, as in the case of a single sound or color, in which we are not conscious of the several vibrations or undulations of which it is composed, would it also be denied, as the definition requires it should be, that such sound or color possesses in any degree whatever the attribute of beauty? To this doubtless the author would reply, that in every case whatever in which the many, still seen as many, becomes one, or in which we have a simultaneous intuition of the relation of parts each to each, and all to a whole, we have a case of the beautiful,—while the single sound or color, is simply agreeable. But let us look at his own illustration. “Take” says he, “a familiar instance, one of a thousand. The frost on a window-pane has by accident crystallized into a striking resemblance of a tree or a seaweed. With what pleasure we trace the parts, and their relations to each other and to the whole! Here is the stalk or trunk, and here the branches or sprays, sometimes even the buds or flowers. Nor will our pleasure be less, should the caprice of the crystallization represent some object disagreeable to us, provided only we can see or fancy the component parts, each in relation to each, and all forming a whole.

A lady would see an admirably painted tiger with pleasure, and at once pronounce it beautiful, — nay, an owl, a frog, or a toad, who would have shrieked or shuddered at the sight of the things themselves. So far is the beautiful from depending on associations, that it is frequently produced by the mere removal of associations. Many a sincere convert to the beauty of various insects has Natural History made, by exploding the terror or aversion that had been connected with them.”

“The most general definition of beauty, therefore,” he continues, “is Multeity in unity. Now it will be always found, that whatever is the definition of the kind, independent of degree, becomes likewise the definition of the highest degree of that kind. An old coach-wheel lies in the coach-maker’s yard, disfigured with tar and dirt (I purposely take the most trivial instances). If I turn away my attention from these, and regard the figure abstractly — ‘still,’ I might say to my companion, ‘there is beauty in that wheel, and you yourself would not only admit, but would feel it, if you never had seen a wheel before. See how the rays proceed from the centre to the circumference, and how many different images are distinctly comprehended at one glance, as forming one whole, and each part in some harmonious relation to each and to all. But imagine the polished golden wheel of the chariot of the Sun, as the poets have described it ; there the

figure, and the real thing as figured, exactly coincide. There is nothing heterogeneous, nothing to abstract from ; by its perfect smoothness and circularity in width, each part is (if I may borrow a metaphor from a sister sense) as perfect a melody, as the whole is a complete harmony. This, we should say, is beautiful throughout. Of all the many which I actually see, each and all are really reconciled into unity ; while the effulgence from the whole coincides with, and seems to represent the effulgence of delight from my own mind in the intuition of it." ¹

But after all these ingenious illustrations, I think every one must still feel, that there is something defective in the definition ; and although we might be willing to admit that everything beautiful is, in fact, multitude in unity, yet it by no means follows from this, that whatever possesses multitude in unity is beautiful. The shapeless and deformed may still not be without a unity of its own, and a relation of its parts to the whole. The relation must be one of proportion. But aside from this, even when the unity consists of a most perfect harmony of relations, whether it be a harmony of forms, or colors, or of tones, or of movements, if there is nothing more than this abstract unity of relations, if there is not also the concrete unity of an inspiring soul, seen, or in some sense divined, I think it will be found that we never contemplate the object with

¹ Coleridge's *Essays*, etc.

that permanent complacency which the truly beautiful is sure to awaken. We soon grow tired of the stiff and formal symmetry, which is without meaning or life, and has relation to nothing but itself. Thus, among geometrical figures, the square and the circle contain the most perfect relation of parts in the unity of a whole ; but even in architecture these figures are rarely admissible, except where their stiff effect can be wholly overcome, by some means or other out of themselves.

In all these theories of the beautiful, taken from our best English writers, there is much that is true, and exceedingly important to be observed. In them all, two sides are constantly alluded to, — something characterized, and something which characterizes ; something expressed, and something which expresses ; something associated, and something which associates ; something which is one, and at the same time manifold. They all agree in regarding that which is characterized, expressed, associated, and one, as the main thing. In the arts, it is that which the artist looks at, strives after ; it is that which we feel who contemplate his work. Now we may call this what we please, — the conception, — the idea, as it lies, whether in the more vague form of feeling, or the more perfect form of intuition, in the artist's mind, or as it is awakened in ours by the sight of his work, — yet it has no existence as the beautiful, either for him or for us, except so far as

he has succeeded in bringing it out and realizing it in his production. His work is the means of realizing his idea, and embodies it. It is nothing else than purely the realization of this to the sight, to hearing, to the imagination, under some outward form consisting of parts. It is easy to see, that, whatever else there is besides what suffices for this is not only unnecessary, but positively out of place, and in the way. It obstructs the view of the main purpose. What I would say may be otherwise expressed as follows: It is necessary to every great and true work of art that it should possess perfect unity, that everything in it should have no other meaning, purpose, or tendency, than simply to express that unity, to bring it, in all its completeness, fullness, and depth, clearly and distinctly before the mind. Thus the artist first realizes fully to himself his own conception, and thus he flashes it, or more gradually instills it upon the minds of others. Hence the wonderful power of productions which thus unite in themselves principle, means, and end, in *one*. We say of them, they are instinct with life, — they possess an inexhaustible fullness. There is no end to the images they suggest, to the associations they awaken. We are never tired of looking at them, — of perusing them. We never return to them but to find something new, and to experience fresh delight. Such is the language we use, and without the least exaggeration.

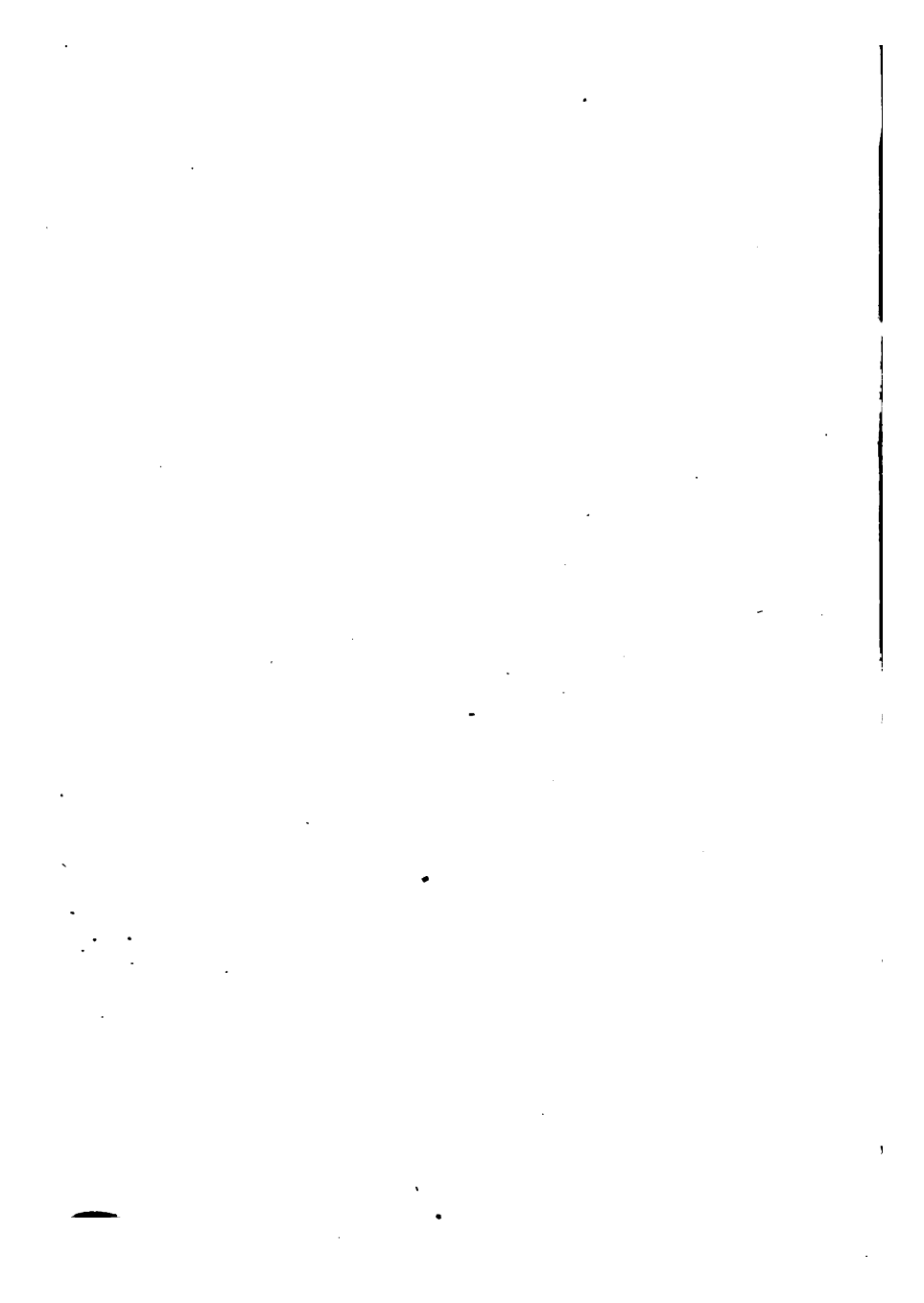
What is the secret of this endless charm? I do not hesitate to say that it may be expressed in a single word, and that is *truth*, — truth as seen in the coincidence of the ideal and real. Real truth, says Locke, “is the agreement of our ideas with things;”¹ and the definition is a very good one. But where shall we find such agreement? There is a difficulty on both sides. How inadequate are the ideas or notions we have in our minds to express the fullness of reality which is in things! But then again, on the other hand, how few of the things around us come up even to our imperfect ideas. What beautiful human form that we ever saw was wholly without blemish or defect? The individual things of nature do not, at any one particular moment, fully correspond even with our imperfect conceptions. It is impossible that they should; for they are continually passing and changing with time, and are never at one stay. Truth is eternal and unchangeable. Now science strives to arrive at truth in one way: art in quite another. The results of science cannot be expressed in sensible shapes and forms of the imagination. The results of science exist only in the thinking mind, and in the forms of recorded thought for the thinking mind. But the very end of all the imaginative arts is to express the truth of things in sensible forms, and in such a way as that these forms, so far as art is concerned, have

¹ Locke's *Essay*, b. iv, c. 5, 8.

no other use or purpose than simply to serve as the expression of truth in its unchanging nature. Thus it is, that maternal love lives through the centuries, ever beaming forth with the same expression of ineffable tenderness from the face of that inimitable picture of Raphael, the Virgin of the Chair. The unalterable truth of perfect harmony of proportions found its realization in the Parthenon of Athens, and in that perfect model of architecture it has ever since sat enthroned.

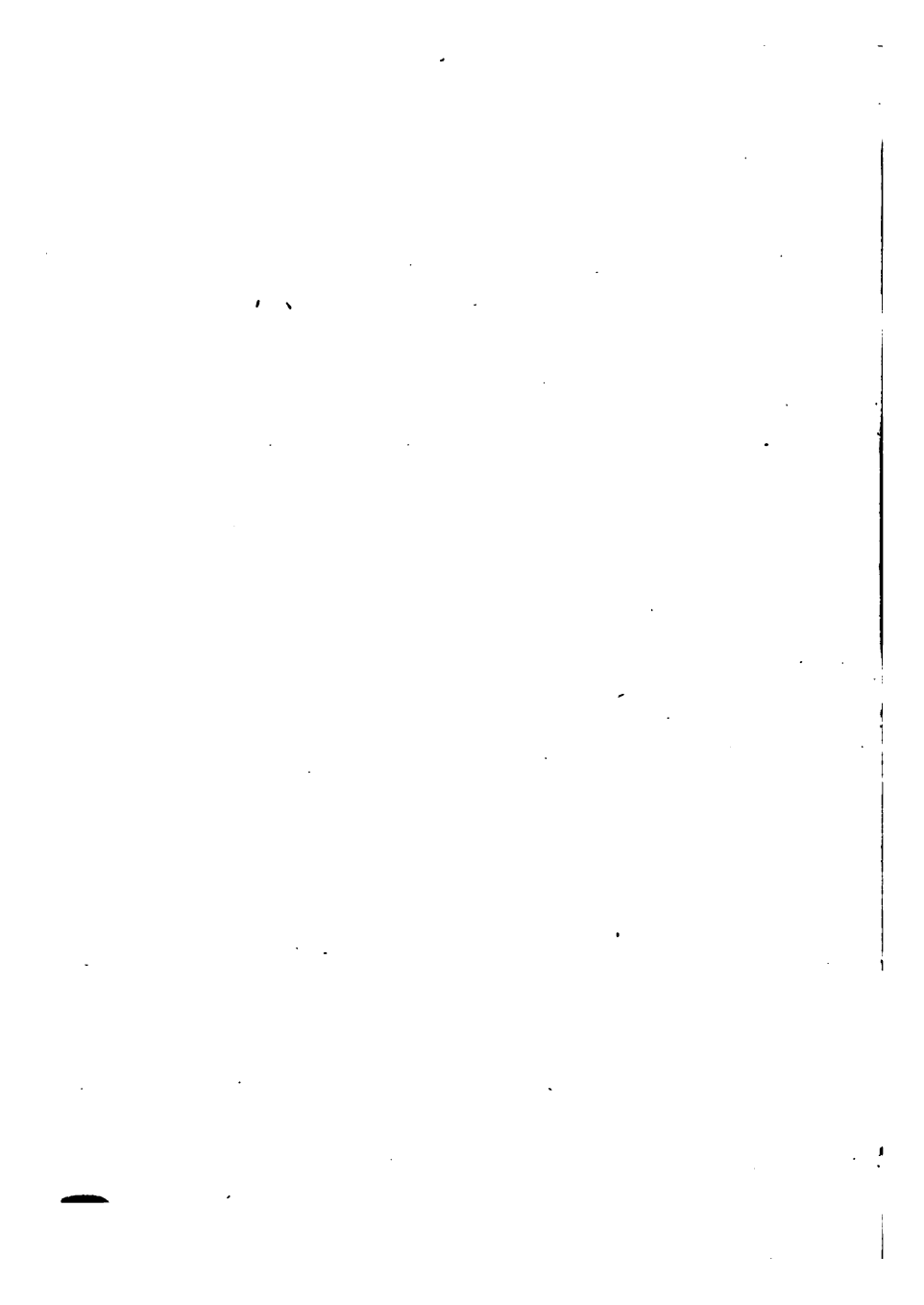
The beautiful, then, is truth, — the truth of eternal, as distinguished from merely accidental, arbitrary, or conventional relations ; and reaching us, not through our understandings, in the form of conceptions or thoughts, but immediately through the heart, — therefore, in some form of sense, or of the imagination ; the truth in this case being felt rather than understood by us ; producing admiration, love, longing, rather than conviction ; moving, rather than instructing us. But will this apply to beauty in its lowest forms, in its simplest elements ? Certainly. Beauty everywhere is a felt conformity to law. Everything pleases, or ought to please, which, in its own sphere, justly represents the truth of being. The deformed, the ugly, on the contrary, is the unnatural, that which comes under no positive law, expresses no truth in particular, but a mere contingency or accident. We see not that charm in a shapeless clod, or a puddle, which we see in a crys-

tal or a dewdrop. As the power and law of form in nature, — rather the creative power of almighty wisdom and truth manifested in nature, — mounts progressively upwards to its masterpiece in man, that charm increases in interest. In man himself, the self-conscious being, it acquires its greatest intensity. His form affords, in itself, the type of outward bodily proportion, a true image, stamped upon it at creation. That form, radiant with intelligence and virtue, reflecting without distorting the divine image in which it was originally created, is the highest beauty.



III.

THE JUDGMENT OF TASTE.



CHAPTER III.

THE JUDGMENT OF TASTE.

AFTER having settled upon these definitions of Taste, and of its object, the Beautiful, it will be necessary for us to consider, more fully than we have yet done, another point, which is, In what respect do judgments of taste differ from other judgments, and in what does the object of taste differ from other objects and qualities, the contemplation of which may also be attended with delight or complacency. I use the expression, judgments of taste, and ask how they are to be distinguished from other judgments. But here a previous question immediately suggests itself. Can taste be, in any sense, properly considered as a judgment at all. For judgment, it has been said, is an exertion of the intellect, while taste is simply a faculty of receiving pleasure, or an "instinctive and instant preferring of one material object to another, without any obvious reason, except that it is proper to human nature in its perfection so to do."¹ And here let me remark, generally, that many speak of these original intuitions of the human mind, or heart, very vaguely, with very little

¹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Pt. i. sec. i. ch. iii.

comprehending of their true import ; as if a previous development of the human mind by discipline of some sort or other, outward or inward, in which the power of judgment is constantly called into requisition, were not necessarily required and implied in such intuitions.

I think it cannot be denied that taste is at any rate a power of discrimination ; that it is by taste we judge between the beautiful and the ugly, that it is by this faculty we distinguish different degrees, as well as different kinds of beauty : whether the grounds and reasons for such decisions are at the moment clearly present to the mind or not ; and moreover, that a good taste, in the best sense of that word, and sound judgment, are, if not the same thing, at least rarely found separated. It is in this view of taste as a power of discrimination, that I call it a judgment. The fact that the judgment is intuitive and without reflection, or rather previous to reflection, that is, a judgment on the truth of which we confidently rely, though we may not distinctly see the grounds and reasons of it, — all this does not essentially alter the fact of its being a judgment. Are not our moral judgments in many cases just as instinctive and instantaneous ?

Allowing then that taste is a form of judgment, let us proceed to consider how it differs in its behavior and exercise from other judgments, such as judgments of sense, judgments of the understand-

ing, moral judgments. We may remark, first, that the beautiful generally, and of art in particular, pleases immediately, and independently of any particular interest of our own in the object. This is an important, indeed a fundamental distinction. We have an interest in whatever we conceive, or are led spontaneously, by the constitution of our nature, to regard, as the means to some desirable end. The feeling of interest resolves itself ultimately into the sentiment of utility, or of the possible subserviency of a thing to some purpose out of itself. Objects of this nature, which constitute or create an interest, whether because they are adapted to the primary constitution of our senses, or to answer wants which have arisen from reflection on our past experience, or which have been contracted by the force of habit; or objects which recall other things with which they have in some way or other become associated, and are therefore dear and pleasing to us, — all such objects we call *agreeable*. Of course, here, one man will differ in his judgment from another. The objects in this case, we may notice, are not valued on their own account, and for what they are in themselves, but only as they satisfy our wants, or may be made subservient to our wishes or passions. And as one man's wants and interests differ from another's; as one man may have, for instance, an interest of curiosity, or an interest for a certain kind of excitement,

an interest from the desire of possession, or an interest from his particular associations, where another has no such particular interests, but others of an altogether different kind, it is plain, that what seems agreeable to one man may be disagreeable, or at least wholly indifferent, to another. Taste is here much the same with inclination, and it is in this sense of the word taste that the saying holds good, "De gustibus non est disputandum." The measure of the agreeable therefore, and the ground of the judgment respecting what things are agreeable and what are not, is their adaptation or want of adaptation to our subjective or personal wants. That only is agreeable which answers as a means to something else. No value is attached to the object aside from the end it subserves. When we look at it, we shall find the case is not so with regard to that which we call beautiful, whether in nature or art. The beautiful pleases on its own account; not on account of its reference to something else. It has its end in itself.

I may here notice a distinction made by a late writer on this subject which is worth observing. "That which is naturally agreeable, and consonant to human nature, so that the exception may be attributed to disease or defect; that, the pleasure from which is contained in the immediate impression, cannot indeed with propriety be called beautiful, exclusive of *its relations*, but one among the component parts of beauty, in whatever instance it

is susceptible of existing as a part of a whole. This, of course, excludes the mere objects of the [senses of] taste, smell, and feeling, though the *sensation* from these, especially from the latter when organized into touch, may, secretly and without consciousness, enrich and vivify the perceptions and images of the eye and ear, which alone are the true organs of sense, their sensations, in a healthy state, being too faint to be noticed by the mind. We may indeed, in common conversation, call purple a beautiful color, or the tone of a single note, on an excellent piano-forte, a beautiful tone; but if we were questioned, we should agree, that a rich or delightful color, a sweet, rich, or clear tone, would have been more appropriate, and this with less hesitation in the latter instance than the former; because the single tone is more manifestly of the nature of a *sensation*, while color is the medium which seems to blend perception and sensation, so as to hide, as it were, the latter in the former, — the direct opposite of which takes place in the lower senses of feeling, taste, and smell. When I reflect on the manner in which smoothness, richness of sound, etc., enter into the formation of the beautiful, I am inclined to suspect that they act negatively rather than positively. Something there must be to realize the *form*; something by and in which the *forma informans* reveals itself; and these, less than any that could be substituted, and in the least possible degree, obscure

the idea of which they, composed into outline and surface, are the symbol." ¹

These senses, however, sight and hearing, which are the only ones suited for the transmission of so pure an essence as beauty, really have many enchantments proper to themselves by which they are apt to call off attention to themselves. Nothing is so easy as to be dazzled and beguiled by them, and to mistake that which is agreeable to the animal, for that which shows itself as beauty only to the higher nature, to the man. A true taste discriminates, and never confounds the beautiful with the merely agreeable.

Secondly. If the judgment of the beautiful, in which we repose and seek nothing farther, is distinguished from the agreeable by being above it, it is separated from that of the morally good, by being beneath it. Moral judgments and judgments of taste agree, indeed, in the fact that both are attended with complacency in their objects, and they alike differ from the other just mentioned, inasmuch as they both claim universal validity. A moral judgment is not a particular, but a universal, judgment. To be true it must be universal. So also of the judgments of taste. Complacency in a moral action springs from its conformity to a rational law, and with the idea of an ultimate end, — the perfection of our being, and the harmony of our will with

¹ Coleridge's *Essays on Art*, above cited. Essay iii.

the supreme will. It is therefore attended with an interest, — an interest for the attainment of that end, for the realization of the conceived idea. But in the beautiful the idea is realized already, and therefore the mind rests satisfied in the mere contemplation or intuition of it.

Hence again, thirdly, the terms of a judgment of taste are never separated. The universal validity of moral judgments, and of all logical judgments which are universal, as distinguished from judgments æsthetical, is grounded on the conscious reference of a particular to a more universal conception, formally expressed as a law. But in a judgment of taste there is no such conscious separation of the particular from the universal, — of the object from its idea, — but both are inseparably one. How the universal and the particular, the kind and the individual, are, in a true work of art, fused in one, I cannot here stop to explain. It will be explained when we come to point out the distinction between works of art and those of nature. The judgment is, therefore, by feeling, rather than by a conception of the intellect. But though it is a judgment of feeling, rather than of the understanding, and, so far as this goes, subjective, yet at the same time it differs from other subjective judgments, in that it possesses universal validity, and holds good for all capable of judging at all. The predicate of beauty is not fixed to the *conception* of the object in the

sense of extending to its whole logical sphere, but has reference rather to the whole class of those capable of judging. To explain, when we say of the rose that it is a beautiful flower, or of the elm, that it is a graceful tree, it may seem, indeed, in this case, as if we meant to include all belonging to these respective kinds. But when we speak of a picture or a poem as beautiful, it becomes quite evident, that in passing this as a universal judgment, we mean simply that all must, or ought to, feel as we do. What I consider as beautiful, I am entitled to expect others will consider so, also. I have a right to expect it should please universally, which cannot be said of that which is agreeable to me, because it falls in with my particular likings, my individual interests or associations.

What is meant here is well illustrated by Coleridge. "That the Greenlander prefers train-oil to olive-oil, and even to wine, we explain at once by our knowledge of the climate and productions to which he has been habituated. Were this man as enlightened as Plato, his palate would still find that most agreeable to which it had been most accustomed. But when the Iroquois Sachem, after having been led to the most perfect specimens of architecture in Paris, said that he saw nothing so beautiful as the cook's shop, we attribute this without hesitation to savagery of intellect; and infer with certainty that the sense of the beautiful was

either dormant altogether, or at best but very imperfect. The beautiful, therefore, not originating in the sensations, must belong to the intellect : and therefore we declare an object beautiful, and feel an inward right to *expect* that others should coincide with us. But we feel no *right to demand it*"¹ as we do in the case of that which is *morally good*.

Hence, again, we cannot reason or argue about what is beautiful, or the reverse. We pronounce a work of art great and admirable of its kind, without reference to the views or opinions of others ; I mean in a purely æsthetical judgment. Arguments to prove that it is so, or that it is not so, cannot alter our judgment, any more than if it were purely subjective, as in the pleasures of sense. We may assent to such opinions and reasonings through modesty or diffidence, — but our judgment in fact remains unaltered. We either find the thing immediately beautiful, or not at all. We define the beautiful, therefore, as that which, without the medium of an intellectual conception as the objective condition of the judgment, we pronounce suited to excite universal delight and complacency.

Fourthly, it is of some importance to consider in what sense relation to an end, or conformity to an antecedent purpose and design, is concerned in the judgment of taste. For some writers, as for example Hume, resolve the whole into the perception of

¹ Coleridge's *Essays on Art*, Essay iii.

a relation of this sort.¹ And here it is obvious to remark, that the perception of beauty is connected with some sense of adaptation, of fitness, of a harmony of relations. We may distinguish two sorts of ends, — subjective and objective. A *subjective* end is one contained within the object itself; as, for example, an organized being in nature has for its subjective end the completeness and perfection of the individual. An objective end is where the object is regarded simply with reference to its adaptation to something else *without itself*, — with reference to its *utility*. It has already been seen that the perception of beauty is not grounded on the sense of utility, or of any purpose to be answered by the beautiful object out of itself: it is a judgment quite independent therefore of any conception of an *objective* end. How this general fact is modified, and why it should be so, in the particular case of architecture, we shall see hereafter. Neither is any clear and definite conception of a *subjective* end in the object necessary to the perception of the beauty of it. A flower or a sea-shell, for example, is seen instantly to be beautiful, if it is so, as much by a person entirely ignorant of its internal structure, as by the naturalist who understands the whole meaning, use, and harmonious adaptation of the parts to the perfection of the individual. By all this knowledge, the interest in the

¹ *Essay on the Standard of Taste.*

object is, no doubt, immeasurably enhanced ; but this interest is altogether distinct in kind from the pure and simple feeling of beauty. So a harmony in music, a picture, a statue, produce their effect, as beautiful productions, at once. Not that the whole power that is in them can be perceived at once, or indeed, if they are truly great, can ever be fathomed to the bottom and exhausted. Not that knowing the exact intentions and motive of the artist in all his details does not *add* greatly even to the purely æsthetic pleasure we derive from his work. But independent of all knowledge of this sort, if the thing is beautiful, we find it so, and that instantly. The truth is, the end and the means, the idea and material, the purpose of the artist and his execution, are so completely *fused* together, so blended into one, as not to admit of separation. Or if we may separate them in thought, yet just as soon as we enter on any such logical analysis, the total impression is lost ; not to be recovered till we abandon ourselves again, with an intellect "released from all service" to the free working of the outward whole.

That the sense of beauty does not originate in our perception of the fitness of means to ends within the object itself, nor depend on any law of mere outward proportion, is thus beautifully illustrated by the same author who has already supplied me with illustrations. "How charming the moss-rose, with its luxuriancy of petals ! That moss, that luxuri-

ancy, are the effects of degeneracy, and unfit the flower for the multiplication of its kind. Disproportion may indeed, in certain cases, preclude the sense of beauty, and will do so wherever it destroys, or greatly disturbs the wholeness and simultaneousness of the impression. But still proportion is not the positive cause, or the universal and necessary condition, of beauty; were it only that proportion implies the perception of the coincidence of quantities with a preëstablished rule of measurement, and it is always, therefore, accompanied with an act of discursive thought."

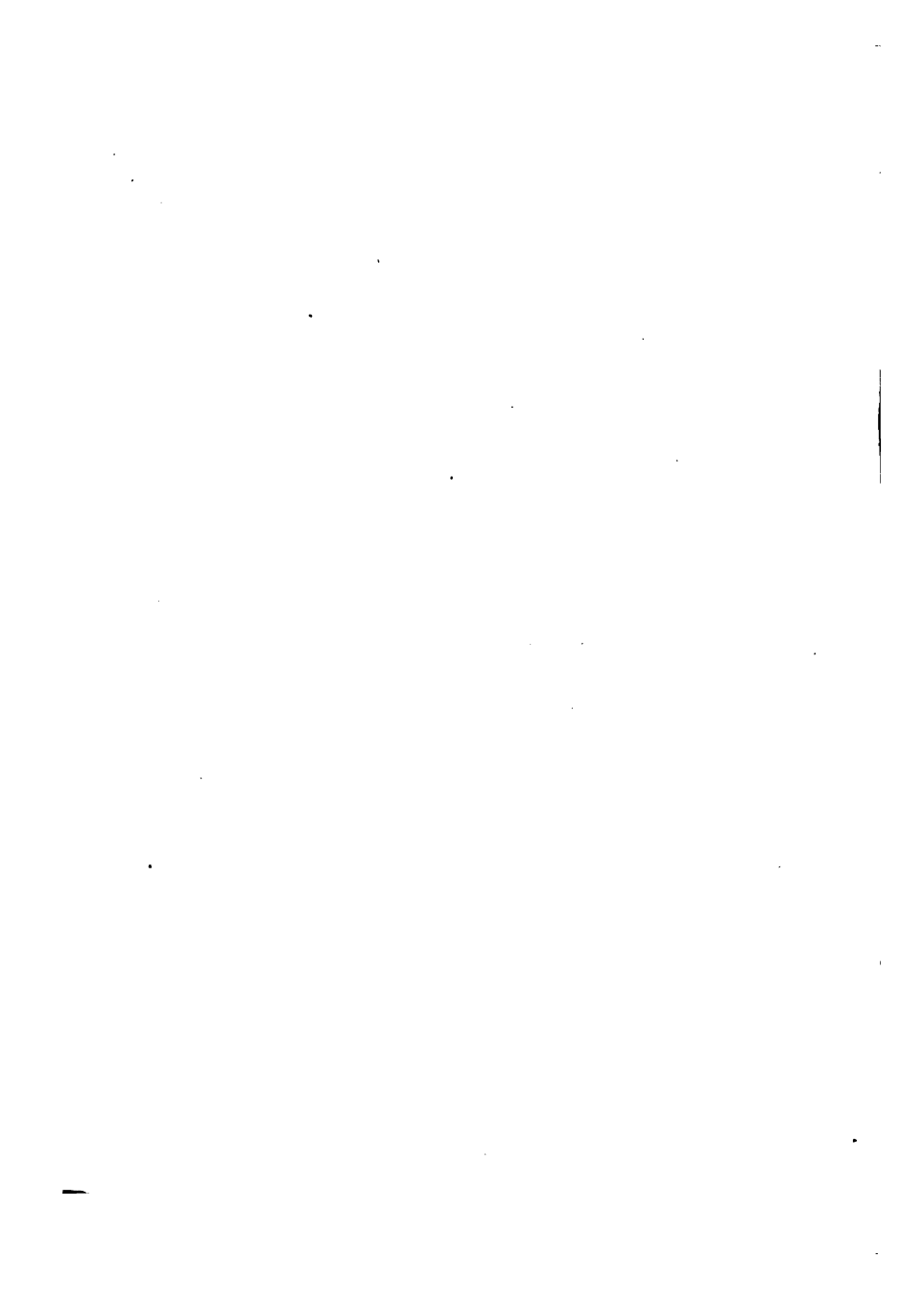
"We declare at first sight the swan beautiful, as it floats on with its long arching neck, and protruding breast, which, uniting to their reflected image in the watery mirror, present to our delighted eye the stringless bow of dazzling silver which the poets and the painters assign to the god of love. We ask not what proportion the neck bears to the body;—through all the change of graceful motion it brings itself into unity, as an harmonious part of an harmonious whole. The very word 'part' imperfectly conveys what we see and feel, for the moment we look at it in division, the charm ceases."

"The long neck of the ostrich is in exact and evident proportion to the height of the animal, and is of manifest utility and necessity to the bird, as it stoops down to graze, and still walks on. But, not being harmonized with the body by plumage or

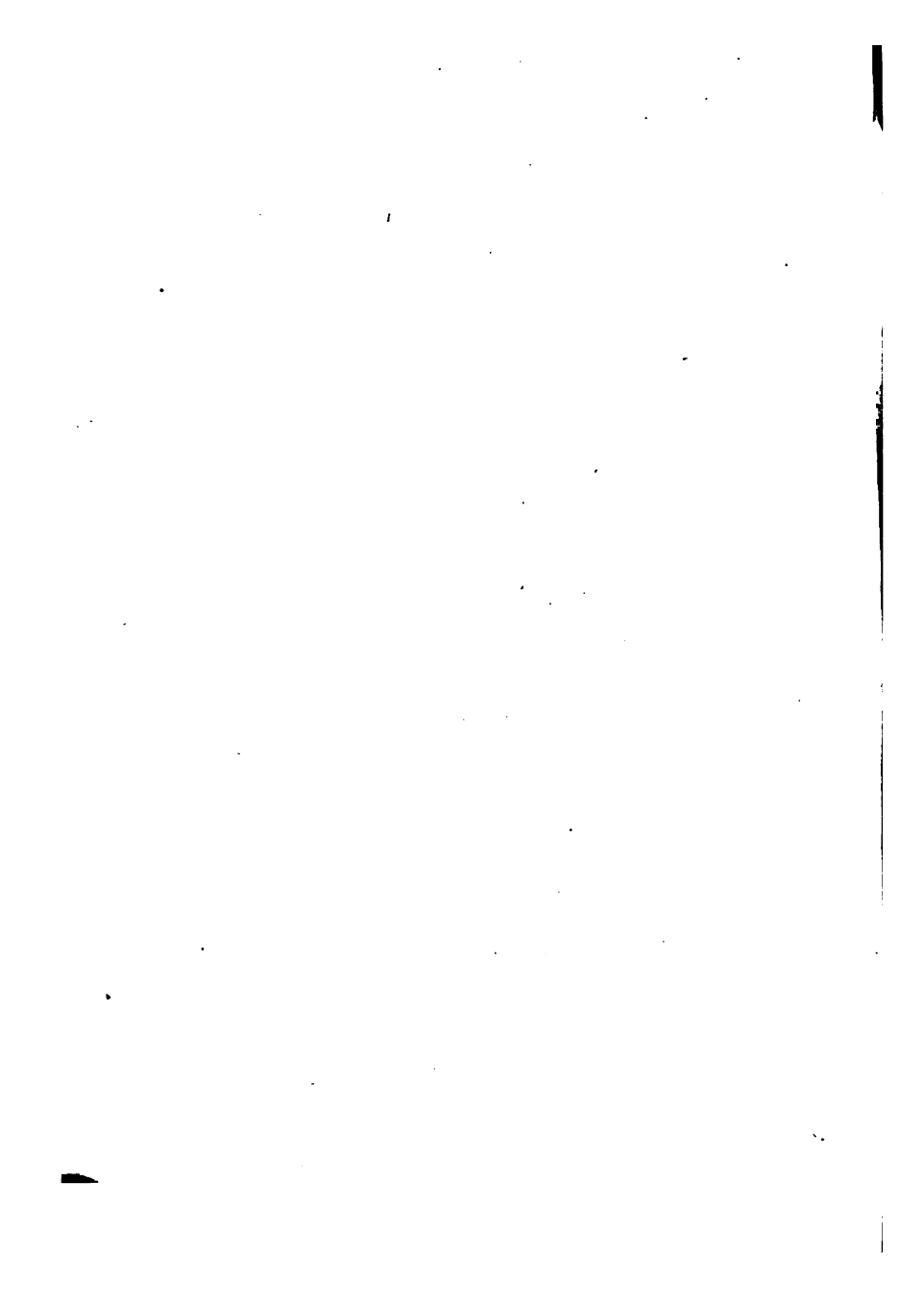
color, it seems to run along the grass like a serpent before the headless tall body that still stalks after it, inspiring at once the sense of the deformed and fantastic." ¹

To sum up the whole of the characters which we have now mentioned as distinctly marking, at one and the same time, the judgment of taste and its object: The beautiful is that which, without the least interest from our passions or desires, without the intervention of a logical conception, without the sense of an obligation to approve, without any definite perception of the fitness of means to ends, — either an outward end of utility, or a subjective end within the beautiful thing itself, — instantly awakens pleasure in *us*, together with the conviction that it is fitted to awaken pleasure in all.

¹ Coleridge, as above, Appendix to Essay iii.



IV.
THE STANDARD OF TASTE.



CHAPTER IV.

THE STANDARD OF TASTE.

WE have seen that one important particular by which the judgments of taste are distinguished from all others is their universality : their universality in the sense, namely, that all men agree in the same, that they pass without question from one mind to another. Thus they are distinguished, for instance, from judgments of sense, by which we pronounce a thing to be agreeable. Such judgments can lay no claim to universality at all. To say of a rose that it is *beautiful*, is the same as to say that it has one quality which will be contemplated with the same kind of pleasure by all. Saying that it has a delightful fragrance is asserting no such quality of it ; this fragrance may be delightful to one person, painful to another. Again, judgments of taste differ from those of the understanding, although the latter are also universal, in the mode of their universality. In what are termed universal judgments of the understanding, a certain class of objects are simply grouped together on account of their participation in some abstract quality, common to them all, as when we say, " all metals are fusible." But the uni-

versality of a judgment of taste is not so expressed. We do not say "All statues, all paintings, are beautiful," but, "This particular statue or painting is beautiful," and the universality of the judgment consists, as it exists in our own minds, in the conviction, — as it turns out in experience, in the fact, — that the same quality which we find in the object will be found there also by every one who has any capacity of judging at all. In moral judgments we approve or disapprove of an action, we pronounce it right or wrong, as it is seen to conform or not to conform to a universal and righteous law ; and we blame those who think or do otherwise than that reasonable law prescribes. But with regard to taste, though we feel entitled to expect the coincidence of that of other men with our own, yet we do not think of blaming them if they do not agree with us, and, still less, of blaming the artist, if his work does not please us.

The judgment of taste being in this particular way universal and common, or communicable, the next point to be considered is, whether the pleasure we receive from those objects which we call beautiful, precedes and determines the judgment, or whether the judgment is before the pleasure. This might seem, at first, to be a point of little or no importance. In a practical point of view, we may grant, it is of none whatever : but in investigating the true theory of art, it is a question not to be

avoided or overlooked. Much is depending on the manner in which this question shall be resolved. For it is evident that if the judgment depends on the pleasure, if we learn how to judge by finding how far we are pleased in this, that, and the other case, and in no other way, this judgment must be altogether the result of experience, and taste an empirical habit, instead of an original faculty. Each man's judgment must depend more or less on the experience and sayings of others; he could never be certain of the truth of its verdict for himself; it would have no absolute authority.

If we suppose the pleasure we derive from a beautiful object comes first, and the judgment afterwards, then the reason of the universality which distinguishes this judgment from the perception of the simply agreeable remains to be accounted for. On the above supposition, the pleasure must come immediately from the object, just as our pleasure in tasting, smelling, or from any other sensuous affection, comes directly from certain objects in contact with our particular organs, and cannot really be shared along with ourselves by others. A man's immediate sensations are the most incommunicable part of his nature. Judgments which are grounded upon nothing at all but such sensations must be equally incommunicable. But there is nothing in which men have a stronger sense of sympathy and communion with their fellowmen than with regard

to anything which is truly beautiful. This common pleasure, it is evident, must be owing to a common sense, a faculty of judgment which, in regard to these matters, is common to all.

The other, however, seems to be the view which more commonly prevails. "In the works of nature," says Dugald Stewart,¹ "we find, in many instances, beauty and sublimity involved among circumstances, which are either indifferent, or which obstruct the general effect." This we must allow. But how, then, are we to extract the pure gold from the dross. "It is only by a train of experiments," he says, "that we can separate these circumstances from the rest, and ascertain with what particular qualities the pleasing effect is connected. Accordingly the inexperienced artist, when he copies nature, will copy her servilely, that he may be certain of securing the pleasing effect." "Experience and observation alone," he adds, that is, experience and observation of the pleasing effect, "can enable" the artist "to make this discrimination; to exhibit the principles of beauty pure and unadulterated, and to form a creation of his own, more faultless than ever fell under the observation of his senses." But how, we might well ask, would it be possible for any man, by simply following experience, ever to get beyond her? How would it be possible to find in nature a

¹ *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*. Pt. ii. ch. v., Pt. ii. § 2.

standard that is above nature? Why should the artist ever feel dissatisfied with what he actually finds in nature? What should ever lead him to think of producing anything better or more perfect?

It would seem to be evident that the standard of judgment must, in some way or other, be in himself. He wants to produce something more excellent than anything he has seen. His standard of excellence then, not being anything he has seen, must be within himself. He is not fully satisfied with what he sees, because he has a presentiment of something better. This presentiment being converted into a reality by a "creation of his own, more faultless than ever fell under the observation of his senses," he feels complacency, he is satisfied. Dissatisfaction is the spur to effort, gratification the accompaniment and reward of success. His gratification arises from his judgment being satisfied.

It is the same here as it is with our moral judgments. The complacency we experience in observing or doing a right action arises from the sense, the judgment, we have, that it is right, that it is an action freely done in conformity to what is right in itself, to a universal law of right. To say that we first feel this complacency, and thence conclude the action to be right, would be reversing the true order of things. So the complacency and delight experienced in observing the agreement between a free

work of the imagination, and our understanding of what the object represented by that work of the imagination should be, is a feeling which is not the ground, but rather the inseparable concomitant of such a judgment of taste. In the moral judgment, it is not enough to approve, we are required to act. In the æsthetical, we rest in approving : the pleasure is simply contemplative. We linger in the contemplation of a beautiful work, because we find in this contemplation a pleasure that renews itself every moment, instead of being soon exhausted, as is the case with every excitement of mere sensuous affections.

The sentiment of the beautiful, so far from having anything in common with such excitements of mere sensuous affections, belongs to a wholly different, and higher, order of perceptions. The dullest sense will be moved and gratified by a brilliant flaring color, or a sharp contrast of colors ; by anything which appears quaint or novel, any thing which excites surprise, or exceeds the ordinary bounds of nature, and every-day experience. Such effects, therefore, are often sought after by inferior artists, as if they were necessary to awaken and sustain an interest in their works. But there cannot be a greater mistake. Impressions of this kind soon wear out. The pleasure of excitement depends upon novelty. We do not allow ourselves to be surprised but once.

A true taste is neither promoted nor gratified by such mere sensuous excitements. It makes use of the senses, but does not rest in them ; they are its means, but not its end. Hence in painting, in sculpture, in all the plastic arts, in architecture, and in gardening, so far as that is raised to the rank of a fine art, the main thing is the intelligible form, the *design*. The colors, the materials employed, are comparatively of minor importance ; though it is expected, of course, that these will stand in some relation of conformity to the proposed end. They are of importance only as conditions, necessary elements, which must be wholly subordinated and sunk, wholly lost sight of, in the design, the intelligible form, not construable to sense, but addressing itself solely to the inward eye.

From all that has now been said respecting judgments of taste, the impossibility of any outward objective rule by which to determine its decisions must be obvious. By an objective rule, is meant a principle of the understanding formally laid down in the shape of a distinct proposition, or a series of such propositions. We have such rules, in abundance, in the common works which profess to treat of practical art, especially in the works on rhetoric. If such rules could be distinctly laid down, like the rules for any ordinary mechanical process, all judgments of taste might be compelled to submit to them ; and we should be obliged to admit that any

work which fully complied with all the required conditions must be possessed of merit, whether we felt it to be so or not. But it belongs to the very nature of a judgment of taste that it cannot be so constrained ; and it is plain that all the arguments in the world would be of no use to bring any man to own, that a work really possessed beauty, which left no impression of the sort on his own feelings.

When a poet, for example, or any other writer or artist possessed of true power, complies with the prevailing maxims and opinions of his age, or with the judgment of his friends, yielding up his own, it is not because he has really become persuaded of the correctness of these maxims ; but because, although the public taste may be thoroughly corrupted, and he may know it, he still chooses to yield to the common delusion, in order to win the temporary approbation he covets, or for some other advantage he expects to gain by it. When his judgment really alters, as it would be likely to do in the course of its further development and cultivation, it will, if he exercise a manly independence, change freely ; not under the influence of any outward and formal rules, but by virtue of its own inherent law of progression. The degree of taste must always hold proportion to the natural vigor of its principles ; its healthy development will depend on the fairness and freedom with which it is exercised, and on the culture bestowed on the mental powers generally.

At the same time it is not denied that there are certain outward and empirical *standards* of taste, quite worthy of being called and considered as such. Standards of this sort are rightly held up as models. But it must be remembered, that, in their true use as models, they are not to be slavishly copied, any more than nature is to be servilely imitated. There is no original faculty of the mind, which, if left to itself, and deprived of all foreign aid, would not fall into many mistakes and take many false directions, before finding the right one. The models which every age has agreed in admiring serve to place others on the track to seek in themselves the principles by which their predecessors wrought, and so take their own independent, and, as it sometimes proves, better course. The good influence of models depends partly indeed on the susceptibility, but still more on the activity, of the mind in contemplating them. No imitation can avail anything but the imitation of principles. But if it is impossible to lay down any outward rules to form the judgment, and direct the taste, with regard to works in which the imagination is the chief constructive power ; if, even in the appraisalment of such works, the principles of a just and discriminating perception of excellence must be evolved, in the case of each individual, out of his own mind, — we may inquire, what then is the common ground of our judgment in matters of taste, by virtue of which we

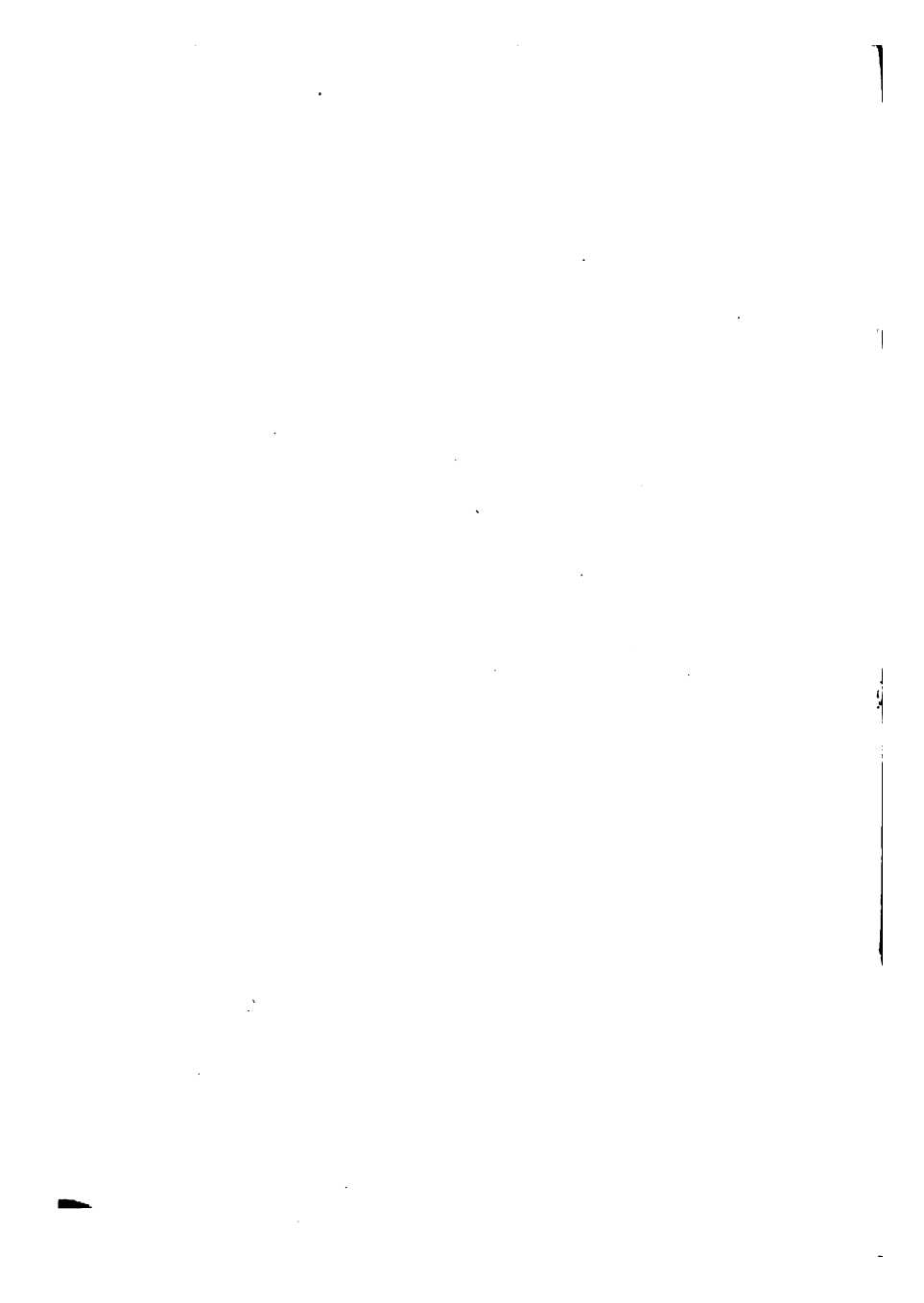
claim the assent of others to our own? The answer must be, that the principle of taste by virtue of which the universal assent is claimed and expected for its verdicts is the same with the regulative principle of the faculty of judgment generally. These judgments flow directly from the common principle of judgment in all men. The subjective principle of all judgments is a faculty which presupposes two other powers, a power to seize and combine the manifold elements of sensuous intuition, namely, the imagination, and another power to present the manifold elements thus brought together, under the unity of a conception, namely, the understanding. Now, in the case of all other judgments, the imagination is not left to its own free play, but is limited and restrained by a definite conception; a formal conception of the understanding lies at the basis of the judgment as its necessary condition. But we may see, at once, that the case cannot be the same with judgments of taste. It is not only true that whatever tends to curb and restrain the free working of the imagination must tend, in the same degree, to destroy the feeling of beauty; but it is true that the understanding generally is in itself wholly without power to apprehend and appreciate that quality in objects which we call the beautiful. When an object is contemplated simply with the purpose of understanding it, whether an object of nature or of art, the emotion of taste instantly van-

ishes, and is gone. Such being the case, how are we to regard the relation of these two faculties, the imagination and the understanding, in judgments of taste? It is plain, that, since the imagination, in order to work freely, as it should do in Art, cannot be limited by any definite conception of the understanding, it must have a power of spontaneously and unconsciously conforming to the laws which reason gives the understanding in forming conceptions; and the common ground of all judgments of tastes is the sense of perfect harmony, which thus arises, between the play of the imagination in its freedom, and the necessary laws of all thought; in other words, the sense of harmony between the way in which we present things, give them shape and form, namely, the imagination generally, and the way in which they ought to be presented, according to the laws of reason in the understanding. Thus in the perception of what is beautiful in nature, our judgment reposes on the sense of the freedom, unconfined by any outward rule, or consciousness of an inward law, with which she indulges in such an endless and sportive diversity of forms, while, at the same time, she remains true to an inward law of order and adaptation. So in contemplating a true work of art, just so far as we enter into its spirit, and feel its beauty, we find our imagination, instead of being restrained and curbed, as in the working out of a scientific problem, set wholly at

liberty, and yet never transgressing the bounds of truth and reason. This sense of harmony between two powers whose relation to each other constitutes the condition of all judgment, and perhaps of all consciousness, though purely subjective, something that must be felt by each individual, but cannot be expressed, is the common principle in all the fine arts. It is a subjective, and not an objective, principle of judgment, governed by an inward, and not an outward, rule. But while it is subjective, and that, in the sense, that it can have no other mode of existence than in the feeling of each individual who judges; still, — as it is one and the same with the inward principle of the faculty of judgment generally, as it is not governed in the least by the particular sensuous affections, the particular modes of conception, the particular understanding of this or that individual, in which there is so much difference; but is one with the inner principle lying at the ground of all knowledge, and therefore may, and indeed must, be presumed to be the same in all men, — we may rightly assume that the fundamental principle of the faculty of taste is the same in all men; and that, in their judgments as to the beautiful, all will agree; and that, in the emotions felt by us in contemplating this class of objects, we are entitled to claim and expect the sympathy of others.

V.

CULTURE OF THE IMAGINATION.



CHAPTER V.

CULTURE OF THE IMAGINATION.

IN the last chapter, we considered the sentiment of the beautiful on the side of its *identity*, as to *principle*, in *all men*. I endeavored to explain what it is that constitutes the ground of universal sympathy by which all are led to see and feel alike with regard to a certain class of objects, notwithstanding the judgment called forth is purely subjective, independent of outward rules, and free from all constraint whatsoever. Let us now proceed to consider the same principle on the side of its *diversity*; and here it is important to distinguish two sorts of diversity. The first is that which necessarily arises in all cases of the particularization of the universal. It belongs to the nature of every universal principle or law, to manifest diversity in its particular applications. But a freedom of this sort is the very fact that marks the force and vitality of a principle, as distinguished from the fixedness and uniformity of a mere abstract rule. The other sort of diversity is that which results from a fundamental *difference of principles*. Keeping this distinction in mind, we shall be prepared to understand, in regard to the

subject now before us, how widely, on the one hand, the tastes of a particular age or nation, or of individuals belonging to the same age or nation, may seem to differ, while at bottom the principle of judgment shall be essentially one ; while, on the other hand, the tastes of certain times and nations may seem not very widely different, — people may judge very much alike, — and yet the principles which determine their judgments may be very different. The first we may call natural, the second class, conventional, diversities of taste. As an illustration of the first, we may mention the well known difference between the Orientals and the Western nations generally, between the Egyptians and the Greeks. between the ancients and the moderns, between the Classicists and the Romanticists. In all these cases of diversity, the principle of judgment remains essentially the same ; and the proof of this is, that a beautiful production, whether partaking of the Oriental or the Western character, whether of the Egyptian or the Grecian, the ancient or the modern, the Classical or the Romantic, type, will still be admired and approved by all fair and unprejudiced judges alike, in all periods of time. But the case is entirely different with conventional diversities of taste. These arise from the influence of causes altogether extraneous from those which can rightfully be admitted to exert any determining influence in matters of this sort ; from the operations of the

private interests, the peculiar feelings growing out of the temperament and constitution of individuals, or of national and traditional prejudices, the tendency of which is to give a wrong direction to the development of the æsthetic judgment. The several schools of art, which have been found, almost without an exception, to degenerate, by insensible degrees, into a stiff and lifeless uniformity of style, are for the most part separated from each other, and brought finally into antagonism, by the influence of such causes as I have last described. But it is evident, from one of the considerations which have already been presented with regard to the disinterested character of pure taste, that all diversity of the nature of conventionalism, and issuing from that root, must inevitably lead to corruption. While the utmost freedom, and an unlimited range, may be allowed to the efforts of artistic power and skill, so long as they are still bottomed on the same fundamental principle of judgment, seated in the common heart of humanity ; yet the least departure from this common principle, however much it may fall in with the prevailing spirit and fashions of a particular age or people, is sure to lead astray. Yet this conventional diversity of which I am now speaking is a very common thing. In the present day it prevails to an extraordinary degree. The very smallest number of those who aspire to be artists, in any of the departments of art, have the courage to rely entirely

upon the simple impulses of their own genius, or to venture upon many steps without having hold of their leading strings. It is enough for some author with a certain claim to originality to seize upon a vein of thought or style of remark which takes with his age, to be immediately followed by a host of imitators, who think they must meet with the same success by pursuing the same track. In this case, the style is the man, indeed, but not the man who writes ; he has not the least good claim to it, but it is the man he imitates.

In this way the taste of a whole nation may be led, by some brilliant but eccentric star, into a false track, in which every new step is but a wider departure from nature and truth.

Thus there are two causes of mistake constantly operating. The first : that the truly original minds allow themselves, no doubt unconsciously, to be governed too much by the artificial taste superinduced by a state of society where wealth and rank, rather than unsophisticated nature, prescribe the rule of judgment, dictate what shall be approved and what shall be admired ; and the second : that at the present day, while every second person you meet in the cultivated circles aspires to be an artist or an author, his inspiring impulse is simply his own persuasion of his ability to reflect the spirit of the society in which he moves, quite as well as those who have already shown how it is to be done. It is

indeed plain that a class possessing no other claim to regard than merely the unlimited means at their command of gratifying each whim and fancy that may happen to come over them possess no rightful authority to dictate within the domain of taste. It is plain that what they are after is not so much the beautiful as the agreeable ; not so much truth as excitement. But this consideration is of little or no account when weighed against another, that in their hands alone is the patronage and reward of merit. Nor is it at all to be wondered at, that, when the taste of society has been converted into such an altogether worldly craving after excitement, the return to simple truth and nature by any mind so independently original as to stand above such control should be sure to meet with ridicule, or the still more scornful punishment of indifference. But happily there is one hope for the world left. A true taste can always see clearly through a false one, though the false can never hope to understand the true. "Merely think," says Wordsworth to a friend, just after the appearance of his collected poems, "merely think of the pure, absolute, honest ignorance in which all worldings of every rank and situation must be enveloped with respect to the thoughts, feelings, and images, on which the life of my poems depends. The things which I have taken, whether from within or from without, what have they to do with routs, dinners, morning calls, hurry from door

to door, from street to street, on foot or in carriage ; with Mr. Pitt or Mr. Fox, Mr. Paul or Sir Francis Burdett, the Westminster election or the borough of Honiton ? In a word, for I cannot stop to make my way through the hurry of images that present themselves to me, — What have they to do with endless talking about things nobody cares anything for except so far as their own vanity is concerned, and this with persons they care nothing for but as their vanity or *selfishness* is concerned ? What have they to do (to say all at once) with a life without love ? In such a life there can be no thought ; for we have no thought (save thoughts of pain) but as far as we have love and admiration.”

“It is an awful truth that there neither is nor can be any genuine enjoyment of poetry among nineteen out of twenty of those persons who live, or wish to live, in the broad light of the world — among those who are, or are striving to make themselves, people of consideration in society. This is a truth, and an awful one, because to be incapable of a feeling of poetry, in my sense of the word, is to be without love of human nature, and reverence for God.”¹

He who would preserve the simplicity of nature, and not lose the quick sense of truth in following after a false and jaded refinement, must begin the cultivation of his taste by laying the foundation in

¹ *Memoirs of Wordsworth*, Letter to Lady Beaumont, May 21, 1807.

a broad and ample culture of his whole mind. He should aim at nothing less than that kind of culture which frees the mind from its idols of every sort, to use an image of Lord Bacon, and fosters the habit of enlarged and generous thought. He should, especially at this day, be ever on his guard against those radically vicious and debasing influences which, under the name of works of the imagination, believe, by the spirit which animates them, all title to the name they assume. He should aim at that cultivation of both the mind and the heart which brings a man nearer to the position at which he can easily survey, and, whenever he pleases to do so, assume, the point of view occupied by others who may judge differently from himself, and account to himself for the difference. — It is such cultivation alone which leads to that harmonious consistency of thought where all the particular matters that are at any moment before the mind are habitually referred to the rational principles to which they belong, and whereby their relations to other things are determined. All this tends, more or less directly, both to develop, and also to purify the taste. This faculty must, it is true, like every other mental power, in order to a complete development, be habitually exercised on its own appropriate objects. It must be awakened to the consciousness of itself, and trained to place confidence in its own decisions by careful study of those works which, by the common

consent of mankind, have already met and satisfied the highest demands. But, even to a commencing interest in productions of this class, there must have been some previous general training of the mind. The charm of such works is of a high intellectual order. It is not addressed to the superficial passions of our nature, nor to the dogmatic opinions, the abstract theories, of this or that particular school of criticism, nor to the prejudices of a single age or nation, but to the purely human in man, to that which belongs in common to the kind. It is evident, therefore, that there can be no very high cultivation of taste, without some considerable degree of that intellectual and moral training which raises a man above himself, or rather elevates him to that true self, in which the narrow interests of the individual are merged, and comparatively lost and forgotten, in those of the whole race.

Since the imagination is the faculty which is called into the most active exercise, both in producing, and judging, works of art, it is evident how much must depend on the right cultivation of this great power, how important it is that this *regal* faculty — for so I think the imaginative power which is concerned in the creations of art ought to be called, should be rightly understood and appreciated at its just value. I am free to say, that I have never found anything as yet in the writings of the most eminent of our English critics which seems to indicate that

they have seized upon the essential thing which constitutes the power and grandeur of this attribute in man, which has scattered along the line of time, through the whole history of culture, such manifest proofs of its true nature, that it is wonderful how it could ever be misapprehended. If we consider the imagination, indeed, from the point of view of that philosophy which derives all our ideas from sense and experience, it would follow necessarily that it can be nothing more than what it is often represented to be, a mere power of repeating, only in a more abstract and feeble manner, combinations which have already become familiar, as matters of outward observation. But then this view is contradicted, at once, by any single example of a work of high art which you may please to select. What the heart of man perceives and feels in such a work is not imitation, but inspiration, for such is the word prompted by the enthusiasm of the moment, to express the sense of a power above common nature, which must have been present in the individual capable of producing such a work. We feel that he is not an imitator, but an originator ; that he is not the slave of copy, but the free author of his own work. And we feel with regard to ourselves, that our own imagination catches inspiration from what we behold, and works with the same freedom as the artist himself had done, whose work is before our eyes.

For it should be observed, that, in speaking of the cultivation of the imagination, as a faculty equally indispensable, equally called forth, in the production and in the contemplation of works of art, we speak of a power which, in this instance of its exercise, must ever be permitted to retain its freedom. It is common to speak of cultivating the imagination by placing it under due restraint, by setting up for it certain limits, and keeping it within bounds. But it is essential to the imagination, whether considered as the original productive power in the artist or the poet, or as that similar power which he addresses and quickens to activity in our own souls, that it should not be so confined. It must, therefore, have the principle of its limitation only within itself. It must not be hampered even by the material it works with, but conquer and subdue it wholly. There is a striking analogy in this respect between the productive agency of the imagination, and the working of the formative processes, and of the principle of life, in nature. In nature we see form impenetrating the entire matter, residing in it as its true essence and shaping power. Even a crystal, we look upon as produced, not by outward and mechanical force, as the lapidary works down the facets of a ring jewel, but by some law of determination that lies within itself, or works through the whole matter. So, eminently, through the entire domain of animated nature, we look upon the outward forms as

the result of an indwelling principle which, disposes of every particle of matter entering into their composition, with a reference alike throughout to its own predetermined end. As altogether analogous to this principle of form and of life in nature may we regard the imagination of the artist or the poet. It works freely and organically, giving itself its rule, or being its own rule ; and even when it imitates nature, as in fact it can never safely depart from nature, yet imitating her with a "rival originality." To set limits to the imagination, then, by any set of outward rules for its regulation, is to cramp rather than to cultivate it, — to make it subservient to the understanding, rather than its coördinate, rather than an independent co-worker with it, or, perhaps to speak with more truth, an originating power, which in producing gives to each thing its *appropriate form*, and in so doing spontaneously harmonizes with the laws of understanding.

If the imagination then, in art, and in enjoying the works of art, must have the principle of its guidance and limitation within itself, since otherwise it could not be free, which it plainly must be in this province, it follows that the only way of cultivating such a power is by the right exercise of it. I say by its *right* exercise ; and as we cannot have, in this case, maxims of right, as in morals, the imagination must be set in the right direction by *examples*, by careful and profound study of those

actual productions which, by the general verdict of mankind, are pronounced the most perfect of their kind. In thus reverently submitting to the guidance of the best examples of its own freedom, the imagination will learn to govern itself. This is the safest, the surest, the most appropriate discipline which it can exercise itself in. Sadly mistaken will he find himself to be who thinks that anything short of the best is good enough for the imagination, or that it may be safely left to take care of itself. We must study those works which all fit judges in all times have agreed in admiring, and, supposing that we cannot at first see what there is in them to deserve such admiration, — as how could it be expected that we should, since their power lies deep, and addresses what is deepest in ourselves, — yet study and study over again, peruse and reperuse: the feeling of their power will grow in the same proportion with the development of the same power in ourselves.

But while some deference is due, as just stated, to the judgment of others, especially when this judgment is confirmed by the general consent of an age, and, still more, of successive ages; yet it is true notwithstanding, that a correct taste cannot be transmitted, and gain authority, by this, any more than it can by any other outward means. It never comes down by tradition, as the history of all art proves; but the beautiful appeals, in each

case, directly to the inner decisions and independent judgment of the individual.

If some productions of taste and of literature are justly considered, and set up, as standards of their kind ; still the end really had in view by this, in the case of those persons who understand themselves, is, not to overrule any man's judgment, but only to solicit and call it forth. Every true work of art addresses itself to man ; it is meant only for man. It appeals to an original power, which each man has, of judging, not only what a thing is, in fact ; but how nearly it comes up to what it ought to be, — to what would be right and suitable in the given case and under the given circumstances. Hence it would appear that the highest model, the original standard of all, is, in some way, if not actually, then potentially, in the individual mind, — is an *idea*, which each must either find, or call out, within himself ; else you may be told that this or that existing work of art is to be taken as a model, and believe it, indeed, on the authority of somebody else ; but as for knowing or feeling that it really is so, — how would that be possible ? Now what are we to understand by this *idea* which is thus appealed to as the common measure of excellence in all the arts ? It may be observed, then, in the first place, that the word, taken in this sense, as a measure or standard of excellence, is not at all applicable, nor is it ever applied, to the elementary beautiful ; and

but very seldom is it strictly applicable to the beautiful in nature. Cicero wrote thus concerning the idea of the perfect orator. "We behold," he says, "the *form* of eloquence in our minds, the actual image of which we seek to realize in the organ of hearing."¹ The old Italian painters, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael,² Guido,³ all speak of an idea of human beauty, far superior to anything they had ever seen really existing, and which they strove to seize and embody in colors. But it is seldom or never that we hear men speak of the idea of a beautiful day, or country, or even of a beautiful animal. The word seems to be restricted in a great measure, within this particular province of art, to man ; and to human or divine qualities and characteristics, which are capable of being expressed only in the form, or in the actions, of the human being. If anything of the ideal character is given, as it must be confessed that it sometimes is, to inferior beings, this end is to be attained only by investing them, either in the mode of representing them, or in our own imagination, with some partial expression of attributes which are strictly peculiar to humanity.

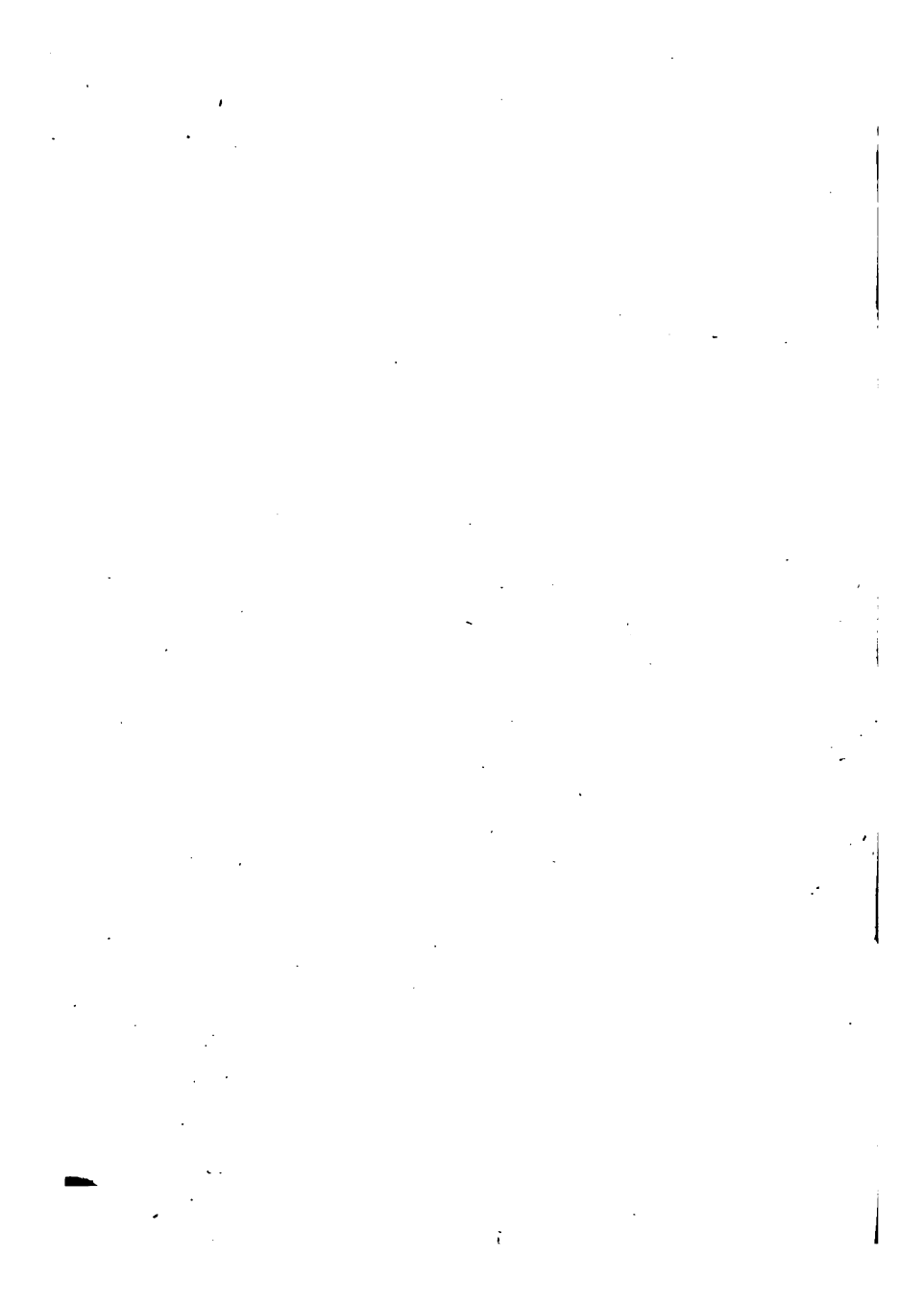
¹ Cic., *Orator*, c. iii.

² Letter to Count Baldassare Castiglione.

³ Letter to Massano, quoted in Dryden's *Parallel of Poetry and Painting*.

VI.

INTERESTS AWAKENED IN CONNEC-
TION WITH THE BEAUTIFUL.



CHAPTER VI.

SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED. INTERESTS AWAKENED
IN CONNECTION WITH THE BEAUTIFUL.

X It is evident that the *idea* of man, if by this is to be understood the idea of his whole essence, as made for immortality, and capable of an indefinite progression in all intellectual, moral, and spiritual excellence, — it is evident that this idea of man cannot be adequately represented by any of the arts of design, in any form of surface or color addressed to sense. Yet man's form is, in some sort, the expression of his inner nature; his body is inseparable from him here, and is not to be long separated from him hereafter. We may distinguish the *normal* idea of man, as the highest type of physical organization and conformation to be found on this earth, and as, in the highest degree, and in all respects, suited to the physical existence of a free, rational being; and the *rational* idea of him, which cannot be adequately represented under any form of sense, but which is capable of being suggested, of being indicated, by the whole play of expression in the muscles of the body and features of the countenance, particularly in that wonderful

organ, the eye, which has been called the seat of the soul ; in a word, in all the ways which man has of showing what is in him.

The normal idea is the human frame conceived at the point of completeness and perfection, considered as the type of all form possessing significance, expressive of meaning ; and as reconciling, at once, the utmost diversity of parts, with symmetry of proportions, and unity of purpose. In man, matter is completely subdued to the expression of spirit. This ideal of the human frame reveals, even in repose, the presence of a power of self-control ; of concentrating energy at any one point, whether in look, in posture, or in action ; of expressing by the slightest changes in the relation of parts the moods of the indwelling soul which vitalizes every part alike. It is this idea which the painter and the sculptor keep constantly before the imagination, not losing sight of it even when purposely departing from it ; since the infinite diversities and adaptations of the same common form must ever have reference to the fundamental type of that form.

The rational or spiritual idea, on the other hand, has reference to man's end, as a being in himself free, and so accountable and immortal, as well as animal and sentient : and therefore capable of goodness and capable of crime ; capable of great and noble affections, as well as of the meanest passions ; of an entire self-sacrifice, or of an entire

abandonment to self. This idea, more or less distinctly or vaguely felt, is the common standard by which is more or less consciously or unconsciously measured the power of him who addresses us through the images or symbols of Art. We say he is the greatest poet, orator, painter, musician, — who possesses and exercises the mightiest power over the passions. But by the passions are not meant here the ordinary sympathies of our common human nature which are excited every day, but those which lie back in the deeper recesses of the heart. These, when awakened, so startle or thrill us, because they give us some present sense of what lies latent in our own being. We feel that the mind which can so call forth that which is innermost in ourselves, really knows, or seems to know, what is in man.

It will be necessary to speak more fully of these ideas, and of that which is usually called the ideal in art, in another chapter. The subject is introduced here simply for the purpose of showing, in general, the nature of that standard to which men ultimately have reference, in their judgment of the beautiful in art. But if this is a true representation of the matter, — and I see not how it could be otherwise represented so as to account for all the phenomena in the case, — then it must be quite apparent, that examples in art, or examples proposed for art in nature, are not to be imitated immediately, and, if I may so speak, from the surface, any

more than examples are to be imitated immediately and outwardly in morals. The examples of virtuous conduct which are held forth for our imitation in morals serve their true purpose only so far as they lead us back to the source from which such conduct springs ; not only because all right conduct must proceed from right principles, but because duty, and the way in which it is to be done, is continually defined by the circumstances of the individual, and it is only by having the principle in his own heart, that he can know with certainty how to act in whatever circumstances he may find himself. ✕ In like manner, fitness, propriety, adaptation to the circumstances, uniform consistency and keeping, are the things most essential to be observed in Art, and as these must vary continually, so that what would be fit and proper in one case, would not be so in another, it is quite evident that the direct imitation of models, however perfect in these respects, could avail but little of itself. ✕ It is only so far as they awaken active thought, as they draw forth, and make us more conversant with, the ideas which they express in our own minds, that such models are useful. To effect anything really great, a man's own mind must be aglow at the centre ; the utmost skill of mechanical execution cannot infuse one particle more of life into his production than was first of all in himself. ¹

¹ " Les œuvres vraiment belles ne se commandent pas ; l'homme

It has been seen that the perception of the beautiful does not depend on any particular interest of our own which we connect with the object, and that the characteristic mark of a pure judgment of taste is its disinterestedness. But it does not follow from this, that, when once such judgment has been passed, the object may not then be connected with an interest. If its beauty does not depend on any interest, it does not follow that it may not awaken one. We are naturally and necessarily interested in whatever gives us pleasure. Besides, that which arouses the slumbering feelings, fills the heart to fullness, transports us into an ideal world, sets before us the struggles of man's will with an outward fate or with his own passions; which presents, not abstractly, but in a vivid picture, enlisting the deepest sympathies, what is most noble and heroic in virtue, or terrible in crime, — that which can thus supply, as it were, the deficiency of our ordinary every-day experience, and give us an insight into human nature such as we might never otherwise gain, must be attended with the same interest which we have in everything else that adds to the conscious knowledge of ourselves. } But if many of

capable de penser par lui-meme n'acceptera jamais un joug qui suppose comme première condition chez ceux qui le portent la médiocrité; et la tentation d'une littérature officielle echouera toujours devant la double impossibilité de donner de l'originalité à ceux qui n'en ont pas et de discipliner ceux qui en ont."

Renan, Essais de Morale, p. 6.

the fine arts possess this power in an eminent degree, still this is not the end which they professedly aim at, nor is it the secret of the charm which they have in common with all art. The aim of the artist, as distinguished from that of the moral teacher or the philosopher, is to realize the beautiful: if he does more, and in securing his main object, which is to please, also conveys instruction, which he nearly always will, since the beautiful and the true are so closely related that nothing can be beautiful which is false to nature; yet is this aside of, or rather accessory to, his conscious aim; and all the interest grounded on this pleasure of instruction is but indirectly connected with the beautiful itself, — is, so far as Art is concerned, an accident, not the essential thing.

Again, we may attach an interest to a work of taste or of art, not only on account of its effect upon ourselves, but because it gives pleasure to others. This, indeed, constitutes a great part, if not the chief part, of the interest which many take in buildings and the laying out of grounds, and in the internal decorations of fine paintings and statuary. Works of architecture, especially, whether public or private, being necessarily exposed at all times to the public view, it is difficult to conceive how, in this art, the interest of giving pleasure to others should not greatly predominate over any interest of private delight which the individual projector or proprietor

can be supposed to entertain. If the man of wealth, in building his city or country residence, consulted only his own particular pleasure or convenience; if he were not prompted by vanity, or by some other and nobler social impulse, to respect the verdict of praise or censure, and the flitting emotion of pleasure or disgust which every casual observer, every passer-by, must needs feel, if he does not express it, how different, — in many cases, doubtless, how inferior, and in some cases, probably, how much more simple and less pretentious, — would be the style of the private residences of the wealthy. For the same reason, again, quite as much, perhaps, as to gratify his own taste, every man of wealth and culture pays some attention to the decoration of his apartments, and to furnishing them, as far as his means will allow, with the most approved works of plastic art. In Europe, every palace has its gallery, and every gallery its gem. No money has been thought too much to pay for the undoubtedly genuine work of a great master. Now this interest, it must be allowed, may not seldom spring from a true love of Art on its own account. Sometimes, however, it is evidently but the idle vanity of possessing what nobody else can possess; the vanity of having, rather than any taste for enjoying; which is quite a different thing, — which cannot be exclusive, but, on the contrary, demands participation and sympathy.

This interest of possession is measured, of course, by the value of the object in public estimation. It rises and falls with the market; it is the interest of the property-owner and the salesman. Another kind of interest is that of the amateur, the virtuoso, the dilettante, or by whatever other foreign name (since it is absent from our vocabulary) the man is to be called who neither produces anything himself, nor owns anything, but whose whole delight consists in seeing what nobody else can see, nor wishes to see, as he does. As a general thing, this whole class lack the important requisite of a fair and open sense for the truly great and noble in art. They are a vain, self-opinionated set, given to some particular school, led away by names. Their opinions, within their own fields of criticism, are often of the least value, and far less to be relied on than the first unbiased impression of any common man of ordinary good sense and cultivation.

Finally, an interest may also be taken in the beautiful, both of art and of nature, which is of a purely intellectual or moral character, and where there is no room for the by-play of any such feelings as have just been alluded to. This purely intellectual or moral interest is, perhaps, most commonly felt in contemplating the pleasing, wild, or picturesque in nature. The beautiful in nature lies open to all. There is nothing here which can be appropriated otherwise than as it is enjoyed; nothing that

can be made the property, and thus gratify the vanity, of an individual ; nothing that can be used as a means to any private or selfish end. In art, men may easily affect an interest which they do not feel ; or feel an interest just because it may subserve some other purpose of selfish gratification. But the interest in nature is not liable to be so perverted. It is more closely allied to a pure moral feeling. There must be, at least, a leisure from bad passions, a freedom from low, sensuous desires, to leave the heart open for the impression of the simple beauty of nature. Besides, calmness, serenity, unobtrusive cheerfulness, is the prevailing character of that which is most attractive in natural scenery. Everything in nature seems at peace with itself ; to sympathize with anything of which this is the characteristic expression, requires a mind which also is at peace with itself. The works of nature, again, are on an unlimited scale of greatness. Her pictures are without a frame ; each of them is all that the eye can take in at once. " Nature," says one ; " stretcheth out her arms to embrace man, only let his thoughts be of equal greatness." She also would elevate him, only let his thoughts follow whither she points. When, instead of striving to penetrate into her secret laws, we give ourselves up to the grand impression of her features, and prefer to lend ourselves to the feelings she inspires, rather than to gratify the curiosity which particular phenomena

may awaken, we find our thoughts immediately led upward to something higher than herself, even to God. This, no doubt, was the poet's meaning who said, "The undevout astronomer is mad." What connection between the mathematical calculations of the astronomer, whose problem is to account fully for everything by mechanical laws, — what connection between this calculation of balancing forces and devotion? Was not Laplace the man who said, "I find here no necessity for God?" But who can look at the grand spectacle of the starry heavens as a whole, fairly surrendering himself to the full influence of that magnificent display, and not do one or the other, either worship the stars, or devoutly recognize the God who made them? So also the boundless prairie, the mighty ocean, the heaving mountains, and even the simple, peaceful lake which they may encircle and guard, are objects which have ever been justly considered as associating with them a certain moral, and, to some minds, religious, interest, depending, indeed, in some measure, for its depth and intensity, upon the temper of soul with which they happen to be contemplated. There are some remarks on this point by Alison, which for beauty and propriety can hardly be exceeded. "It may not be our fortune, perhaps," he says, "to be born amid nature's nobler scenes. But wander where we will, trees wave, rivers flow, mountains ascend, clouds darken, or winds animate the face

of heaven ; and over the whole scenery the sun sheds the cheerfulness of his morning, the splendor of his noonday, or the tenderness of his evening light. There is not one of these features of scenery which is not fitted to awaken us to moral emotion ; to lead us, when once the key of our imagination is struck, to trains of fascination and of endless imagery ; and, in the indulgence of them, to make our bosom either glow with conceptions of mental excellence, or melt in dreams of moral good. Even upon the man of the most uncultivated taste, the scenes of nature have some inexplicable charm ; there is not a chord, perhaps, of the human heart, which may not be awakened by their influence : and I believe there is no man of genuine taste who has not often felt, in the lone majesty of nature, some unseen spirit to dwell, which, in his happier hours, touched, as if with a magic hand, all the springs of his moral sensibility, and rekindled in his heart those conceptions of the moral or intellectual excellence of his nature which it is the melancholy tendency of the vulgar pursuits of life to diminish, if not altogether to destroy.”¹

These remarks of a Scottish philosopher recall to me the still more interesting confession of the sweetest of Scottish poets. “I have,” says Burns, “some favorite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain daisy, the harebell, the fox-glove, the

¹ *On the Nature and Principles of Taste.* Essay ii. ch. vi. sect. 6.

wild brier-rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of gray plover, without feeling an elevation of soul, like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Tell me, my friend, to what can this be owing? [^] Are we a piece of machinery, which, like the Æolian harp, passive, takes the impression of the passing accident, or do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such proofs of those awful and important realities, a God that made all things, man's immaterial and immortal nature, and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave."¹

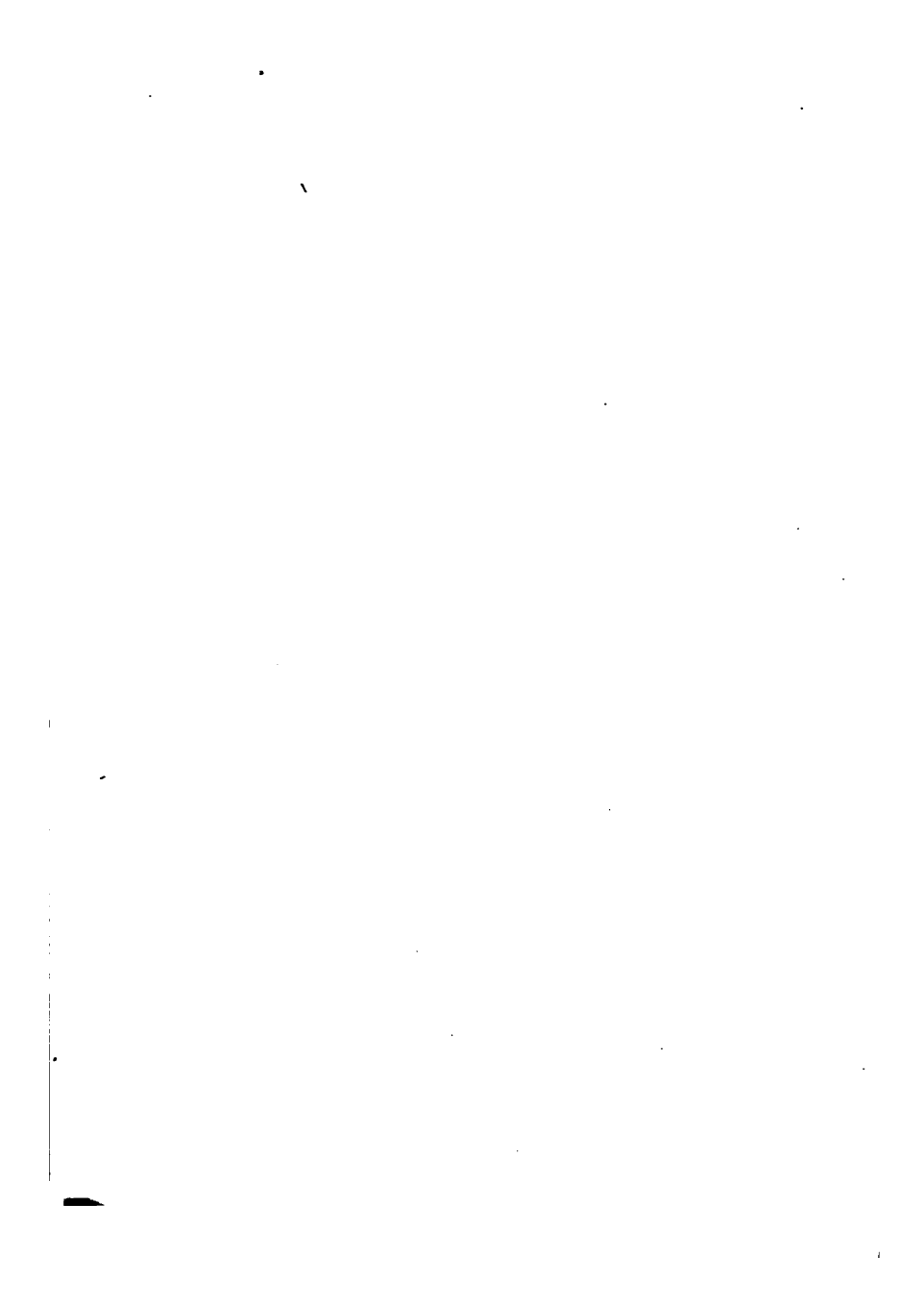
There is this distinction, then, between the kind of interest immediately awakened by the impressive features, the striking objects or incidents of nature, and that which is indirectly called forth by the beautiful works of art. It must be conceded that nature has entirely the advantage over art, so far as this, that while art is capable of being prostituted to unworthy ends, the beautiful in nature is never liable to be so abused. The influence going forth from her, if felt at all, is felt as an ennobling, elevating, purifying influence, and the more so, the farther we get from the works of man, and penetrate into the solitudes where she works in silence and without molestation.

¹ Letter to Mrs. Dunlop, January 1, 1789.

VII.

RELATION OF ART TO NATURE.

17



CHAPTER VII.

RELATION OF ART TO NATURE.

THERE is another point not to be overlooked in speaking of what belongs essentially to a work of art. In all such productions, the hand of man must be clearly recognized. We must be distinctly aware that what we contemplate is a production of art, and not of nature. It might seem as if there could be no danger of ever mistaking the one for the other, and in fact there is none. But still, the essence of art is supposed by many to consist in imitation; hence it would seem to follow, if they are right, that the nearer the copy came to the original, — the nearer it was brought to a complete illusion, — the nearer art would approach to its perfection. This is the notion which many entertain, as if the end of art were deception. The true principle, on the other hand, is, that we must always see in such works the forming hand and mind of man, and yet the productive power must seem to have acted just as free from constraint, and as unconfined by rules, as if its work were, in fact, an unconscious production of nature. In the first place, in order to feel the power of art, its work

must not only be clearly distinguishable, but actually distinguished, from nature. I mean, the perfection of art does not consist in so deceiving the senses as to make one believe that, instead of the mere representation of a thing, he has before him the real object represented. I am always glad to avail myself of the authority of good English writers on these subjects, wherever I find them expressing the truth so exactly as, on the point before us, seems to me to have been done by the author of "Modern Painters." "Whenever anything looks like what it is not, the resemblance being so great as *nearly* to deceive, we feel a kind of pleasurable surprise, an agreeable excitement of mind, exactly the same in its nature as that which we receive from juggling. Whenever we perceive this in something produced by art, that is to say, whenever the work is seen to resemble something which we know it is not, we receive what I call an idea of imitation. . . . The most perfect ideas and pleasures of imitation are, . . . when one sense is contradicted by another, both carrying as positive evidence on the subject as each is capable of alone; as when the eye says a thing is round, and the finger says it is flat; they are therefore never felt in so high a degree as in painting, where appearance of projection, roughness, hair, velvet, etc., are given with a smooth surface; or in wax-work, where the *first* evidence of the senses

is perpetually contradicted by their experience ; but the moment we come to marble, our definition checks us, for a marble figure does not look like what it is not ; it looks like marble, and like the form of a man ; but then it *is* marble, and it *is* the form of a man. . . . We see, then, the limits of an idea of imitation ; it extends only to the sensation of trickery and deception occasioned by a thing's intentionally seeming different from what it is ; and the degree of the pleasure depends on the degree of difference and the perfection of the resemblance, not on the nature of the thing resembled. The simple pleasure in the imitation would be precisely of the same degree (if the accuracy could be equal), whether the subject of it were the hero or his horse." ¹

In the year 1787, when the arts in this country were yet in their infancy, my grandfather, a New England clergyman,² made a journey to Philadelphia, and while there went to see, among other interesting objects, a celebrated collection of paintings and natural curiosities belonging to the elder Peele. "We were conducted," he says in his journal, "into a room by a boy who told us, that Mr. Peele would wait on us in a minute or two. He desired us, however, to walk into the room where the curiosities were, and showed us a long narrow entry

¹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Pt. i. sect. i. ch. iv.

² Rev. Manasseh Cutler, of Hamilton, Mass.

which led to the cabinet. Dr. Clarkson, my companion, went first; and as he stepped into the room, I observed through a glass window at my right hand a gentleman close to me, standing with a pencil in one hand, and a small sheet of ivory in the other, and his eyes directed to the opposite side of the room, as though he was taking some object on his ivory sheet. Dr. Clarkson did not see this man until he stepped into the room, but instantly turned about, and came back saying, 'Mr. Peele is very busy taking the picture of something with his pencil. We will step back into the other room and wait till he is at leisure.' We returned through the entry, but as we entered the room we came from, we met Mr. Peele coming to us. The Dr. started back in astonishment and cried out: 'Mr. Peele, how is it possible you should get out of the other room to meet us here?' Mr. Peele smiled. 'I have not been in the other room,' says he, 'for some time.' 'No!' says Clarkson, 'did I not see you there this moment with your pencil and ivory?' 'Why? do you think you did?' says Peele. 'Yes,' says the Dr., 'I saw you there if ever I saw you in my life.' 'Well,' says Peele, 'let us go and see.' When we returned we found the man standing as before. *My* astonishment now was nearly equal to that of Dr. Clarkson; for although I knew what I saw, yet I beheld two men so perfectly alike, that I could not

discern the minutest difference. One of them, indeed, had no motion ; but he appeared to *me* to be as absolutely *alive* as the other ; and I could hardly help wondering that he did not smile, or take a part in the conversation. This was a piece of wax-work which Mr. Peele had just finished, in which he had taken himself." "So admirable a performance," continues the relator, "must have done great honor to the artist's genius, if it had been that of *any* person ; but I think it is much *more* extraordinary that he should be able so perfectly to take himself." Men of the same cultivation in other respects would, no doubt, at the present day, judge differently, and instead of allowing Mr. Peele's wax figure of himself to be a work of genius, would perhaps be inclined to question whether it deserved to be called a work of high art at all. Where no deception of this sort is intended, the direct copying of nature in its more minute details, whether in painting or poetry, can never fulfill any of the high purposes of art. The Dutch school of painting is celebrated for characteristic truth in the representation of common life. Chaucer and Crabbe are not less true and accurate, in the same line, as poets, though they both possess also other, and vastly higher qualities. Such painting and poetry must ever be the most pleasing and popular. People love to see even the most common objects, which, as real, they would scarcely think of noticing,

truthfully represented in descriptive poetry or in painting. Hence the great popularity of such painters as Teniers, in whose pictures the shining brass kettles, the clear translucent vases, and other familiar household objects, which in a kitchen or a cabinet would hardly be looked at, are sure of attracting their full share of admiration. And it must be allowed that even in paintings of the highest order, such close imitations of nature have their importance ; yet not as an end in themselves, but only as a means, subordinate and subservient to the general effect. Who would deny, for example, that the jewels which seem almost to sparkle on the graceful forms they adorn, in some of Allston's pictures, contribute somewhat to the whole pleasing impression. But what are they, either in the aim of the artist, or to the feeling of a worthy spectator, compared with the immeasurable fullness of expression reposing in those beautiful faces. "Nature herself," says Sir Joshua Reynolds, "is not to be too closely copied." "A mere copier of nature can never produce anything great, can never raise and enlarge the conceptions, or warm the heart of the spectator." Again, he says, "If deceiving the eye were the only business of art, there is no doubt, indeed, but the minute painter would be more apt to succeed ; but it is not the eye, it is the mind, which the painter of genius desires to address."¹

¹ Discourse iii.

But, at the same time, it is absolutely necessary in a true work of art, that it should not merely appear, but be, natural, — that it should be seen to flow from a power working spontaneously, like the productive powers of nature. The maxim, *ars est celare artem*, is certainly not true when taken, as it so often is, in the sense that this triumph of concealing the appearance of art is to be obtained by dint of labor in mere polish and elaboration. In nature, and what is natural, we see no appearance of constraint. There must seem to be none in art, no confinement to outward and mechanical rules at all. It is on this impression of freedom in the producing power, that the pleasure we derive from contemplating works of taste, mainly depends. This, however, is not to be so understood as if the great works of art were spontaneous in the sense that they really cost no labor to the artist. A careless work by a great master may, indeed, show the freedom of his touch, like that gigantic hand which Michael Angelo is said to have drawn with a piece of coal on the wall of the room where Raphael was painting, in the latter's absence, and which, when he returned and saw it, awakened in him the consciousness of a higher power than he had yet shown, and led him from that moment to adopt a bolder and nobler style of art. But how much previous toil and labor that seemingly slight and careless sketch presupposed. It was indeed but

the work of a minute or two, and though it stands there still pointing disdain at Raphael's still unfinished painting, it was meant simply as a passing hint ; while the really great productions of both these masters, in which they show all their power, were the fruit of immense labor ; for they ever labor the hardest who are spurred on by an impulse within themselves.

A production of art, then, can be pronounced beautiful, only when we see that it is art, while yet it looks to us like nature. An impression of this kind can never be given except where art is not limited by rules and systems held distinctly before the understanding, but proceeds with unconsciousness of rules and in perfect freedom. The effect of rules and systems which profess to lay down the way in which a thing is to be done is to induce stiffness, and what is technically called *mannerism*. Such mannerism has generally been the inevitable result, and ending off, of the different schools in painting, and in the other arts. A man of power produces something great, — others flock to him as a master, and study his works as models. He himself teaches them all he can ; but how can he communicate the essential thing, that which really gives the life and power in his own works ? This is a thing too deep even for his own comprehension. Much less could he make others understand it. Hence such schools, while they do, indeed, in

one respect, serve an important end, by arousing the latent powers of a few to conscious action, yet produce also a much more copious harvest of mere imitators, and, in the end, generally dwindle to nothing.

This productive power, which does not depend on instruction from without, except as an occasion of exciting it to self-development, and of warning it against false directions, is what we mean by *genius*. Genius is a power to produce that for the production of which it is impossible to lay down any positive precepts, or rules of working. † In this respect chiefly it differs from expertness or skill, which can be acquired by experience, and a faithful application of the rules which have been derived from experience. Consequently the essential and distinguishing quality of genius must be *originality*. The originality, however, in this case, has also its distinctive mark. It is not singularity, quaintness, or extravagance, all of which a feeble mind may so easily affect; but it ever commends itself by naturalness and simplicity. With the man of genius we feel at home; for, in carrying us farther away from our individual self, he does not convey us into a foreign world with which we have no natural sympathies, but only deeper into the recesses of our own true being, where, strange as it may seem, we recognize every new thought and feeling, though awakened for the first time to our conscious

knowledge, as a possession that belonged to us already, and as only showing how much richer we are than we supposed.

I might go on still farther to point out the relation of art to nature, — a great subject, but an utterly incomprehensible mystery, except when viewed in the light, and on the principles, of a spiritual philosophy. I shall here limit myself, however, to a brief notice of Lord Bacon's celebrated definition, that Art is *man* added to nature, — “*additus rebus homo.*”¹ In saying that art is man added to nature, Lord Bacon seems to mean, that the unconscious power in the artist's mind, which is the man's nature, is still wholly under his own control, directed by a law of freedom and not of necessity. Man produces freely by his own nature what nature left to itself produces by necessity. He is free in the determinate conception of his object, and free in finding and applying the means for bringing it out, of which, however, the unconscious natural power is the chief. The same thought is expressed by Shakespeare, where he says, —

“ Nature is made *better* by no mean
But nature *makes* that mean ; so o'er that art
Which you say *adds* to nature is an art
That nature makes.”²

The acquiring of practical skill is a thing, mean-

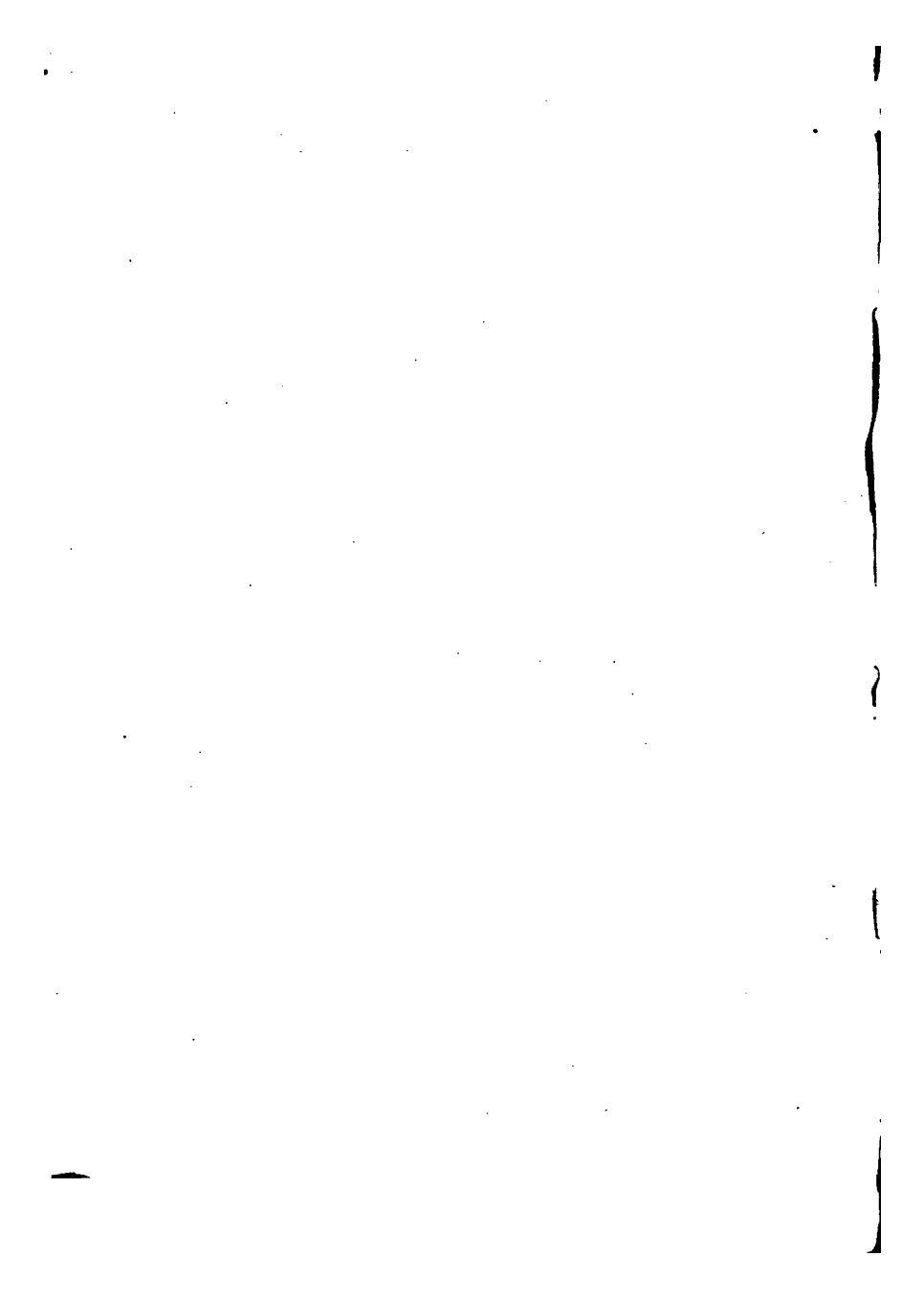
¹ *Descriptio Globi Intellectualis*, cap. ii.

² *Winter's Tale*, Act iv. sc. iii.

while, which depends almost entirely upon experience and voluntary effort. For however true it may be that one must be *born* a poet, one can *be* a poet only by his own volition. The practical skill which is to be acquired by exercise alone, and not by theory, is as necessary in the liberal as in the mechanical arts. But there is this essential difference between the two, that, in the mechanical arts, the rule of working can be taught by rote ; nay, that external nature herself, by the application of scientific principles, can be made to perform with entire precision and uniformity, and with an almost unlimited superiority in respect to power and rapidity of execution, the work of the human hand. But, in the liberal arts, neither can the method of working be taught by mere theory, nor can the work itself be transferred to another agent ; the whole skill must be absolutely self-acquired, and all the essential labor, that which really makes the work to be what it is, must proceed from the artist's own hands. There is, to be sure, in many of the liberal arts, a part that is purely mechanical, as, for example, in architecture, in sculpture, in engraving, — where other hands may be employed than those of the master ; but this mechanical skill belongs wholly on the side of the outward means and material ; it is simply a process of fitting the material for its purpose, but without any power of applying it to that purpose. A higher than mere mechanical skill here becomes necessary.

It seems evident, then, — as the man is, in this case, nearly deserted by all helps from without, — that he is thrown necessarily upon his own resources. Indeed, what other has he, or can he have? To find out by actual trial the exhaustless fund of those resources which lie hidden in the human spirit itself, so as to draw upon them with a confident reliance, instead of servilely depending on what has been furnished ready to hand by the mental activity of other men, — this requires careful, patient, unwearied self-education. And this is particularly the case in art. The man's style, it is said, is himself. What that deeper self is, which is to be expressed by his style, if he has any of his own, can never be reached in any other way than by the most assiduous cultivation of such powers of expression as he has. This is a labor which no other man in the world can do for us. But it is precisely the sort of labor of which we are so apt to be impatient. Hence the tendency to resort to theories and rules of other men, as mechanically learned, as they were in the first place mechanically conceived, and which at best could never serve any other purpose than the mere negative one of warning against false directions. Cicero wrote an elaborate work on Rhetoric, but unhappily that work never did, and never could, produce a second Cicero.

VIII.
IDEALITY OF ART.



CHAPTER VIII.

IDEALITY OF ART.

THE subject of this chapter is the Ideality of Art, as compared with the truth of Nature ;— the ideality of art, — the ideal character of those productions, or creations, as they may not unfitly be called, of the human mind, which are distinguished from other productions of man by the name, *works of Genius*, — the truth and beauty of these creations, as compared with the truth and beauty which is in nature. Conflicting opinions have been entertained, and are still entertained, on this subject, — as to the meaning of the term ideal as applied to art, and of truth as applied to nature ; as to whether there is, or ought to be, any other ideal of art than what is to be obtained from a faithful observation and exact copy of the truth of nature ; in a word, as to whether the ideality, so often spoken of as a distinctive characteristic of the higher works of art, be anything more than a mere notional abstraction of the human understanding.

It will not be my purpose to enter at all into the matter of this controversy at the present time. But I shall take the liberty to use the word Idea in

the sense in which it has often been used by persons the best entitled to choose their own language in writing and speaking on the subject of art. I mean those who have stood in the highest rank as artists themselves. For, — not to go back to Plato and Cicero,¹ men standing in the highest rank as artists as well as thinkers in the ancient world ; not to quote the authority of Raphael and Guido Reni, nor even that of Dryden and Sir Joshua Reynolds ;² all of whom, not only employ this term as peculiarly fitted to express the distinctive character of works of genius, but take pains, many of them, to define the exact meaning which they would give to it in this application of it, — I shall content myself with a single reference to the authority of a good old English author and poet. Sir Philip Sidney, in discoursing of the *Idea*, wherein consists the skill, as he holds, of every artist, says, “ The fact that the Poet hath this Idea is manifest, by the delivering forth his works in such excellence as he had imagined them ; — which delivering forth is not *wholly* imaginative, not a mere work of fancy, — as we are wont to say by them that build castles in the air, — but so far *substantially* it worketh as not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency, as *nature* might have done ; but

¹ See Plato, *Timæus*, 28, A. Cic., *Orator*, § 3.

² Dryden's *Parallel of Poetry and Painting*. Reynold's *Works*, Dis. iii. See also Letters of Raphael and Guido, referred to p.

to bestow a Cyrus on the world capable of making many Cyruſes" — being the ſubſtantial type of the character. "Neither let it be deemed," he continues, "too ſaucy a comparison, to balance the higheſt point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature ; but let us rather give right honor to the Heavenly Maker of that maker, who, having made man in his own likenesſe, ſet him beyond and over all the works of that ſecond nature ; which in nothing he ſhoweth ſo much as in poetry ; when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth ſurpaſſing her doings."¹ It is very much in the ſenſe of this old Engliſh writer I ſhall uſe the word *Idea* : and I ſhall aſſume, as well underſtood, that, in proportion as a work of imagination has proceeded from ſuch an inſpiring idea, it has *life* : and the more vigorous and pure the idea, the more will that life be of a kind which triumphs over time, over national prejudices, artificial cuſtoms and taſtes, and wins its way to univerſal recognition and homage. Without this, all the reſt, the moſt ſkillful and methodical combination of materials, of words, images, tones, colors, rythms, will always go for nothing. We may admit the ſpeech, the poem, picture, or whatever elſe it may be, is an elegant and faultleſs piece of compoſition ; but it is ſpiritleſs, and leaves on us, after all, no impreſſion of power.

¹ *The Defense of Poesy.*

That vital inward power which is the idea, the *forma informans*, in the artist's soul, exists first as a *feeling* of the truth of a thing, that spontaneously seeks to understand itself by utterance, and at the same time finds itself guided by an infallible instinct to the appropriate utterance.¹ Thus art not only addresses itself to feeling, but begins with it. Such a power resides, in some degree, in every human breast, for it is as indispensable for the recognition of the beautiful, as it is for the creation of it.

“Format enim Natura prius nos intus ad omnem
Fortunarum habitum.”²

This feeling which inspires and guides the imagination of the artist, and, through his production, is awakened again in the minds of others, contains the rule of its own expression, and acknowledges no authority without itself. If you ask what in particular this idea is, which, spurning formal rules, is yet so infallible a rule for itself; and which, though it has all the vagueness of a feeling in its incipiency, shows all the precision of intelligence in its mode of working, — the best, indeed the only answer, is found in that which it produces. It

¹ The subjective ground of the ideal lies in the heart of our common humanity, in its infinite longing after something better, purer, and more perfect than has ever yet offered itself to its actual experience, after something it knows to be possible though not yet real, and which can be realized at least by imagination in the ideal world, though it may not be in this imperfect world of our actual experience.

² Horace, *De Arte Poetica*.

very distinctly announces what it is, in what it does. So far as this is seen by us to possess both originality and truth, so far as it commands our willing approbation, and touches our ready sympathies, we do in fact acknowledge, that all this was already contained in the original idea out of which the whole has sprung.

The stating of a few distinctions, however, may serve to make the matter somewhat more clear. The idea which is sought to be realized, but is as yet only in the process of realization, only as it exists unexpressed in the artist's mind, may be called the *æsthetic idea*, or the idea of the imagination; for feeling and form go together here, — they cannot well be separated. Let us consider, then, how such ideas differ from those of pure reason, that is, pure theoretic reason, — for *æsthetic ideas*, too, really have their origin in reason. Let us see how they differ, moreover, from conceptions of the understanding, and in what relation they stand to images of sense, and also to the logical understanding. We may define an *æsthetic idea* as a single intuition which does not admit of being expressed in a conception, or in any number of conceptions of the understanding, and hence it is that in so many cases, — always, indeed, where language is the material, — the painter or poet has recourse to symbols and emblems. Such symbols plainly are resorted to not so much on their own

account as because, being themselves suggested by, they are capable of suggesting, thoughts which lie too deep to be ever reached by the poverty of abstract language. An idea of the imagination is a thought so fused, as it were, with the image or form in which the artist would embody it, as to become thus first capable of passing into the minds of others. We understand what it is thus attempted to express, in the endless significance of the form to our feelings ; but if we endeavor to explain it, one man may do it in this way, and another in that, and each explanation will be equally just and equally inadequate.

While an *æsthetic idea of the imagination* is an intuition which cannot be fitly represented by any abstract conception, an *idea of reason*, on the other hand, is one which cannot be exactly represented by any outward emblem. Ideas, for example, of a purely mathematical, moral, or spiritual, nature belong to this class. Their element and substance, their matter as well as their form, is spiritual or of the nature of reason itself, and they do not admit, therefore, of being really externalized in outward forms of sense. Such ideas may indeed be awakened by art, but they can be truly and fully realized only in the thinking mind and in the form of living thought.

As to the relation of these æsthetic ideas to the faculties of sense, I have already observed that forms of sense are their only mode of expression ;

but under the influence of these ideas sense becomes, as it were, another and entirely different thing, — a transfigured and ennobled mode of perception. If sight and hearing are, in themselves, the most elevated of all the senses, they receive a still higher and more ethereal character when released from their strict confinement to the actually present, and emancipated into the free domain of a poetic imagination. The steps by which, even in a rude mind, the prosaic sense which sees nothing in nature but its outward forms may be awakened by incidents of ordinary occurrence out of this lethargic dullness, into so quick a sensitiveness as to convert even the rustling of a dry leaf into a chasing phantom, are finely set forth by Wordsworth in his story of Peter Bell. But what an other life is given to the most common things in nature by a truly poetic imagination, deriving what it sees from within, rather than from without, itself, I hardly need illustrate by examples. That well-known passage in the “*Tempest*”

“Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves ;
 And ye that on the sands with printless foot
 Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and do fly him,
 When he comes back ; you demy-puppets, that
 By moonshine do the green-sour ringlets make,
 Whereof the ewe not bites ; and you, whose pastime
 Is to make midnight mushrooms ; that rejoice
 To hear the solemn curfew.”¹

¹ *Tempest*, Act v. sc. i.

This passage, so accurate in the statement of facts, as to excite the surprise of modern naturalists, presents at the same time, with inimitable touches, that still higher truth in the mysterious life and sympathies of nature which the mere naturalist so often misses. Such is the power of sense when quickened by the seeing eye within.

But the understanding is not left wholly idle here. The *understanding* is in this case the instrument of the *preconceived purpose*, — the imagination, the free creative vital power by which that preconception becomes realized. It is necessary the artist should have some definite object before him, some conception of what he would produce. But the imagination produces in a living form, which includes in it the conception, instead of being included by it; that is to say, the conception is contained in the work, not as a confined product of the individual understanding, but as *flowing* out of an inexhaustible idea, where the imagination is still left free to expatiate at will in any direction to which it may be led by the forms and images actually presented.

The imagination is a most busy power, ever at work, whether we sleep or wake. In our ordinary perceptions it is a shaping power acting in strict obedience to the fixed laws of the understanding. In the common arts of life, it is a shaping and modifying power, acting in subserviency to the

understanding, for outward ends. In science, the imagination is a productive power, guided by voluntary thought in constructing general forms for the purposes of knowledge. But under the influence of æsthetical ideas, the imagination is a free creative power, unlimited in its resources, which bodies forth its ideal creations under whatever intelligible forms of sense it may choose as its material.

So far as the *understanding* of the artist is concerned and consulted, he may aim to please the multitude, and he may seek for patronage as a means to his end. But as an artist, he must have the *spontaneous impulse*. He must have what is called a genial spirit, and delight in the idea for its own sake. His main prevailing motive must be to realize what is in his own mind, and the pleasure he finds in the exercise of this high creative power.

Having explained what is meant by the artistic idea, let us now proceed to the consideration of ideal beauty, or of *the ideal*. Ideal beauty is where the whole truth contained in the idea itself is so fully brought out and blended with the sensible material, that there is no discordance between them, but such entire correspondence and agreement, that both are absolutely one. It seems, indeed, to involve a palpable contradiction, that unity and manifoldness, which are so directly opposed, should be so completely reconciled and harmonized with each other. Yet this contradiction is the very problem for art to

solve ; and only just so far as the artist succeeds in solving it, can he satisfy himself by reaching the end for which he is striving. The unity of the idea in a great work of art is such a unity as goes forth into a full expression of its own endless nature, in the manifoldness of an outward existence ; and this manifoldness, again, in the whole diversity of its details, must be such as everywhere to carry us back to the unity of the idea out of which it flows. Wherever such a work has been achieved, we need not first to be told of it in order to perceive it, even though our experience may be small ; for it speaks to a keener eye than that of outward sense, and to another power of judgment than that which is formed by much study. In fact, as ideal beauty is, in its own way, nothing but the clear outward expression of reason itself, it only needs that one should have arrived at some consciousness of his own essential being, to recognize and appreciate it at once.

And here it is important to understand in what sense the language is used when it is asserted, that this ideal beauty surpasses that of nature. Doubtless it is a vain and foolish fancy which has led any one to imagine that the human mind, however highly gifted, could ever vie with that deep inworking power whose effects are to be seen in the most insignificant of nature's productions, especially in organic life.

“ What fine chisel
 Could ever yet cut breath ? ”¹

And to speak of a still higher life. What poet or philosopher has ever yet produced such a true representation of *man* as has been furnished by the actual history of humanity, and would be presented to us, were it possible to grasp that actual history as a whole, and bring it within the compass of a single glance. But still there is a sense in which the artist may be said to make the marble or the canvas breathe, and in which the poet can embody in a single character, and present before us in one vivid intuition, a truer and more complete representation of the kind, stripped of all accidents of the individual, than any actually living and merely human individual ever exhibited.

The peculiar essence of each thing, the law of its particular being, working from within and fixing its own limits, defines the form of that thing. This is constant, perennial, ever the same ;— all the rest temporary, transient, accidental. The material elements which enter into the presently existing individual, the point of development actually reached, the relations and circumstances from

¹ *Winter's Tale*, Act v. sc. iii.

But thou who didst appear so fair
 To fond Imagination,
 Dost rival in the light of day
 Her delicate creation.

WORDSWORTH, “ *Yarrow Revisited*.”

without which hinder or modify the working of that inward principle, — all these, compared with the latter, are unessential. That inward law seeking simply and entirely to realize itself, but with such materials as are presented, under such outward circumstances, hostile or favorable to success, as may happen to exist, is what we mean by the truth of nature ; and all such truth is more or less beautiful. Now this truth is what art endeavors to seize in its purity, and quite separated from all the accidents by which it may be disturbed, or curtailed of its full proportions ; and with an unlimited choice of materials and circumstances. Thus, while nature can present only the individual, art can represent the kind. While nature presents the individual itself only in a series of developments, following one after the other in a never ending succession of growth or decay, art can seize it at the highest, or at any other, point of its being ; and arresting it there, make it independent of time, and bring out the unchanging truth which belongs to the chosen moment. And finally, while nature presents its object under certain inevitable circumstances, which by themselves considered are all accidents, — and hence we speak of an accidental effect in nature, produced by a grouping of objects, where no such effect was designed, — art can place its objects in whatsoever circumstances and combinations it pleases, and so represent the beautiful,

either in the calm repose of unconscious truth, or in the moment of genial excitement, or struggling with hostile elements, which, in seeking to destroy, but serve to call into fuller expression the latent power which lay reserved within.

Now if every individual thing in nature is beautiful just in the same proportion as it is a true expression of that which it was originally meant to be, and if everything is *deformed* just in the same proportion as it fails, — whether owing to the imperfection of its materials, or to the power of counteracting agencies without itself, — of being fully *informed* by its own appropriate law, much more is this so in the case of man. Both religion and philosophy teach us to regard him as the crowning work of creation. All that elsewhere in the world is scattered in fragmentary portions is in him gathered up and concentrated. What elsewhere is the product of an unconscious law, acting with necessity, is in him the rational self-conscious being, so much the work of his own freedom, that if it goes wrong, he is not only so far deformed, but guilty, and his guilt is his worst deformity. While everything in external nature is necessarily individual, man can rise above his narrow self, and wholly identify himself in all his interests, hopes, fears, and affections, with his kind. He can realize in himself the whole idea of that humanity of which his individual self is but a single exponent.

For all these reasons, the highest possible type of ideal beauty for art is to be found in man ; and this is the point, therefore, to which all its strivings tend. But above and below this central point, the ideal of humanity, in which spiritual and sensible are so completely blended and harmonized, stretch other regions of unlimited extent for the boundless range of the creative imagination. There is the whole world of external nature, and the still freer world of pure spiritual existences. The question is, what is the ideal here, and after what manner, in what possible form, can it be attained? For that ideal beauty must be confined to the human being alone, no one, certainly, will pretend. How then are we to conceive of the ideal in these two cases, in which the object in the first falls below, and in the second transcends, the human nature, since both these legitimately come within the province of art, and both must in some sense be idealized? And first, with regard to the objects which, in dignity, fall below the human nature. It is generally conceded at the present time that a bare imitation, a direct copying, of external nature never can fulfill the purpose of art. In fact, this has always been felt. Hence it has been supposed that the talent of the artist consists in selecting what is most beautiful in nature, and then forming it into new combinations. This seems to have been the opinion of Sir Joshua Reynolds,¹ and

¹ See *Reynolds' Works*. Discourse iii.

other writers of his age. But the question is, how is he to do this ; what is to guide him in the selection, and what is to be the principle of his combinations ? According to the common notion, it would seem as if all this were a mechanical process, guided by nothing but mere caprice or casual associations. But not so. Closely as the artist may be allowed, and though he is driven indeed by a spontaneous impulse, to study nature ; still, it is evident his work must proceed wholly, in all its details, out of his own soul. The artist's work is himself ; it is not nature as the ordinary careless mind sees it, but as he views it ; or it is nature transfused into his own life ; so that he first becomes one with it, and then creates it afresh, with a free and living power. As a late writer has it, "The artist not only *places* his spectator, but *talks* to him, makes him a sharer in his own strong feelings and quick thoughts, . . . leaves him more than delighted, — ennobled and instructed, under the sense of having not only beheld a new scene, but of having held communion with a new mind, and having been endowed for a time with the keen perception and the impetuous emotion of a nobler and more penetrating intelligence."¹ To some it seems mystical and altogether unintelligible, to others pantheistic, to say that the creative power in the artist's soul, while it works independently, and wholly

¹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Pt. ii. sec. i. ch. i.

out of itself, is yet one in kind with the creative power in nature. Yet plainly, in some sense or other, it must be so, else there could be nothing after all but mere imitation, nothing but mechanical combination of abstract forms ; no originality, no freshness of life, no radiation of that life from a central point, and therefore no organic unity, in the productions of genius. It is a great mystery, indeed, that God has created man with such a power ; but that man has it, the works of the great poets and painters of every age and nation prove beyond dispute. In representing external nature, therefore, the artist does not copy what is without him, but gives body and form to what was already within him,— to his own ideas ; not in the sense that he may depart from nature, or lose sight of her for a moment, but in the sense that it is impossible to reach the truth of nature by imitating her outward forms, which are in themselves lifeless ; that the only way to reach the truth which nature expresses in these outward forms is to have that truth within one's own soul ; to feel its power, and to work purely from its impulses. Now ideas in nature herself are expressed *symbolically* ; that is, they are rather suggested than fully expressed ; the forms of nature lead us to something higher than themselves. Or, as the thought is expressed by Coleridge, in language which only a poet could write : " I seem to myself to behold in the quiet

objects on which I am gazing, more than an arbitrary illustration, more than a mere *simile*, the work of my own fancy. I feel an awe, as if there were before my eyes the same power as that of the *Reason*, the same power in a lower dignity, and therefore a symbol established in the truth of things."¹ Now the artist feels that truth which nature symbolizes, but symbolizes so faintly to the apprehension of many, that they have no discernment of it whatever. The descriptive poet, the true landscape painter, idealize Nature by making her symbolic language so plain, that we of dimmer vision can in his text read and interpret it also. The language of nature is largely written, but to many it is often as unmeaning as the Chinese characters on a tea-chest. Symbols they are, but of what, we cannot divine. But in the case of the Chinese characters the symbols are more or less arbitrary. Not so with those of Nature, which are eminently significant and suggestive; so much so that we constantly recur to them as figures and images, to illustrate and give body to the truth which our own imperfect and abstract language is inadequate to convey. These images taken from nature illustrate a truth in our minds, because they are actually a part of it. It has often been said that nearly all our words to express intellectual and

¹ *Statesman's Manual*, App. B., Coleridge's *Works*, Shedd's edition, vol. i.

moral ideas were originally taken from the names of sensible things and actions. But these sensible things and actions are themselves, for the most part, expressions of those very ideas, "in a lower dignity," which, in their higher development in the human mind, we say they express figuratively. And this, in my view, is the true principle for the explanation of all figurative language. Now the artist who is worthy of the name makes all nature expressive of these higher ideas ; and that, too, as must be evident from what has now been said, not by departing in the least from the truth of nature but, on the contrary, by entering more profoundly into it. As the latest English writer who has spoken on this subject with something of a philosophic spirit says : " Truth " is " the foundation of all art ; like real foundations, it may be little thought of when a brilliant fabric is raised on it ; but it must be there : and as few buildings are beautiful unless every line and column of their mass have reference to their foundation, and are suggestive of its existence and strength, so nothing can be beautiful in art which does not in all its parts suggest and guide to the foundation, even where no undecorated portion of it is visible ; while the noblest edifices of art are built of such pure and fine crystal that the foundation may all be seen through them ; and then many, while they do not see what is built on that first story, yet much admire the

solidity of its brick-work, thinking they understand all that is to be understood of the matter ; while others stand beside them, looking not at the low story, but up into the heaven at that building of crystal in which the builder's spirit is dwelling. And thus though we want the thoughts and feelings of the artist as well as the truth, yet they must be thoughts arising out of the knowledge of truth, and feelings arising out of the contemplation of truth."¹

Having thus explained, and as I think truly, what is meant by the idealizing of *external nature*, I next proceed to consider how the case stands with those objects, when introduced into art, which belong to the *spiritual world*, and which are of a purely spiritual nature. And here it is quite obvious that art must necessarily begin with ideas, and that the objects themselves are essentially ideal. And there is no other possible way of expressing them in art except by symbols, not already furnished, as in the case of outward nature, but, by altogether new combinations, springing out of the creative imagination of the artist himself. It would seem as if the symbols must, from the very nature of the case, be extremely imperfect, and that their effect would naturally be to degrade the objects thus brought down out of their own sphere into a lower one. As the ideal representations of external nature lead us to think of something above what is actually expressed,

¹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Pt. ii. sec. i. ch. i.

by giving prominence and intensity to that which is **most** significant in the objects represented; so the symbolic representations of spiritual things, since they have been **formed** purely on the principle of significance, and have no **meaning** at all, except just so far as they are suggestive, lead **away** the thoughts to something higher than themselves. **The** higher kind of poetry, for example, has no other way of **expressing** spiritual and moral ideas, but by images and symbols. But to dwell on these images, however fine in themselves, would defeat the very object for which they are introduced. Their beauty consists, not so much in what they are, as in what they suggest, and the more directly they tend to turn the thoughts away from themselves to what they signify, the more completely do they subserve the purpose for which they are introduced.

Opposed to the ideal, as I have already observed in a former lecture, is the *characteristic*. It is important to obtain a right understanding of the relation of these two essential elements of the beautiful in art to each other. The ideal, we have shown, is the nearest possible realization, in an actual work of art, of the truth of the *kind*, of the abiding, universal, central law, on all sides of which there will be, in things as they actually exist, slight deviations, but from which there can be no very wide departure, without leaving the sphere of one particular kind, and passing over into that of another. Now

it is evident that an absolutely perfect and exact conformation to the law of the kind would admit of little or no variety among the several individuals belonging to the sphere of the same kind. The only character would be the universal character which marks off and distinguishes one kind from another. This character, seized in all its truth and fullness, as, for example, in the absolute proportion and harmony of parts which constitute the beauty of the human face, or of the whole structure of the body, would impress us with a profound sense of the power of form ; and as the form, in the case chosen for illustration, is that of the human rational being, it would not be mere form, without spirit, — soulless form ; but it would be instinct with a certain intellectual grandeur and force, yet in perfect repose, in an absolute equipoise and indifference of every power of expression, with no concentration of energy, feeling, or life, at any particular point ; power consisting in the perfect self-collection and repose of the spirit within itself, and manifested by the entire harmony of all the parts and members in their relations to each other. Something like this, evidently, would be the realization to sense of the absolutely pure idea of man. But however much we might be impressed with the beauty and majesty of such a form, it is certain that it would not be apt very deeply to enlist our sympathies, or move the affections of the heart. A plain face, illumined and

brightened with some particular expression, would be likely to interest us more.

Let us now turn to the characteristic. And by this, as opposed to the ideal, it must be apparent, is meant that which distinguishes one individual from another belonging to the same general class or kind, as well as the same individual from himself, at different times. It is evident at once how far this point of distinction and individuality of character may be carried within the same sphere. It has been said that no two leaves are exactly alike on the same tree. In higher beings, in man, the differences are no less interminable; while, at the same time, they are vastly more obvious and important. Here, not only one individual differs from another, but the same individual differs from himself at different times. It is out of these differences of the individual at different times, the whole play of expression which indicates more or less clearly the inner man, that the true artist, the really faithful portrait painter, is enabled to seize at length that which constitutes the individuality of character. It is impossible to judge what a person is,—I mean in nature,—seen but once, and in the perfect repose of all the features. The imagination, to be sure, will be busy, and we may form a thousand conjectures, which perhaps would quite as often lead us wrong as right. "The guess would be," says Mr. Allston, "that a beautiful person would presently be

enriched with all possible virtues." This would be the guess of the sanguine and imaginative, "The colder speculatist would only see in it, not what it possessed, but the mind that it wanted. Now it would be curious to imagine how the eyes of each might be opened, with the probable consequence, how each might feel when his eyes were opened, and the object were seen as it really is. Some untoward circumstance comes unawares on the perfect creature : a burst of temper knits the brow, inflames the eye, inflates the nostril, gnashes the teeth, and converts the angel into a storming fury. What then becomes of the visionary virtues? They have passed into air, and taken with them, also, what was the fair creature's right,—her very beauty. Yet a different change takes place with the dry man of intellect. The mindless object has taken shame of her ignorance : she begins to cultivate her powers, which are gradually developed until they expand and brighten ; they inform her features, so that no one can look upon them without seeing the evidence of no common intellect : the dry man, at least, is struck with their superior intelligence, and what more surprises him, is the grace and beauty which, for the first time, they reveal to his eyes. The learned dust which had so long buried his heart is quickly brushed away, and he weds the embodied mind. What third change may follow, it is not to our purpose to foresee." ¹

¹ Allston's *Lectures on Art*. Introductory Discourse.

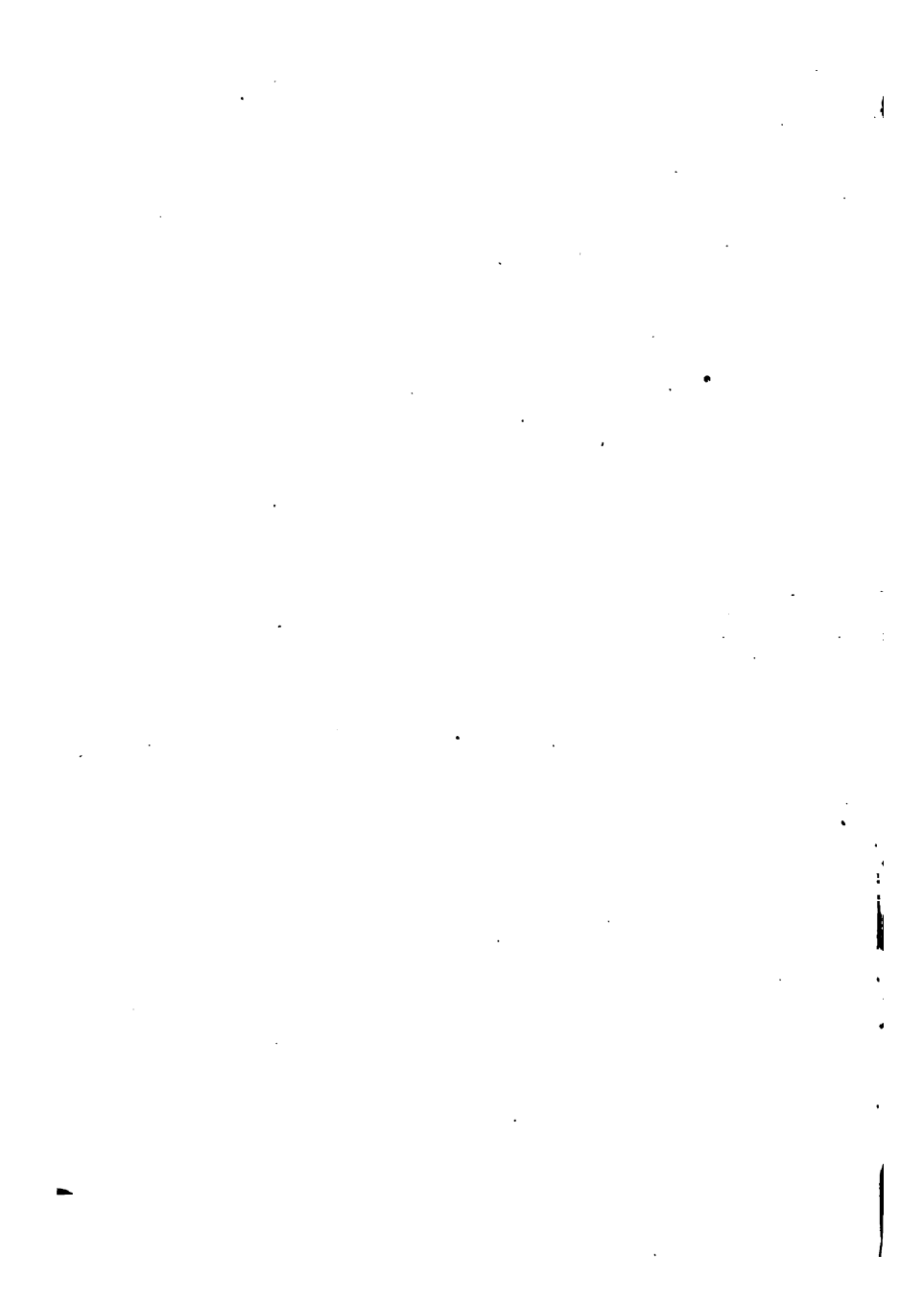
Besides these marks, gathered from the variety of expression which distinguishes the personality of the individual, there are others, still more general, — family, national, professional peculiarities, — which stamp a character of resemblance among themselves, and difference from all others, upon whole classes or communities of men. Of these it is unnecessary to speak at the present time. But having, sufficiently for my purpose, pointed out the distinction between the ideal and the characteristic, I now return to the question, which was, to determine the relation of these two essential elements to each other in the fine arts. It is evident that we require expression, character. The object represented must have a character of its own, clearly expressed, and unmistakable. To interest us, it must be something; a Caliban, a Trinculo, a Prospero, or Miranda. But while the hideous Caliban, a creature as near to a brute as anything could be, and still be called a man, might amuse us by himself; yet his purpose, evidently, in the mind of the poet, as well as in his effect on ourselves, is simply to act as a foil and contrast to bring out the higher and gentler qualities of his betters. The latter alone engage our human interest, and the more so as contrasted with such an incarnate monster, their sole companion. Such is the only conceivable purpose of deviation from the ideal, carried to the extreme. This is one case. In general, however, strong oppositions and contrasts

of this sort are not required in order to the bringing out of character. Few can manage them rightly. There is a truth in ugliness, if I may so express it, which, if overstepped in the least degree, produces only a feeling of disgust. In general, character, passion, "the endless inflections of thought and passion," in order permanently to interest, must repose on the ideally beautiful as their basis. This, as it seems to me, is the true representation of the relation in which these two elements stand to each other in art. Life, expression, soul, requires some movement, some shade of deviation from the equipoise of absolutely perfect beauty, but a deviation which would be inconceivable except as that perfect beauty is presupposed. Thus in the statue considered the most perfect work that has come down to us from antiquity, in the Apollo Belvidere, the lower lip curls with the slightest expression of scorn as the god lets fly his shaft, sees it reach its mark, and moves calmly on.

To conclude the subject, it is evident that some mixture of the characteristic is requisite, even in the most ideal creations. It is needed to awaken and sustain all that human interest which grows out of the passions, humors, and even weaknesses of our nature. The ancients, who were so devoted to the beautiful in form and in character, still had to make many concessions to this demand. The moderns, who attach far more importance to the individual,

and to the traits that distinguish one individual from another, and therefore take a pleasure even in the eccentric, within certain limits, introduce into all their artistic productions a much richer diversity of character than we find in any works of the ancients. In these times, when the fondness for excitement has become a passion, we require, not a diversity merely, corresponding with the truth of nature, but the strongest contrasts, human nature exhibited at its extremes, and such contrasts running through the whole tissue and fabric of a composition, as if it were the only thing which could be safely depended on to create and sustain an interest. One who has been accustomed only to productions of the modern mind is likely to feel chilled by the coldness, and dulled by the comparative monotony, of the best translations of the ancient classics. We esteem our modern form of art an improvement on the older models ; and, doubtless, it is so, in all those branches of art which were capable of improvement in this particular direction.

IX.
THE SUBLIME.



CHAPTER IX.

THE SUBLIME.

EVERY one is conscious, in his own feelings, of a remarkable difference in the effect produced on him by those objects which are called beautiful, and by another class, addressed to the same power of judgment, but which are called *sublime*. There is a peculiar feeling of complacency, of admiration mingled with a sort of awe, awakened by whatever presents itself to the senses or to the imagination under any such form of undefined vastness or grandeur as seems to stagger and confound all power of distinctly conceiving it. Thus the broad ocean, an interminable desert, the depth beyond depth of the starry heavens, the crash of thunder, the shout of a vast multitude of men, and the like, produce, when there is no immediate or urgent sense of fear, an effect on us which I know not how better to describe than by saying that it is at once pleasing and elevating. The awe is not such as to depress or humble, but rather to raise us. The sublimity which we attribute to the outward object is in some sort a reflection from our own minds. And it is to be remarked that the judgment in this case, where we

feel the emotion of sublimity, possesses the same general character with the judgment in the case of the beautiful : namely, it clearly does not arise from any sense of personal interest we take in the object that excites it ; nor from any complete conception of it as an object we understand, — for it is quite certain in this case that the complacency is not only separate from, but wholly incompatible with, that which arises from the clear and distinct comprehension of the object before us. The judgment, again, is instantaneous, and waits for no arguments. It is also of universal validity, in the same sense as in the case of the beautiful. It possesses, therefore, all the characters of a judgment of taste. The question is, *how* then does the sentiment of the sublime differ from that of the beautiful ? I have already alluded to the theory of Burke, who distinguishes the sublime from the beautiful by referring it to fear, apprehension, the instinct of self-preservation, as its essential and fundamental element. But if this were correct, then, in the same proportion as the essential element predominated, we might expect to find the emotion of sublimity would be called forth. The reverse of this, however, is nearer the truth ; for nothing can be more clear than, that, in order to the perception of the sublime, the mind must be completely self-possessed, and instead of shrinking from the object which inspires the emotion, must either feel itself drawn towards

it, or else set it at defiance. Others have resolved the sublime into the simple feeling of greatness. Thus, the writer whom I have quoted before, on the subjects of imitation and of truth, says: "The simple conception or idea of greatness of suffering or extent of destruction is sublime, whether there be any connection of that idea with ourselves or not. If we were pleased beyond the reach of all peril or pain, the perception of these agencies in their influence on others would not be less sublime, not because peril or pain are sublime in their own nature, but because their contemplation, exciting compassion or fortitude, elevates the mind, and renders meanness of thought impossible. Beauty is not so often felt to be sublime, because, in many kinds of purely material beauty, there is some truth in Burke's assertion, that 'littleness' is one of its elements. But he who has not felt that there may be beauty without littleness, is yet ignorant of the meaning of the ideal in art."¹ It is no doubt true that many things which are beautiful are also sublime, and that the ideal beauty of art always partakes more or less of this character. But to say that this sublimity is attained simply by the removal of every element of littleness, and that the sublime is only "another word for the effect of greatness on the feelings," goes but a very little way towards explaining the nature of this effect, and enabling us

¹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Pt. i. sec. ii. ch. 3.

to see its true relation to that which is produced upon us by the simply beautiful. The explanation which I have to present is as follows: In our judgment and feeling of the beautiful, the imagination, as has been said, while it is free, that is, tied to no rules, and to no actual experience, conforms entirely to the same laws of reason by which the understanding forms definite conceptions. The beautiful is always presented, therefore, under the *formal* relation of an object to an end, the relation of all the parts of a harmonious and well defined whole, as in a piece of music, a statue, or a group of figures in a painting. In these cases the object, however great, is easily grasped as one complete whole. There is neither any *break* in the contour, nor does it run out into the vague and indefinite. But in the sublime, the case stands otherwise. In a judgment of this sort, the imagination, being incompetent to present the object under any definite form of a conception, refers us immediately to those ideas of reason which cannot be sensuously represented. Any one, as it seems to me, may easily convince himself that this is so, if he will but narrowly watch the movement of his mind in contemplating the sublime of space, of time, or of power in nature, or the morally sublime in human actions. The imagination here is staggered, the understanding confounded, but not so the reason. That which is too great for those other faculties to comprehend, still comes

within the power of the latter. There is no sublimity in that which merely astounds the mind, if the mind cannot still rise above it, or at least to a level with it. The elevation must be in ourselves, in our own feelings. It is not the mountain masses of towering icebergs, scattered in rude confusion in the crash and tumult of a sea storm, nor the calmer, but scarcely less terrific desolation of the Alps, — things that confound the senses, — that are in themselves alone sublime, but it is these and such like scenes which awaken the emotion of sublimity in the spectator, when he finds that these vast material masses, and brute powers of nature, must confess after all their inferiority to the mind which, instead of being overpowered by them, rejoices and triumphs in their undefined horrors. That which exceeds the comprehension of the sensuous imagination, were it not immediately measured by a higher power of the soul, would simply startle and shock us, and become positively disagreeable; as we see in the case of those who instinctively cover up their eyes, or hide away, from a thunder storm. But the greatest things in nature are still small compared with the still greater possible conceptions of the human mind, and hence, from the consciousness of this, the mingled feelings of complacency and awe with which they can be regarded.

Since writing the above, I have had the opportunity of studying the recently published views on

this subject, of the late Mr. Allston, in his "Lectures on Art," a work of great interest and power, so far as it goes ; but, unfortunately, like his "Belshazzar's Feast," left in an unfinished state. His remarks on the beautiful, and particularly on a class of objects which, as he justly observes, has not hitherto been noticed as holding a distinct position, but which forms a consecutive series, connecting the beautiful with the sublime, show that power of nice and delicate discrimination which we should expect to find in one who was a perfect master of the subject on which he writes. To the causes which operate in this class of objects so as to produce their peculiar effect on the mind, he applies a particular designative term, that of "Imputed Attributes." For what distinguishes such objects in their relation to the imagination, is this, that we connect with them "(not by individual association, but by a general law of the mind) certain moral or intellectual attributes ; which are not, indeed, supposed to exist in the objects themselves, but which, by some unknown affinity, they awaken or occasion in us, and which we, in our turn, impute to them."¹ The ideas so awakened, he says, we "express by the ascription of such significant epithets as *stately*, *majestic*, *grand*, and so on." He then proceeds to the gradual transition by which we pass from ob-

¹ See *Lectures on Art and Poems*, by Washington Allston. Introductory Discourse.

jects of this character to those possessed of the attribute of sublimity. We perceive something like these moral characteristics in the inanimate world "when we call some tall forest stately, or qualify as majestic some broad and slowly winding river, or some vast yet unbroken waterfall, or some solitary, gigantic pine, seeming to disdain the earth, and to hold of right its eternal communion with air ; or when, to the smooth and far-reaching expanse of our inland waters, with their bordering and receding mountains, as they seem to march from the shores, in the pomp of their dark draperies of wood and mist, we apply the terms *grand* and *magnificent* : and so onward to an endless succession of objects, imputing, as it were, our own nature, and lending our sympathies, till the headlong rush of some mighty cataract suddenly thunders upon us. But how is it then ? In the twinkling of an eye, the outflowing sympathies ebb back upon the heart ; the whole mind seems severed from earth, and the awful feeling to suspend the breath ; — there is nothing human to which we can liken it. And here begins another kind of emotion, which we call sublime." ¹

This is forcible and true painting. The successive stages by which we ascend, — and which we mark by the very language we employ to designate our emotions, — from the lovely, quiet, and placid lake

¹ *Lectures, etc. Introductory Dis.*

or river, to the thundering cataract which awes and bewilders us, could not be more faithfully described. But what then is the nature of this feeling of the sublime, to which we are thus gradually led, but which is of an entirely different kind from all the others? Mr. Allston ascribes it to the sense of the Infinite, and more particularly to the sense of an infinite harmony without us. This, he means, is the ground of the feeling, of which, however, it is by no means necessary that we should be distinctly conscious. In most cases it is unthought of. He admits that "a sublime effect is often powerfully felt in many instances where this idea could not truly be predicated of the apparent object. In such cases, however, some kind of resemblance, or at least, a seeming analogy to an infinite attribute, is nevertheless essential. It must *appear* to us, for the time, either limitless, indefinite, or in some other way beyond the grasp of the mind: and whatever an object may *seem* to be, it must needs *in effect* be to *us* even that which it seems."¹ We impute infinity to the object thus presented to us, and an infinity which is without ourselves.

The question is, whether this infinity is anything other than the unlimited, the indefinite, that which cannot be grasped by the understanding or sensuous imagination. On this point he remarks:

¹ *Lectures, etc.* Introductory Dis.

“To make our meaning plainer, we should say that that which has the power of possessing the mind, to the exclusion, for the time, of all other thought, and which presents no *comprehensible* sense of a whole, though still impressing us with a full apprehension of such as a reality, — in other words, which cannot be circumscribed by the forms of the understanding, while it strains them to the utmost, — that we should term a sublime object.”¹ This certainly does not differ much from the statement of the fact as already laid down in the former part of this discourse. But why should we be so attracted by what baffles all our powers of comprehension? Why should we feel the sense of elevation before that, which, as it should seem, could only serve to impress us with a feeling of our inferiority? Mr. Allston endeavors to account for this, unsatisfactorily, as it seems to me, by the affinity which, as he supposes, exists between the principle of harmony within us, and the unknown, incomprehensible principle of infinite harmony without us. That there is such an affinity is not disputed. That, by a secret attraction and influence, nature draws on the “*attempered*” mind towards God, is not denied. But that this mysterious influence is confined exclusively to the *sublime* in nature is certainly not true: and the elevation experienced when the mind is really thus drawn on-

¹ *Lectures*, etc. Introductory Dis.

ward from things created to the Infinite Creator is more nearly allied in kind to the sentiment of devotion than to that of sublimity ; two feelings which no person who has ever felt them both would ever think of confounding. As one example of the sublime in *art*, by which we feel lifted above the earth, Mr. Allston instances the Gothic Cathedral, " whose beginning and end are alike intangible, while its climbing tower seems visibly even to rise to the idea which it strives to embody." While we acknowledge the deep significance of this style of architecture, as well as its singular adaptedness to inspire and sustain devotional feelings in a rightly disposed mind, yet we cannot but perceive that this meaning and this tendency are quite distinct from that impression of sublimity which one spectator equally with another would have in contemplating the vast pile aside from its religious associations, and simply with reference to its æsthetical effect. In the one case, when we surrender ourselves to the sentiment of devotion, we are indeed drawn upward to the infinite, but so far as we are so, wholly lose sight both of the structure and ourselves ; in the other, the structure itself is what fills the mind, and at the same time elevates it, because it enjoys, instead of being only amazed and confounded by, the perplexing infinitude of details, in which the imagination is lost.

In the presence of the sublime, the mind is *moved*,

while at the sight of the beautiful, it is in a state of comparative repose, of tranquil contemplation. In the former case, we are, as it were, startled and attracted by the same object. The inadequacy of our limited power of sensuous apprehension, which is appalled at the magnitude, or the indefiniteness, of the object before it, discovers to us another, unlimited, power within ourselves, which is the measure of absolute greatness, and therefore, instead of shrinking from such objects, we are drawn to them.

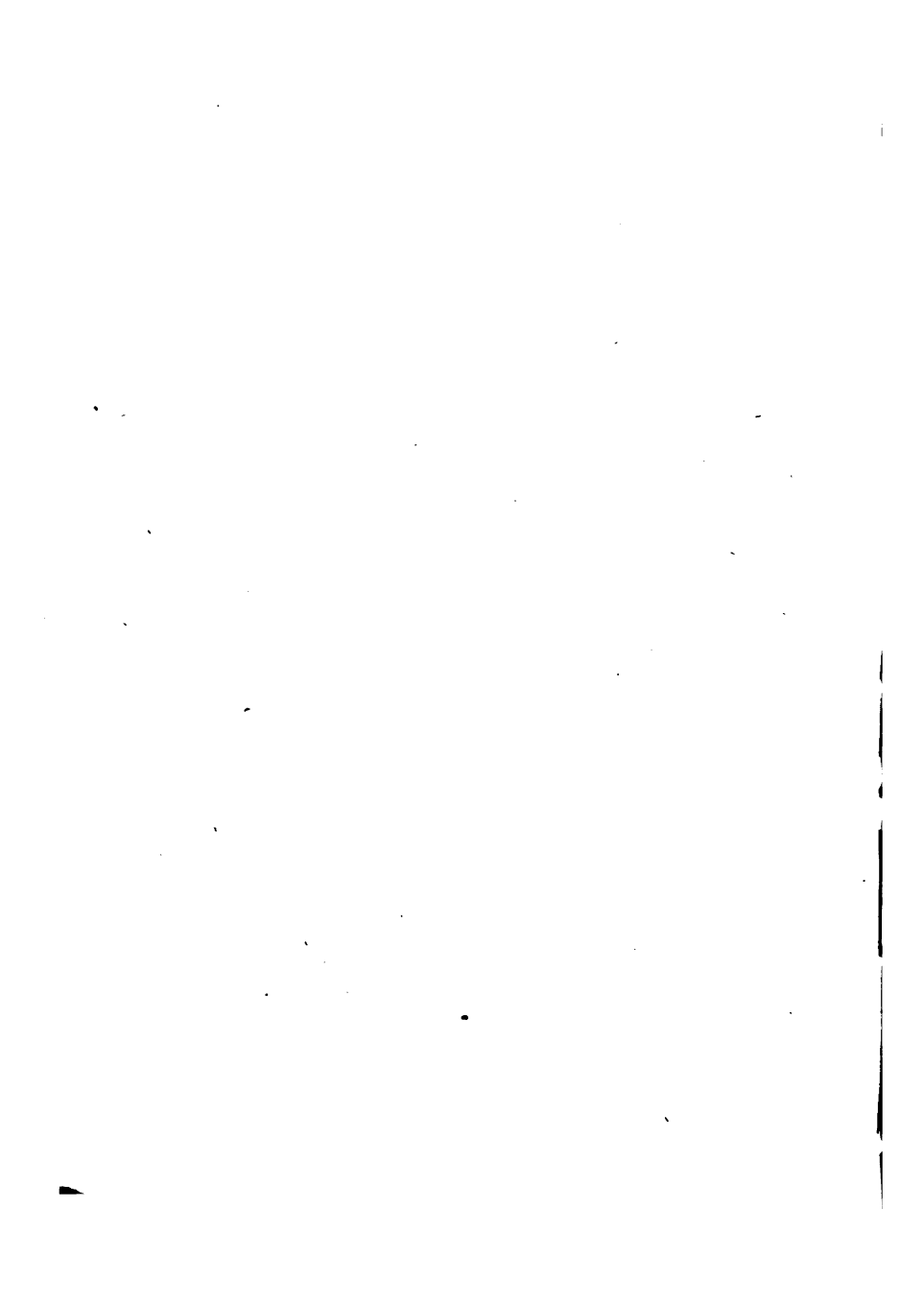
Hence, perhaps, we may account for the strange interest we take in the sublime of human suffering as it is exhibited in tragedy. Many have been struck with the singular fact, that, while sympathizing deeply with such suffering, we still give it the sanction of our secret approbation. The hero may struggle with his destiny, but he must not shun it, however terrible and undeserved. We see that destiny, at first vaguely shadowed forth, becoming more and more inevitable as the final catastrophe approaches. It is fixed by inexorable necessity, — fearful, undefined power, which gives all its terror to the ancient tragedy. The sublimity, however, does not lie here, but rather in the defiance of this power by the human will, when so situated that it could not do otherwise than defy, without at the same time denying the deep conviction of its own inherent freedom. Such a conflict, in which the resistance of the will is not only hopeless, but pro-

vokes and brings about the terrible catastrophe, would be a shocking rather than an elevating spectacle, unless we felt that, after all, freedom is higher and mightier than necessity, and, by asserting itself to the last, instead of falling, conquers.

It may be observed, in general, that it is this kind of sublimity, which consists in the elevation of the mind above matter and brute force, which alone can be represented by the arts of design. The material sublime, or its effects, may, it is true, be to some extent reproduced in poetry and description, though even here it must necessarily always fall short of the reality. But the great masses and powers of nature, mountains, earthquakes, storms, cannot be so imitated by painting as to produce the effect of their actual presence. While, on the other hand, the passions, and the control of the mind over them, devotion, inspiration, self-sacrifice, self-forgetting love, are favorite subjects, both in painting and sculpture. Thus the Laocoön and the Niobe are accounted among the most sublime productions of ancient art. In the one, the father and his two sons, in the other, the mother and her daughter, forget themselves in each other. The undefined grief and love which, in the latter group, strikes the two into senseless stone, baffles the imagination, but leaves a subject of endless contemplation for the mind.

X.

DIVISION OF THE ARTS.



CHAPTER X.

DIVISION OF THE ARTS.

I HAVE now said all that the limits of my plan will admit on the subject of Art in general ; and it has been my intention, however imperfectly it may have been fulfilled, to present in these remarks, in outline, at least, the principle, the means, and the end of all art, without reference to the particular mode and form in which it may embody and represent itself. The principle, — by which I mean, not the formal, but the essential principle, — the substantial ground, and vital source of all art, is the idea of the truth, dwelling within the breast not as a conception, but as a feeling, as a truth power, manifesting itself first in the form of feeling, and both prompting and guiding the imagination to the more or less adequate expression of all that is contained within it. The organ of expression is the imagination thus set in motion, and the means of expression are whatever materials can be employed to embody the forms of the imagination for the intuition of the outer or the inner sense. And the end of all art is simply the realization of the idea. Such a realization, that is, as the mind can repose in with com-

plete satisfaction, quite independent of all bias of personal desires or interests. But following this, as subordinate ends, are the empirical interests of pleasure, instruction, sympathy, and moral elevation.

The next thing to be considered is the division of art into the fine arts, the principle of this division, and the relations and affinities, thence resulting, of the fine arts among themselves.

What the fine arts are we know in general already ; but why they are, and in what necessary relations they stand to each other, is a question not so easily disposed of. The general opinion of the best thinkers, so far as I have had the opportunity of observing, is, that the ground of the division of art into the several fine arts must be looked for in some relation or other existing between the idea, which is the common principle of art, and its possible modes of outward expression. While the idea of the beautiful is one, the mode of its expression is necessarily determined by the nature of the outward materials of which it must avail itself in seeking realization. The materials of art comprise in general all those means which inward feeling and meaning have of expressing themselves outwardly. The first attempt at a philosophical division of the fine arts which has come to my knowledge is one made on this basis by Kant, in his criticism of the faculty of judgment.¹

¹ *Critik der Urtheilskraft*, § 51, *Von der Eintheilung der Schönen Künste*.

There are, he observes, several natural modes of expression which we resort to in the utterance of our thoughts and feelings, when we wish to communicate them to others ; such as tones and inflections of the voice, sounds modified by the organs of speech, postures and motions of the body : in other words, modulation, articulation, and gesture. These are the three modes of outward expression natural to man.

That they are natural to man is evident from the fact that they are resorted to alike by the untutored savage, and by the accomplished orator, when equally bent on conveying home to those whom they address, the impassioned feelings or thoughts which fill their own breasts. These three modes of expression when employed together, as in eloquence, admit of endless variety of combination, according as passion, truth, or fancy may be the governing impulse which sways and moves the mind of the speaker. But each of these modes of expressing actions, thoughts, and emotions may also be employed with great effect separately from the others. A story may be told in a very clear and graceful manner where the fancy alone is addressed through the eye, as in the Pantomime. Nothing is resorted to here, as the means, but outward action and gesture. Another and still higher class of emotions may be called into lively play by simple arrangements and combinations of inarticulate sounds. And

the power of language, even when unaided by action, or modulations of the voice, we all understand.

The fact that there are these three modes of expression, which can be used either separately or in combination, lays the foundation, according to Kant, for three general divisions of the *Fine Arts*: first, that class of them which employs as its material articulated sounds or words; second, that which makes use of outward forms and images of sense; and third, that class which resorts to the immediate expression of feelings.

1. That class of the fine arts which makes use of words as its material is again subdivided into two, *Oratory* and *Poetry*. Oratory moulds and fashions a work of the understanding and of pure logic so as to reconcile it with the free play of the imagination. Instead of confining itself to strictly logical forms, which can interest only the understanding, and that, too, only on the condition of its having reached a certain stage of development, which brings up the hearer towards a level with the speaker, it embodies thought in the form of symbols, images, and actions, addressing themselves alike to the fancy and feelings of all. Poetry, on the other hand, brings out a free work of the imagination which is at the same time strictly conformed to the essential laws of logic and of the understanding.

2. The arts which employ outward forms as their material, or which express ideas in intuitions of out-

ward instead of the inner sense are either such as exhibit *real* forms of sense, or such as employ only apparent forms. The first are the plastic arts, properly so called ; the second *painting*. Both use forms in space for the expression of ideas ; the one, forms addressed to the senses of both sight and touch ; the other, forms addressed to sight alone. The æsthetic idea in the imagination is the archetype for both. The plastic arts are Statuary and Architecture. In the first of these the expression of æsthetic ideas is the sole object : in the other, this is subordinate to an end of outward utility.

3. The arts which awaken the sense of beauty by the immediate excitement of feelings and emotions (the material, in this case, being not distinct images of sense, but simply the modulation and harmony of sounds and colors), are addressed to the senses of hearing and sight : namely, music and the art of coloring.

This division may be said, perhaps, to be ingenious, but when the attempt is made to carry it out into detail it is found to be artificial and defective. The analogy in some cases is extremely far fetched, as, between gesticulation and the plastic arts. By what stretch of the imagination can architecture be connected with gesture ? The art of coloring, again, is wrongly separated from painting : for though design is the main thing with the painter, yet, evidently, by design is not meant simply the outward

contour of the figures, but every part which helps towards the full expression of form. But the great objection is, it does not follow the natural order indicated by the historical development and progress of the arts themselves. In fact, the author himself does not pretend to propose it as the only philosophical division, but merely as one out of the many which might be proposed for the purpose of a systematic survey of the whole field of art.

A division which will be found, I think, to correspond more nearly to the true character of art, as naturally flowing out of its generic idea, as well as to the course of its development in history, is that into symbolic, classical, and romantic art.¹ I shall now proceed to point out more fully the grounds of this division.

There is a period in the history of art, and also one particular art, as I shall presently show, of which the sublime, the magnificent, is the characteristic type. In all cases of this sort, it may be said that the outward material or medium suggests to the mind more than it immediately expresses. The material, as such, preponderates over the expression, which latter is therefore extremely vague and indeterminate. This, as we have already seen, is the character of the symbol as it is found in all the works of material and organic nature below man. To these natural symbols we often resort, for the

¹ See Hegel's *Werke*, 10, 1, s. 378-380.

purpose of suggesting that which we have no convenient language to express. Hence the most rude and savage men, in an excited state of feeling, spontaneously express themselves in the boldest figures ; and hence the early poetry of almost every nation abounds in such symbolic forms, which rather obscurely hint at, than fully bring out, the meaning intended. Nor does poetry in its more refined and cultivated state by any means avoid language of the same kind ; the difference is, that such language does not constitute its prevailing character, because in cultivated poetry, instead of nature striving with more or less rudeness to express reason, we have self-conscious reason purposely embodying clearly developed ideas in forms so transparent, that we see clearly through them to the more spiritual thought. We find cultivated poetry, however, occasionally resorting to these natural symbols, which suggest rather than clearly present the thing intended. Thus Milton, describing the encounter between Death and Satan : —

“ Such a frown

Each cast at th' other, as when two black clouds
With heaven's artillery fraught, come rattling on
Over the Caspian ; then stand front to front
Hovering a space, till winds the signal blow
To join their dark encounter in mid air ;
So frown'd the mighty combatants, that hell
Grew darker at their frown.”¹

It is in vain we seek here for a clear and distinct

¹ *Paradise Lost*, ii. 713.

image of the thing designed to be represented. All is left vague ; but so the poet intended it, in order to give ample room to the shaping imagination. The symbol, as such, is also introduced more or less into sculpture and painting ; and indeed into all the arts, — but sparingly, and only for a particular purpose : for example, as a standing or traditional emblem of the character represented. Thus, the ægis of Minerva, the bonnet of Mercury, the laurel of Apollo in Grecian art ; the camel's skin of John the Baptist, the sword of St. Luke, the wheel of St. Catherine in Christian art, — are symbols significant of more than they immediately express, and characteristic of the individuals on whom they are found.

Now what I wish to say here is, that where the symbol, as such, instead of being introduced occasionally and for a subordinate purpose, as in the cases just mentioned, constitutes the prevailing type and character of art, — in this case the real, by which I mean the medium of outward expression, ever has predominance over the idea. The latter is vague, and oftentimes wholly lost in the material. On the other hand, when the idea is completely expressed in the outward form, so that there is neither a preponderance of the former over the latter, nor of the latter over the former, we have an entirely different, and much more perfect type of art, which also is represented by one particular art.

Again, when the idea preponderates over the form, we have still another entirely distinct style of art, as well as another epoch in the progress of its development. This lays the groundwork for a division of the fine arts which, as I have said, grows out of the true conception of art generally, and, moreover, corresponds with what is found to be actually true in the history of the arts among men.

In the first place, the *symbol*, which is the least defined expression of conceptions or ideas, was the form of art as it existed among the most ancient nations, — among the Persians, the people of India, and the Egyptians ; and as it is still seen in what remains of their works. In the ruins of Persepolis, in the grottoes and pagodas of Hindostan, in the subterranean or out-standing temples of Egypt, we cannot fail of seeing at once the symbolical character of the art of these ancient peoples. It was an attempt to suggest by massive, and often monstrous, forms the infinite and absolute, which cannot be so expressed. Art was here intimately connected with religion. And its peculiar character, where it did not run into the grotesque, was sublimity. The feeling of sublimity, as we have already seen, is more or less connected with the vague, the shapeless, the undefined. Massive structures, figures of colossal size, for the most part emblematical, and varying from the human form in order to be so ; hieroglyphical inscriptions, where each letter was

an indistinct image of some natural object, — these are the predominant characters of Oriental, and more particularly of Egyptian, art.

The second great step in the history of the fine arts is that in which this symbolical and emblematic character is entirely superseded, and where we find as perfect a coincidence and equipoise between the idea and its outward realization as the nature of the case admits. The first complete and successful representation of mental ideas in forms addressed to the outward sense was in the plastic arts of Greece. Many good observers have noticed the plastic, statue-like character which pervades the whole domain of Grecian art, not less the poetry than the sculpture of that people.¹ Everything here is objective, fully realized, completely expressed to sight and touch. The symbolic meaning is absorbed and lost in the beauty of outward forms.

The *third* step in the progress of the fine arts is the more spiritual character of modern art. The pure, ideal, characterless perfection of outward beauty of form here ceases to be the main thing. The individual rises to importance. Gods and demi-gods make place for man created after the divine image, and capable of rising above his earthly

¹ See Coleridge, *Characteristics of Shakespeare's Dramas*; A. W. Schlegel's *Lectures on Dramatic Art*; Schelling's *Oration on the Relation of the Arts of Design to Nature*.

nature. The outward form is valued only as a means of expressing the inward beauty of the soul, and as that beauty admits of an endless variety of expression, and, in order to be brought out in its more delicate shades, must often be brought into contrast with the opposite qualities, hence the great latitude and freedom which modern art allows itself as compared with the ancient. It is true the ancients did not neglect the higher moral qualities of the soul; as we see in the bloom of their poetry, in the drama, "the lofty grave tragedians," as Milton calls them.

"Teachers best

"Of moral prudence,"

"High actions and high passions best describing."¹

But this is the predominant character of modern art. Hence the materials themselves are less palpable, less outward, — colors, sounds, words.

The art which was cultivated to the greatest extent in the *symbolic* period, and which also most truly represents it, because in this art the material has a vast preponderance over the idea, is *architecture*. That which answers to the classical epoch is *sculpture*. And the branches of art which characterize the modern period are *painting*, *music*, and *poetry*.

It is generally allowed that the moderns, in their best attempts, have not been able to approach the

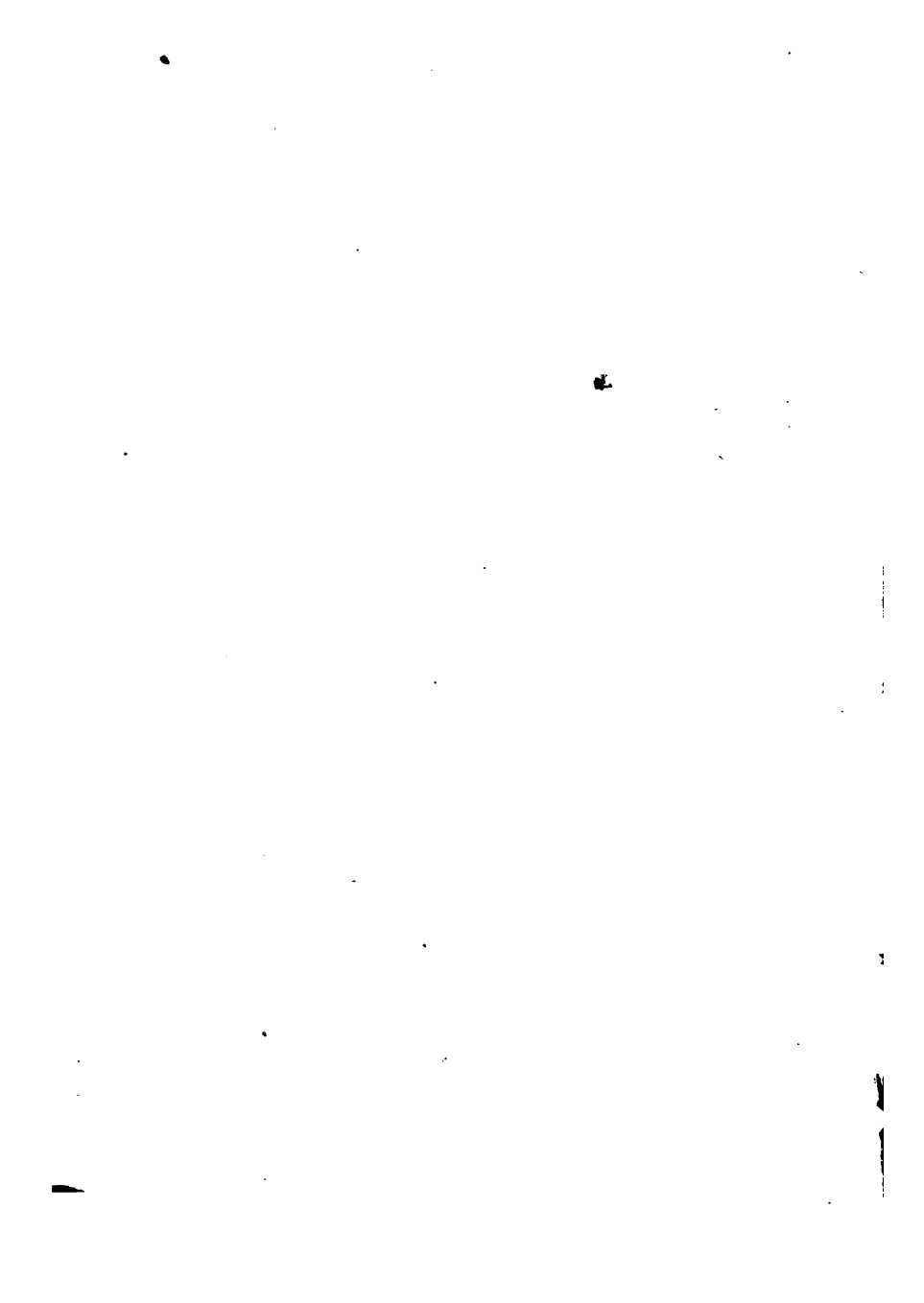
¹ *Paradise Regained*, Book iv. 266.

ancient Greeks in sculpture, comparing what the former have done even with the few great productions of ancient art which still remain. But when we call to mind that the best productions of the age of Phidias have perished, and that every little city of Greece was full of the noblest works of the chisel, we may see the claim of sculpture to be called pre-eminently the classical art.¹ To compensate for this, the moderns have carried the more spiritual arts of painting, music, and poetry, to a higher degree of perfection than was probably known in the ancient world.

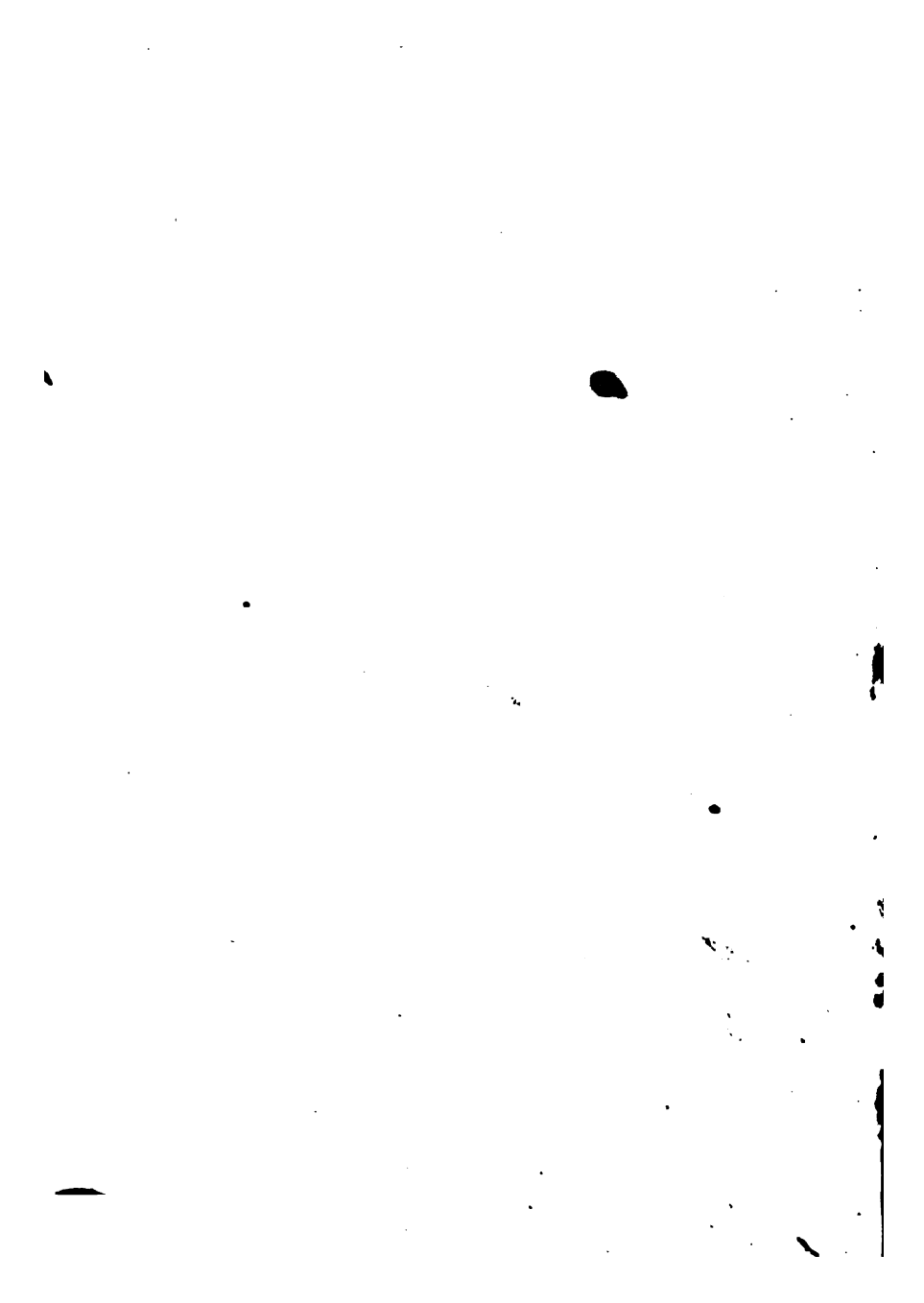
In the first of these arts, in architecture, we have the conception, the idea, but vaguely defined, and in its most abstract form, as in organic nature, — beauty expressed by outward regularity and symmetry of parts. In the second, in sculpture, we have the more complete realization of æsthetic ideas, the utmost possible distinctness of parts harmonized together in the unity of a whole. And as everything in the idea is in the form, the beauty is entirely objective; we are fastened to the object. Settled repose, calmness, dignity, grace, are the peculiar characteristics of this statuesque style of art. The art of painting among the Greeks seems to have partaken of the same character. The Grecian temple was as severely chaste and simple as the naked figure it enshrined.

¹ See Overbeck, *Geschichte der Griechischen Plastik*, P. iii. Einleitung.

In the third, and romantic, style of art, so called because it grew up among the Christian nations of the West, who laid the foundations of modern culture on the ruins of the old Roman Empire, — in this last style of art, the main thing is expression, the expression of the inward beauty of the soul, of moral ideas, of man's connection with a higher world, of his great destination. If we ask for the greatest productions of modern art, we shall have to look for them in the three arts which I have mentioned as belonging peculiarly to modern times : and particularly in *that* music, *that* painting, and *that* poetry, whose object it is to raise man above earthly things. If we ask for the two great epics of the modern world, would any one at all acquainted with the subject hesitate a moment to say : they are the "Divine Comedy" of Dante, and the "Paradise Lost" of Milton ?



XI.
ARCHITECTURE.



CHAPTER XI.

ARCHITECTURE.

THE several fine arts having been thus arranged according to their natural and historical order, let us proceed next to inquire more particularly respecting the means, the special ends, and the capabilities of each.

We begin then with Architecture, as the first in historical order, and the lowest, inasmuch as it is the basis and foundation of all the others. But when architecture is reckoned as the lowest among the arts, it should be remembered that the standard of comparison is not *utility*, nor *magnificence* or imposing grandeur of appearance, nor *harmony of outward proportions*; but simply its suitability to answer in a satisfactory manner the great end and purpose of art in general, which is, as we have considered it, the realization or embodiment of ideas in sensible forms. Considered from this point of view, architecture, in its relation to the other arts, must take an inferior place; and, gardening excepted — if this can be considered in art by itself, and not rather a mere appendage to architecture, — it makes the least pretension to that kind of beauty which

consists in the full realization of such concrete ideas. It has no power of presenting its objects so as to produce the impression of an organic unity. Its only unity is that of such outward relation of parts one to the other and to the whole as we call symmetry, — exactness of proportion. In this respect it may be said to stand in the same relation to statuary, as in nature the formative law shown in the crystal does to that in an organized body.

Again, the end of architecture, as a fully developed art, is not in itself. It does not terminate in the realization of a beautiful conception or plan, but looks still farther onward to a purpose of utility. Its work has meaning only so far as it is adapted to a use out of itself, — to accommodate an occupant or occupants. It must have an *obvious* purpose of utility. It must not only be adapted to an end without itself, but must clearly manifest that adaptation. And hence an architectural work should unite harmony of outward proportions, with fitness for its proposed object; and as this fitness depends on the nature of the object, on the locality, on the climate, and other like circumstances, it is evident that there can be no common standard or model for works of this sort. The Grecian architecture, for example, was adapted to the national institutions, and to the peculiar climate, of Greece. It grew out of the wants of that people, and took a form which, though it may have been in part borrowed originally from

the East, yet was modified, or rather reproduced and made over again, with a strict reference to their climate, and to the materials it was most convenient for them to employ. It would be absurd, therefore, to set up the Grecian style as an absolute standard for all times and places. Architectural forms must necessarily be modified by the purposes of the structure; and when these two elements, beauty and use, do not completely harmonize, a sound taste, which in this case is one and the same with good sense, will not be satisfied.

At the same time, architecture, *as a fine art*, has regard simply to the beauty of the fabric, and is designed to express the subjective idea of the artist.¹ That idea is the ground of all the unity that appears, and embraces the useful and the decorative together. Hence if the plan of the original concipient is not fully carried out, or is altered in

¹ Sismondi, in his history of the Italian Republics, speaking of the revival of art, under the auspices of those republics in Italy, which he says began with architecture, remarks in regard to this art, that it is of all others "the one that most immediately wears the character of the age, since its object is not the imitation of nature, but to represent the ideal forms of abstract beauty, as man conceives them. Hence it best makes known the greatness, the energy, or the littleness of the nation where it flourished, of the man who carried it to perfection; and it is the art which can best afford to do without the heritage of preceding generations, the one where genius and the force of will can most easily supply the place of the rules or examples with the study of which all the other arts must begin."

Histoire des Repub. Italiennes du Moyen Age, ch. xxv.

the process of construction by any one but himself, the effect at which he aimed is inevitably lost. A piece of architecture which manifests genius is worked out, as it has been well said, in the same manner as a poem. The æsthetic idea as the groundwork of the whole must come first; and it is to this conception of the imagination that skill and understanding are applied to render it practicable in construction. All the ends of utility can be answered without this, but the charm of beauty must be wanting.

As the materials of architecture are massive, inorganic matter, so its forms consist for the most part of abstract relations of quantity. It is the most mathematical of all the arts. Straight lines, determinate angles, regular curves, and exact proportions abound; the bold, free, unconfined outlines of organic life are wanting. It may seem strange the notion should ever have been entertained, that either the forms or the proportions of architecture were all originally derived from the organic world. The fixedness of these *proportions* is their main characteristic; and is so manifestly connected with the necessary disposition and support of *heavy masses*, as to be unaccountable without reference to the original materials. It is an art necessarily reposing on certain structural conditions. Is not the proportion of the Grecian pillar, for instance, necessarily calculated upon the strength of the material employed, and the superincumbent weight?

But when we attempt to account to ourselves for the fundamental forms, proportions, and ornaments of architecture by the massive nature of the material of which the *first architectural works* were constructed, we assume something as a fact, which can neither be proved by history, nor shown to be very probable, namely, that the first buildings were constructed of stone or some other heavy material. There are three ways in which we may suppose that architecture, as an art expressive of some design beyond that of mere utility, originated. First, in simple structures of wood. In this case the idea of the pillar might be taken from the trunks of trees ; the ceiling and roof from their overarching boughs. Other ornaments, when introduced, would naturally follow this primitive type, and be taken from forms peculiar to the vegetable world. These would be retained when more massive materials began to be employed. Or we may suppose that architecture, in the proper sense, commenced with the employment of those heavier materials, and arose from the effort to give dignity to structures erected for public purposes, and especially for the celebration of religious worship. In this case the style would naturally have some relation to the nature of the material employed, as well as to the particular purpose for which the building might be designed. Finally we may conceive that the first efforts in the architectural art were expended in the erection of struc-

tures of a purely symbolical character, having no other use than their significance as memorials of important events, the historical records of a people without a written language, the first rude attempts to give outward expression to thoughts and ideas considered worthy of being handed down to future generations. It would be difficult to conceive any other purpose for which many of those ancient monuments were erected, — the Druidical circles, the mounds of Wisconsin and Ohio, the isolated pillars and obelisks, which belong among the earliest and most permanent works which man has erected on the face of the earth. It would soon very naturally occur, to distinguish these monuments from all other structures intended for the ordinary purposes of life, either by more elaborate ornament, or by a form bearing some relation to the things they were designed to commemorate or to symbolize, or else by their colossal size and proportions. All these marks of distinction might be combined together in the same work, as in the tower of Belus, which stood entire in the time of Herodotus, who saw it and describes it.¹ A massive square wall, two stadia in length on each side, with brazen gates, inclosed a solid tower of one stadium in length and breadth. This supported another tower, also solid, and so on to the number of eight towers, one above the other. Steps ascended on the outside from one

¹ Herod., i. 181.

stage to another, and the whole was crowned with a great temple, containing nothing but a couch in the centre, before which stood a golden table. We cannot fail to perceive the difference between this and a temple in the Greek or Roman sense. It was a temple in which there was no idol, and in which no worship was performed. From such structures, designed rather for a symbolical purpose, than to serve as the habitations of men, or for the accommodation of a public assembly, it is most probable that architecture as an art, in the proper sense of the word, began; and, in connection with these, we may suppose, were invented those fundamental forms which, variously modified, were subsequently employed in the decoration of buildings having a more direct reference to public or private utility. We shall find this supposition remarkably illustrated and confirmed by a glance at the general character of the architectural works of one of the oldest civilized nations, whose monuments, owing to their material and the solidity of their structure, while they are the most ancient, are among the best preserved, that have come down to our times. One of the first things that strikes a stranger among the remains of ancient Egypt is the obelisk, an upright polished shaft of solid granite, covered with hieroglyphical inscriptions. We ask what it means, and whence its form. We are informed by Pliny¹ that it

¹ *Nat. Hist.*, xxxv. ch. 14.

was a monument dedicated to the sun, whose rays it caught, and at the same time represented. It was a sunbeam in stone. Of the partly monumental, partly symbolical character of the sphynxes ; of the so-called statues of Memnon, of the pyramids, there never was any question. The labyrinths, those singular buildings, stranger than the pyramids, half in the air, half underground, each embodied a riddle. One of these, near the lake of Moeris, said to be recently brought to light again, was visited by Herodotus, who says it contained three thousand chambers, besides halls and winding passages without end, inclosed by one and the same wall. To walk through its mazy rounds was to solve the intricate courses of the planets. The halls in this building were surrounded with columns of polished marble.¹ But let us pass to the temples. Here we have a continuous series of the structures already described, following, one kind after the other : sphynxes, obelisks before the great entrance, a pair of semi-pyramids constituting the portal and called the propylæon, then a long double row of pillars standing in the open air, finally the temple itself, the sacred inclosure, dedicated to the inner mysteries of a superstitious and idolatrous worship. The significant, suggestive character of all these objects is more or less distinctly expressed by the winged globe and other symbolic figures on the propylæon, the Lotus

¹ Herod. ii., 148.

flower of the Nile on the capitals of the pillars, the very walls of the inner temple completely covered with figures in bas-relief, different from those in nature, and designed to be significant by means of this difference. The same remarkable peculiarities we find in the ruins of Persepolis,¹ and in the recently excavated remains of ancient Nineveh. The old temples of India, also, were after a wholly analogous style ; so that no doubt can remain with regard to the general pervading type of the oldest architecture.

The farther we go back, the more massive are these forms. This is the general fact with regard to all the ancient nations, and with regard to the earliest type of architecture in each. Whatever importance, therefore, may be attached to local circumstances, and to the direct influences of external nature, which may have led some nations, as for example the Egyptians, to form structures of gigantic size and indefinite extent ; yet when we find this tendency to prefer the vast and massive characterizing the earliest architecture of every people, it seems evident that this disposition naturally belongs to the human mind at a certain stage of culture. The name " Cyclopean," which the Greeks and Italians applied to their most ancient structures, indicates the solid and massive character of those works, which seemed to them too stupendous a labor for any other

¹ Müller, *Archæologie der Kunst*, § 246.

than a Cyclopean race of men.¹ As it regards Egypt, it still remains a wonder how such vast blocks of stone as are found in the oldest architectural works of that country could have been removed from their natural positions. But the buildings themselves were correspondingly enormous in size ; — the ruins on the plain of Luxor, for instance, exhibiting to the wonder of modern eyes a temple which when entire must have extended more than a mile in length. It is indeed difficult to transport one's self back, and really enter into the feelings and views of an age which seemed to require such stupendous monuments to express itself. But that the peculiar character of these works grew out of the people themselves at that particular stage of culture, and was not owing, as some would have it, to purely physical and other influences, is as evident as that similar works have never been produced, under precisely the same physical and outward influences, in any succeeding time.

The same general remark, that the farther we go back to the early beginnings of architecture among any people who have had an architecture of their own, the more massive we find its forms, holds good in tracing the progress of this art among the Greeks. That this people borrowed the fundamental forms of the art which they carried to such a height of perfection from the Egyptians, cannot be doubted.

¹ See Muller's *Archæologie der Kunst*, § 45.

But among the Greeks these forms were divested altogether of their symbolical character, made wholly subservient to an end combining utility with beauty, and reduced to that severe unity of design, rigidly excluding everything superfluous, everything not indispensable, either for use, or for harmony of effect, which justly entitles their style to the epithet which it has ever borne, that of the classical architecture.

Before tracing the development of this art among the Greeks, let us consider for a moment the general character of the classical style, and the necessary relation which every part has to the other in this sort of building. The object is to inclose a space, either for walking, as a portico; or for the accommodation of public assemblies, as an open forum, a pnyx, a theatre; or as a sanctuary and shrine of the deity, a temple. As the latter is the only case, out of all these, in which a space is completely inclosed by walls and a roof, in which therefore all the ends of architecture are fully realized, we may confine our attention to this as the most perfect model of the classical style of architecture. In the first place we are struck with the grand proportions of the whole, in the three dimensions of space. The structure is neither too low nor too high, too long nor too broad. There might be an excess in either of these and still the building answer the purpose of its construction as an inclosure, a sanctuary; but in the first place, there ought to be no such excess

without a reason for it; and in the second place, such excess would be contrary to that symmetry and harmony of proportions which a just sense of the beautiful in art ever requires. The Greek architecture for the first time established and fixed the law regulating those conditions on which the grand, imposing effect of an architectural structure as a whole must always depend.

Now if there is a roof, it must be supported, as well as the triangular spaces necessitated by the sloping of the roof at the two ends. The walls have already a purpose of their own like the roof; they are for *inclosure*. Some other special provision is therefore necessary for *support*. In many cases walls alone could not support a roof. This necessity is supplied by *pillars*, which, as supports, should each have a base and capital. In order to stability and strength, these pillars, instead of being isolated and wholly independent of each other, should be bound together at top by a common beam. This necessitates the *architrave*. The architrave, at the same time that it binds the pillars, must itself also serve as a support; on it lie the beams and rafters of ceiling and roof. The heads of these beams lying over the architrave, together with the intervals between them, necessitated the *frieze*. But the architrave and frieze need protection; the roofs should not end suddenly upon them, but must project over them. Hence the necessity of a *cornice*

over the frieze. Thus we might go through every detail of a Grecian building, and easily convince ourselves that the minutest parts all stand together in that mutual relation of necessity which comes nearest to express, in a case of this sort, where all the relations are outward, the unity of an organic whole.

I now proceed to give a rapid sketch of the development of this art among the Greeks, and of the several orders which resulted from that development. The most ancient, and at the same time the most simple and massive style, was the *Doric*. Some think that the Tuscan, the prevailing order of the Greek colonies in Italy, was still older, the oldest style of architecture among the Greeks.¹ It is characterized by still greater simplicity, by pillars without bases, and the absence of everything merely ornamental. In other respects these two orders were nearly alike, and gave the same impression of solidity, strength, and massive grandeur. The most obvious mark of the type in these, as well as all the other Grecian orders, is contained in the pillars, their height in relation to their diameter, their ornament, particularly the capital, their distance apart. In the Doric pillar, the pillar is never more than seven, or seven and a half times its own diameter in height; sometimes only four. The capital is

¹ See *Hirt. Geschichte der Baukunst*, Zweites Alter, § 27, and *Vitruvius*, lib. iv. c. 7, and lib. iii. c. 2.

a simple swell or expansion. The shaft is sometimes smooth, at others channeled. They stand apart, in the oldest buildings, only at the distance of the thickness of two pillars. Next after the Doric, in the order of time, comes the Ionic, which, in respect of solidity, stands between the Doric and the Corinthian. Elegance and grace constitute the distinguishing characteristic of this order, which effect is due chiefly to the smaller size of the pillars in proportion to their height, and to their greater distance apart. In the capital of the Ionic pillar, the termination is finely expressed by the four segments, each winding upon itself. With the Corinthian order the architecture of the Greeks seems to have arrived at its natural end ; for the material is here wrought to the highest degree of lightness and elegance compatible with the strength of the shaft. With the exception of the cylindrical pillars and their wreathed capitals, we find nothing in these purer forms of the Greek architecture which contains any hint of the arch, whether round or pointed, which forms so constant a feature in the more modern art. Straight lines and angles constitute the whole, and the Romans are said to have been the first to introduce arches between the pillars, as well as vaulted ceilings and domes. If we except this change, the architecture of the ancient Romans, as well as all their other arts, was borrowed wholly from the Greeks.

The last of the historical orders deserving that name belong exclusively to Christian art ; and although they probably grew by insensible transitions out of the elements taken from these older heathen forms, yet these elements were in themselves of but subordinate importance, mere conditions ; and were transfused with an entirely different spirit. The first of these is the Lombard or Romanesque : the second the pointed, or Gothic order of architecture. The domed cathedrals of Italy represent the one style, the spiry and pinnacled structures of the north of Europe the other. Having mentioned these most characteristic features, I shall not enter any more minutely into the differences between these two types of modern architecture. Of the Gothic, however, it may be observed that the aim seems to be to overcome the massiveness of the material by dividing it into the utmost tenuity of parts. The slim and tall pillars are strengthened by being grouped into ten or twenty together, and the roof and ceiling are formed by their branching extremities. Without, the structure ends in a central or double spire, springing gradually upward from the base, with numberless subsidiary pinnacles.

With regard to the symbolical character of these two styles of Christian art, I will quote the following — perhaps they may be deemed rather overstrained — remarks of a late English writer. “ The Lombard architecture, with its horizontal lines, its

circular arches and expanding cupolas, soothes and calms one ; the Gothic, with its pointed arches, aspiring vaults, and intricate tracery, rouses and excites, — and why ? Because the one symbolizes an infinity of Rest, the other of Action, in the adoration and service of God. And this consideration will enable us to advance a step further. The aim of the one style is definite, of the other indefinite ; we look up to the dome of heaven, and calmly acquiesce in the abstract idea of infinity ; but we only realize the impossibility of *conceiving* it, by the flight of imagination from star to star, from firmament to firmament. Even so Lombard architecture attained perfection, expressed its idea, accomplished its purpose, but Gothic never ; the ideal is unapproachable.”

XII.
SCULPTURE.



CHAPTER XII.

SCULPTURE.

ARCHITECTURE naturally prepares the way for sculpture, and, in fact, the two are found almost constantly associated. The oldest temples of India were crowded with figures, for the most part symbolical. This is the case also with the splendid ruins of Persepolis, where, however, the figures are not all symbolical, but represent the different nations belonging to the old Persian empire, coming to bring their tributes to the king, in their several costumes, and with the natural products of their countries. The walls of the Egyptian structures were covered, within and without, with figures in bas-relief, and even those ruder monuments recently brought to light by the researches of travellers in Central America abound in decorations of the same kind. Among the Greeks, architecture and sculpture were rarely separated from each other. Most of the detached and isolated remains of Grecian sculpture which are to be found in modern galleries originally belonged to public buildings, and those which were brought from Greece to Rome were again employed for a similar purpose, — to embellish the temples,

forums, and porticoes of the latter city. The temple was incomplete without a statue in its shrine, while, besides, on the exterior of the buildings, the frieze under the eaves, or the metopes of the frieze, — the intervals between the projecting roof beams, — were ornamented with bas-reliefs; and the pediment, or triangular space sustained by the pillars in front, was filled up with entire figures in groups.

But although sculpture grew out of architecture as its natural root, although it used the same material, and went hand in hand with the latter art, yet as those highly organized forms in nature which require and imply others less perfect, as their necessary condition and basis, still have a law of their own, so sculpture was governed by its own principle, and aimed at its own peculiar end. While the temple was for the statue, the latter, which it enshrined, was for itself. While in architecture the material predominated, and the unity was only one of outward proportions of masses, in sculpture the material was overcome, and converted throughout into an expression of the inspiring idea; and this idea was man, in the full-developed energy of his entire physical, moral, and intellectual being.

Hence, no doubt, in part at least, the comparative limitation of the range of objects which come naturally and appropriately within the sphere of this art. It is not everything in nature that can be fitly represented by sculpture. And while the art is

confined for the most part to the human figure, admitting of variety only within that general range, its power of representing the human form is also confined in a great measure to detached, isolated examples. In order to variety, it must descend below the strict severity of the ideal standard ; since character, individuality of character, necessarily requires a deviation — greater, in the same proportion as it is more strongly marked — from the perfect balance and unity of ideal beauty. The statue is a whole by itself, isolated from everything else ; it carries its own space with it. Each figure must constitute a world within itself, a microcosm. This highest unity is the only one of which, strictly speaking, statuary is capable.

I have said, that, in the ancient sculpture, objects in many cases were represented in groups, where each figure stood in a certain relation to the others. This grouping was necessitated, for the most part, by the close connection of sculpture, in the ancient world, with architecture ; and hence the posture, and action, of the several figures in such groups were determined, very often, by the nature and condition of the spaces they occupied. Thus it was common to fill the pediment supported by the pillars constituting the front of an ancient temple, not with bas-reliefs, but with entire figures in statuary. The space being a triangular one, gradually narrowing towards the extremities, it was necessary, of course,

that while the central figure preserved a standing posture, the others should be represented in a variety of positions, as the space allowed, as kneeling, recumbent, or prostrate on the ground. There were other groups, however, where the position and attitude of the figures were not necessarily determined by their relation to anything without themselves. The Laocoön is the most perfect example of a grouping of this sort. The figures in this remarkable composition are bound together by the terrible link of the two serpents, clasping three human beings together in their inextricable folds. So in the Niobe, the daughter clings to her mother as her natural refuge. Such are the cases of the highest conceivable unity of composition between several independent figures in statuary. It is unity secured solely by bringing the objects into actual contact with each other. In the other cases of grouping, where the objects are separated from each other by an intervening space, the unity is expressed simply by the relation which these objects have to each other, as indicated by their actions. The connecting link is not supplied by art, but by natural space ; or rather it is supplied by the mind of the spectator, who perceives that these objects have a connection with each other, not merely because they are in proximity, but because their several postures and actions are intelligible only by reference to their relations to each other.

It is in this respect, that composition in sculpture differs from that in painting. In the latter art, space itself is created, as well as the figures which occupy it. The lights and shadows, all surrounding objects and their reflections, actually unite together, by means entirely within the province of the art itself, a multitude of different and independent objects within the same whole. Each figure, to be sure, is but partially represented; we cannot contemplate each, as we can in a group of statues, on every side of it; but we can see that all are not only *ideally*, but *really* and *in fact*, united together by a medium which is the product of the same art that produced the figures themselves. Thus, in this matter of grouping, we perceive the very close connection of sculpture with architecture, on the one side, and one of its most remarkable points of difference from painting, on the other.

There is a necessity in sculpture of preserving a perfect equipoise, so far as that is possible, between the form and the material. In *all* art, the complete fusion of form and matter is the highest achievement; but nothing great can be accomplished in this particular art without it. If the material has the preponderance, the artist must fall short of his idea, and produce nothing, in not producing what he intends. And sculpture cannot give prominence to the ideal side, cannot indulge in the strong expression of intellectual or moral qualities, with-

out overstepping its appropriate limits. The spiritual must be expressed wholly in the material, — the marble or the stone. Hence, according to Schelling, sculpture can reach the very height of its power, in the representation of such natures, alone, as imply in their essence and conception the necessity of being uniformly and at all times what they are in idea ; namely, in beings supposed to be possessed of a divine nature.¹ And for the same reason, since inertness belongs necessarily to matter, it is a fundamental law in sculpture, that, in order to preserve the equipoise between the idea of the artist and the material he employs, the expression of feelings, of the passions, must be moderated. And this holds good, not of the lower passions only, but of them all, even of the highest of which the soul is capable. In this respect too, — in its capability of expressing human passions, sculpture, as an art, concedes its inferiority to painting.

The distinctive excellence of sculpture, in a word, is, that it can embody the highest possible degree of outward beauty in a single figure. In this respect, painting cannot approach to sculpture ; and sculpture exhibits the highest creative power of art in *detached examples*. Art, as such, cannot go beyond what sculpture is able to produce, so far as beauty of form in a single figure is concerned ; and as complete perfection of form can be carried by

¹ *Relations of the Arts of Design to Nature.*

this art into every part of the figure, as it does not represent one side merely, but every side, and can give perfection to every limb and every muscle, it can go beyond what nature has to present in any individual example.

Hence the *ideality* of this art. The notion of the ideal perfection of the human form seems to have been first awakened in the modern mind by contemplating the classical works of antiquity. The sense of this perfection was vividly impressed on the Italian masters, both of sculpture and painting, in the fifteenth century, who employed this word to denote the difference between the beauty of the human form as expressed in the remains of Grecian sculpture then existing in Rome and Florence, and the ordinary productions of art in their own days. Winckelmann, a German, who spent the greater part of his active life in Rome, and who seems to have united, beyond most other men, either of his own age or of any other, a quick sensibility to the beautiful in art, with the most profound judgment, together with a power of exact analysis, was the first to express, in clear language, in what this ideality of ancient art essentially consisted. Since his time, several of the best works of the best days of Greece, then scarcely known, or altogether unknown in Italy, have been discovered and transported to Western Europe, — to Germany or England. But although an important addition

has thus been made, since the days of Winckelmann, to the means of forming a judgment of the peculiar character of ancient art, still no occasion has yet been found to alter, or materially to modify, the just views which seem to have presented themselves, at once, to his clear vision.

The ideality of ancient sculpture appears to consist mainly in three particulars. *First*, in the unity in which the several parts of the human body, in their most perfect state of organization, — the knowledge of which, therefore, could have proceeded only from actual and immediate observation, — are taken up and combined together in a new whole expressing the utmost freedom. *Secondly*, in the minute accuracy with which every point of surface, every swell and depression, every accidental modification of a muscle or a vein occasioned by the action or the attitude of the figure, modifications so slight as often to be imperceptible, except to the most delicate touch, or under a particular point of light, are represented. These slight shades of variation, though not noticed by themselves, yet, being at one place as much as another, over the whole surface, instead of being lost, contribute essentially to the general impression. These interminable differences, balanced and reconciled at every point, express the very flush and vigor of life. We see some muscles in repose, others in action, but each kind so as to seem capable of exchanging parts with the

other, which change would be instantly followed by a wave of motion over the whole surface of limb or body. But this general harmony of parts, and accuracy in the details of particular parts, communicating as they do the impression of freedom and life, are after all but conditions, the necessary foundation and basis of something else, namely, *spirit*. This is the third and last quality of the ideal in art. In the highest works of sculpture, spirit is corporealized, or body spiritualized. Such terms seem, indeed, to imply a contradiction; and by some people, perhaps, would be pronounced absurd. Language is, at best, but an imperfect medium to convey impressions, intuitions. In the present case, it is simply intended to denote a peculiar impression made on every susceptible mind in contemplating a great work of ancient sculpture. It is not only instinct with life, physical life, but with spirit, internal life. What spirit? Of course it is that of the artist. He has breathed himself into it, and the best of himself, his whole feeling of what that exalted nature is, or ought to be, which he strives to represent. That nature, that high intelligence, that immortal youth and vigor of inward life is embodied, represented not by symbols, but in fact. It diffuses itself and declares itself throughout the whole form.

But we are not to suppose that this ideality was confined by the Greek sculptor to the representa-

tion of those higher natures, those imaginary or traditional beings, which his countrymen worshiped as gods. The same pervading character is apparent in all the productions of the chisel belonging to the flourishing period of the arts in Greece. In those beautiful reliefs, now in the British museum, which once adorned the frieze of the Parthenon at Athens, and are supposed by many to be the work, or at least after the design, of Phidias himself, we see a religious procession composed of young men and maidens, intermingled with their elders, clad in the holiday costumes, and bearing the implements and vessels, of a Panathenaic festival. Here we have ordinary life. But it is the idealized life of a people, the people of Athens, in the pomp and circumstance of a high public action, a *pan* Athenaic celebration. In the dignity of the elders, the respectful, but manly bearing of the young men, the decorous modesty of the maidens, we see embodied the spirit of Athens as represented by each class of her citizens. And such bas-reliefs, I may here observe, were the intermediate steps from sculpture to painting.

At the same time, it is quite beyond the power of sculpture, though capable of all this which I have described, to bring out the whole soul, and reveal to us all that man, as a being endowed with feeling as well as mind, is capable of, and all that he aspires to become. The beauty of the statue

is superhuman and cold ; it does not descend, — come down to our feelings as men ; it is too elevated for our common and natural sympathies.

Although the forms in sculpture are not *necessarily* modified by the material, as in architecture, but the chisel of the artist overcomes the hardness of the stone, so as to give it an appearance of the utmost softness and flexibility ; yet considerable proficiency had already been made in expressing the severer beauties of form before this last perfection was attained. The earliest remains of Grecian art are easily to be distinguished by the hardness and rigidity of their outlines. It was a long time before the arms were separated from the body, or the feet from each other.¹ When these limbs were unfettered, the figure did not immediately spring into freedom, but still retained a certain stiffness and restraint, which many ascribe to a conscious purpose of the artist, or to a traditional rule from which he was not at liberty to swerve, rather than to the nature of his material. Both probably had some influence. Among the ancient Persians and Egyptians,² this character was retained to the last. But from the first, the tendency of sculpture among the Greeks was steadily toward the entire emancipation of the form from the heavy, massive, cumbersome character of the material in which it must be expressed. While the art was employed elsewhere,

¹ Müller, *Archæol.*, § 68

² The same, § 228.

not to represent the human form idealized, but to symbolize some deified power of nature *under* the human form, altered from its true proportions; the same art in Greece constantly strove to represent man's physical frame in its simplicity, so as to be itself the fittest temple and symbol of the Divinity.¹

¹ This divinity however, it should be recollected, the expression of which was so remarkably attained to by the Greek sculptors, was simply the ideal perfection of the human form, suited to inspire neither religious veneration, nor love, but only the reverential adoration with which the mind naturally regards the highest beauty. I may illustrate by a story told by Goethe of himself, in his Italian tour. "In the palace Guistiniani" (in Rome), says he, "there stands a Minerva which commands the homage of my perfect admiration. Winckelmann scarcely notices it, at least not in the proper place. For myself, I feel unworthy to say anything about it. While we were admiring and lingering about this statue, the wife of the Custode informed us, that, in the olden times; this was a sacred image, and that the *English*, who belonged to the same religion, still worshipped it at the present day by always kissing one of its hands; which as we observed was, in fact, very white, while all the rest of the statue was of a brownish tinge. A lady belonging to this religion, said the woman who waited upon us, came here but a short time ago, and throwing herself on her knees, prayed to the image. At so strange a thing, she herself, who was a Christian, could scarcely refrain from laughing, and was obliged to leave the room, lest she should burst out on the spot. Seeing that I too lingered around the statue, she asked me whether it was that *I* had some *fair one* who resembled this marble which so fascinated me. The good woman knew of but two sentiments, those of adoration, and love. Of the pure admiration of a glorious work, of the brotherly veneration of the human mind, she could form no conception. We were highly delighted with the English lady, and went away with a desire to return; and I certainly shall soon be back there again."

And hence the perfection to which the art arrived in the time of Pericles.

It has been said that sculpture, in modern times, cannot succeed except by falling back into the *antique spirit*; and as this is impossible, since the spirit of the artist must be in unison with that of his age, sculpture, it would seem, can never attain again to that eminence among the arts which it once enjoyed. That it cannot succeed in the sense of taking the first rank, and giving its own tone to the other arts, as it did in Greece, is evident for two reasons. First, because the outward beauty of form is no longer idolized and worshipped as it was among the ancient Greeks; secondly, because feeling, emotion, the evident presence of soul, is now absolutely required even in the cold marble. But when such expression is aimed at, sculpture, for the reasons already stated, steps out of its own appropriate province, and invades that of painting. There were many attempts to revive this art in the early part of the fifteenth century, and afterwards. Many of the more eminent painters, as Michael Angelo, for example, were also sculptors. But there is one characteristic which distinguishes all these Christian artists from those of the classical school; namely, that what they represented in the marble was evidently designed for the canvas, or, at least, shows that the great aim was after a "painter-like management of effect." A new style, more

resembling the ancient, has been introduced within the last century, which has been praised, perhaps, quite as much as it deserves. When an art has no other purpose or object in view than simply to administer to the fastidious cravings of luxury, it may attain to a refined and sickly elegance, but to produce anything truly great, requires a different sort of enthusiasm.

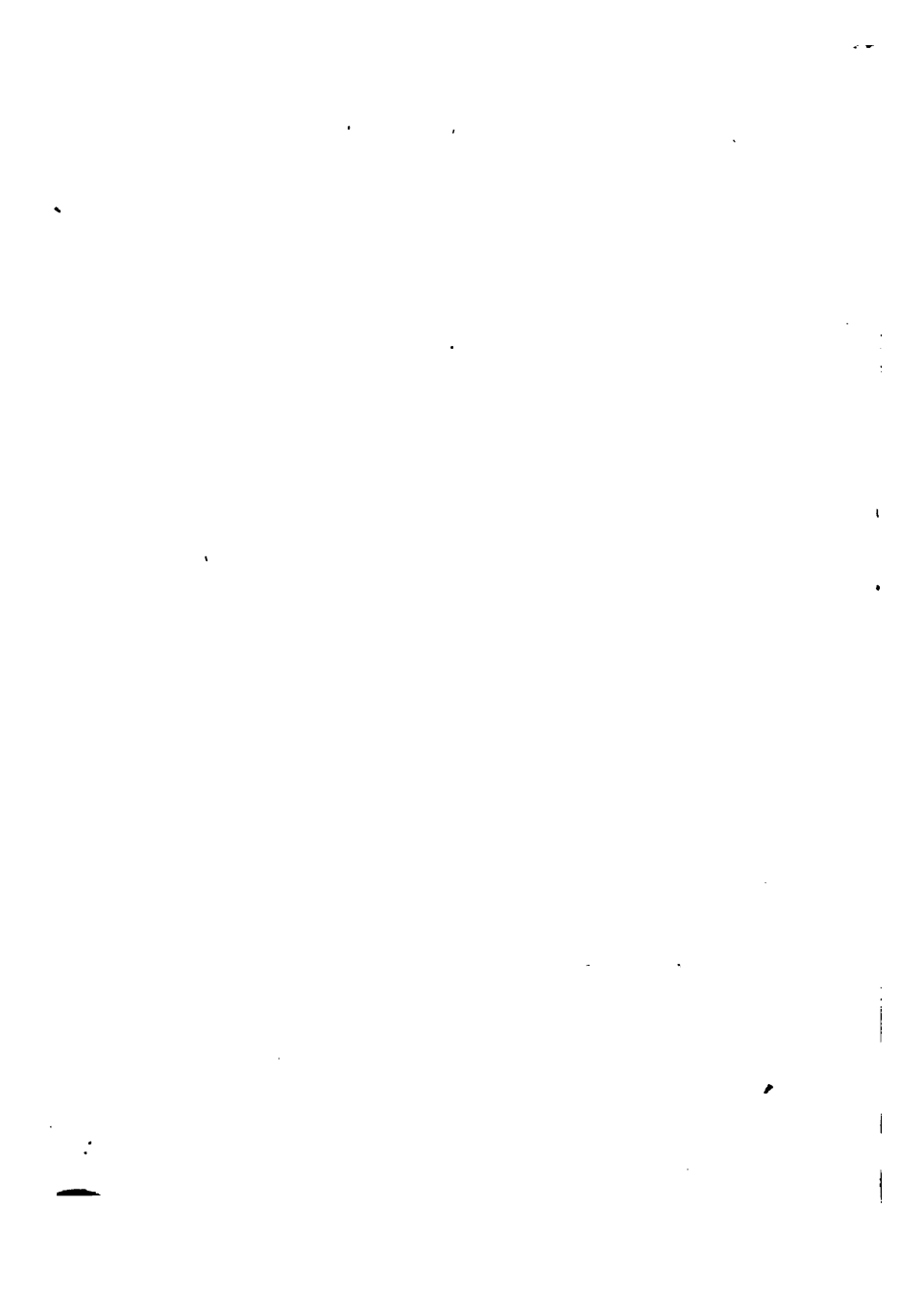
The ancient sculptors devoted their talents to public objects, and were employed for the most part by the *state*. Among these objects were the commemoration of great actions and events by worthy monuments, and the handing down to posterity the forms of distinguished men, who had benefited their country and the world. The same subjects remain for modern times.

“ The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
 The fair humanities of old religion,
 The power, the beauty, and the majesty
 That had their haunts in dale, or piny mountain,
 Or forest, — by slow stream, or pebbly spring,
 Or chasms and wat’ry depths ; — all these have vanished ;
 They live no longer in the faith of reason ! ”¹

Neither, therefore, can they live in marble ; no fine touch can ever call them up again from the dead. But great men are a worthy subject for the chisel in all times alike ; nor is there any reason why, in this field, the modern may not rival the ancient sculptor.

¹ Coleridge’s *Poems*, “ *The Piccolomini*,” act ii. sc. 4.

XII.
PAINING.



CHAPTER XIII.

PAINTING.

THE next of the arts, in point of age, if we mean by the age of the fine arts their natural order of succession in time, is *painting*. Painting is younger than sculpture, in the sense, that the former is never found preceding the latter among any people where the arts have followed the natural order of their development. The shaping or moulding of an object in the totality of its dimensions is a more obvious process than the attempt to represent the same dimensions on a plane surface. In another sense, however, painting is older than sculpture; namely, in the sense in which manhood is older than youth, though it comes after it. Youth may be more beautiful than manhood in reference to the beauty of outward form; but beauty of character, beauty of intellectual and moral force, requires a harmonious combination of more strongly defined contrasts, such as the maturity of age alone presents. Painting belongs to a period of more advanced culture than statuary.

The fact said to have been recently brought to

light, if it is a fact, that some of the finest productions of the Grecian chisel were painted ; ¹ the fact that figures in relief, sculptured on the inner walls of the Egyptian temples, are overlaid with colors, and that the same seems to have been true of the rude attempts at sculpture by the semicivilized people who once inhabited the central regions of our own continent, may be regarded as the unconscious expression of a conviction, in the feelings of those times, that sculpture is an imperfect art, inadequate, after all, to bring out fully, within the compass of its own sphere and resources, the whole conception of the artist. But such is the incompatibility of the two arts, that they cannot possibly be so combined together as that one may supply the deficiencies of the other. A painted statue, instead of uniting the advantages of sculpture and painting in one common production, loses at once the peculiar excellences of each ; the purity and dignity of form is lowered, while nothing at all is gained in expression. A few unsuccessful attempts to unite together arts so entirely diverse from each other in their means, ends, and resources, would soon lead men to see the necessity of cultivating them independently.

The first thing we have to consider in painting, as an art by itself, is the *material* it employs. Many of the distinctive, and most important, char-

¹ See Kugler, *Kleine Kunstschriften ; Antike Polychromie.*

acters of this art depend in a great measure upon the nature of its material. This is, colors, or rather, light and darkness, an impalpable matter, addressing one sense, and occupying really but two dimensions of space, though seeming to address more senses than the sense of sight, and to fill all the dimensions of space. The very nature of the material awakens immediately the activity of the imagination. The forms of solid matter are rigid, fixed, inflexible. Colors are fluent, changeable, combinable, to an indefinite extent. One color can be laid upon another, can fade into another by the most imperceptible gradations. The capabilities of the art correspond to this superior pliancy and manageableness of its material. In the first place, what seems to be a defect, the imperfection of its material, the impossibility of giving full actual reality to its objects in space, is in fact an advantage. It is an advantage, inasmuch as it is a greater triumph of art to produce what it needs out of its own resources than to borrow anything from a foreign source. Painting possesses the means by which to create its own space : first, *linear* perspective, or the truthful representation of objects standing at different distances, by a corresponding difference of their relative magnitude and position ; second, *aerial* perspective, or a truthful representation of the effects of the atmospherical medium through which one object is seen behind another. Thus,

painting gives depth to a plane surface, creates for itself a foreground, a middleground, and a background ; or rather, realizes distance to the eye in the same way as it is actually realized in nature ; for what other means have we of judging of the relative distance of objects by that organ, except by what amounts to the same thing as the linear and aerial perspective ?

Again, painting possesses a *plastic* power, a power of *moulding* individual objects into substantial, outstanding forms, by means of lights and shades, by the due distribution and mutual interpretation of these two opposites, which, in distinction from color, properly so called, gives to a surface all the sensible properties of a solid, its smoothness or roughness, angularity or rotundity, so far as these properties are perceived by the sense of sight. That these effects are produced simply by the right management and disposition of light and dark is evident, because the same may be reached to a very perfect degree in a crayon drawing, or in an engraving. It is really by light and dark, shine and shadow, the sight judges of any actual solid in space. Thus the perfectly moulded form of a beautiful statue, with all those endless, but gently mediated, inequalities of outstanding surface, which change with every new position at which it can be contemplated is, in truth, presented to the sense of sight as various combinations and

gradations of light and shadow. These effects, which in natural objects, and also in architecture and sculpture, are a common result of light and the objects it shines on, are produced in painting by the art itself, and with an absolute choice as to the means to a given end.

We should not omit to mention the line as another important material in painting. The line is also used in architecture and sculpture ; but only in the preparatory sketch or draught, *as outline* ; in these latter arts, it is not a material, but an instrument. The painter also employs it in this sense. It is the means by which he expresses his thoughts, invents, groups, arranges and harmonizes, the variety of parts into a symmetrical whole. It is the instrument of design, of composition. But in painting, the line is also retained as an *essential material* in the work ; no longer, indeed, as stiff outline, demonstration, but fused with the other elements, perspective, light and shadow, colors. The lines in a perfect painting run and melt into each other ; but while they cannot be absolutely traced, their whole power is felt in giving precision and distinctness to every form. It is the lines which first attract the eye, when we look upon a great work of painting with a view to comprehend it. By them we trace the author's thoughts, seize the grand conception, feel the power and originality of his invention, the graceful disposition of all

the parts, the "unity in multeity" of the whole composition.

But the most essential material after all, in this art, that by which it produces its peculiar effect, that which determines the nature of its subjects, that which gives to painting its distinctive character as a fine art, as well as its name, is *color*. The general conception of the artist, the remoteness and relative distance of objects, the distinctness and perfection of form in all the dimensions of space, may be realized by means of simple lines, and the contrast of lights and shades, as in a cartoon drawing, or in an engraving. But a painting requires the variety, the contrasts and combinations, of colors. All the other materials which have been mentioned must be raised up from their abstract, elementary, and shadowy form of existence, and substantiated in that under which objects actually appear in nature. The magic of painting consists in its power of giving to color — that medium of all outward manifestation to the most spiritual of the senses — its highest possible effect.

Let us look, in a general way, at the effects which may be produced by colors; and first, by *harmony of combination*. The effect here meant is that which results from colors alone, without reference to figures, design, expression, or any of the other distinguishable characteristics which may also enter into a work of painting. The masses of

color distributed over a picture have by themselves, as every one must be sensible, an effect of their own, pleasing and attractive, or disagreeable and repulsive, according to the judgment, or want of judgment with which they may be disposed. Indeed, they have much the same relation to the whole work in a painting, as the great proportions of a building have to the main effect in architecture. When these masses are judiciously distributed, so as to preserve to each other the due proportion as to quantity ; so as each to retain everywhere its own peculiar tone and quality ; so that one may vivify the other by the force of contrast, while at the same time there are no sudden transitions, but the eye can easily and naturally pass from one to another, and take in the whole at a glance, — we experience a pleasure very nearly akin to that which the ear perceives from the united melody and harmony of sweet sounds. Particularly is this the case, when the primary colors, red, blue, and yellow — the colors from which, by various combinations, all the others result — constitute these masses. All the great painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries seem to have been aware of this fact, but more especially those of Holland and Venice. Hence the charming general effect of their works upon the eye at the first glance and at a distance. They attract us, we know not why. We feel the secret charm of totality without confusion. Everything is there ; everything is reconciled.

Another witchery of color results from the imitation of the accidental effects of light and shadow on a mass of color of the same kind. This particular modification of colors, resulting from the accidental play of light, constitutes what the painters call *local tints*. It is by means of these local tints, chiefly, that the charm of life in natural objects reaches us through the sense of sight. In a mass of foliage, for example, every leaf taken by itself is nearly of the same color ; but in the mass, as actually presented in nature, this same color is diversified, by the effect of light, into all the various tints between the fundamental blue and yellow of which it is composed. So of all other objects ; each has its own peculiar color ; but this color, as actually seen, is modified by the accidental circumstances of light and shade under which it happens to be seen. It might seem at first that these effects of light, direct and reflected, in giving diversity to the appearance of objects possessing fundamentally the same color, would be seen chiefly in those cases where light and shadow fall upon objects in broad masses, as in a landscape, and might be overlooked in those cases where an individual object, as for instance the human face, is seen only under one particular light flowing in a body from one and the same point. But the difference here consists not in the entire absence of these effects, but only in the delicacy and minuteness with which they are exhibited. How

many slight variations of surface, gradually melting into each other, give the effect of life — so far as it can be given by mere form, so far as it can be represented by mere sculpture — to the human face! Now the only way in which this same effect can be brought out by painting is by imitating these variations of surface, not by light and shadow in the abstract, but as they are actually seen in the living face, through those special modifications which the color of the flesh receives at every changing point of its surface. It is the wonderful accuracy which the painters of the Venetian school attained to in this particular respect, which entitled them to be called the masters of color.

What chiefly distinguishes color, however, above every other material employed in the fine arts, is its power as a means of expression. If form is the *basis*, color is the *direct medium*, of expression. Nothing else of an outward and sensuous character is capable of representing and fixing those more delicate and evanescent phenomena which interpret the heart to the eye, which show the inner state, the passions and emotions of the soul, in all their depth and variety. In sculpture, the dignity of intelligence, thought, power, sovereignty, are conveyed to us in the more or less absolute perfection of form, — of the human form. Spirit is rendered corporeal, is diffused through every part, speaks in every limb. It is all brought out into body. But painting can

represent the concentration of the spirit within itself. In painting, the soul asserts its own independent dignity and worth, its intrinsic superiority to the body, its power of triumphing over it. In this power of exhibiting the soul itself, in the concentration of its energies, in the intensity of its longings, or in its calm triumph over all the passions, consists the distinctive character and excellence of painting as compared with the other fine arts. Music is an art capable of exercising a great power over the feelings. It can, in its own peculiar way, imitate and excite every passion of the soul ; but it cannot, like painting, hold and enchain us by the expression of feeling which reveals the inmost being of an individual, and which, once seen, can never be forgotten again. Poetry can do this, but imperfectly.

In its highest, ideal efforts, painting aims to seize and fix those expressions, above all others, which reveal the relationship of the soul to a higher mode of existence than this present, and to a world above sense. The material which painting employs allows of this : for whatever can be made known by the fleeting changes of the human countenance, that central seat of expression, may be imitated by colors, though it cannot be by marble. The very focus of mental expression, for example, the eye, can in marble, owing to the nature of the material, be little better than a dead piece of stone. On the

canvas, it maintains its rightful sovereignty over the rest of the features.

This power of expression enables painting to exhibit, beyond any other fine art, the fine shades of character, traits inexpressible by language, and not seen even in actual life, except for an instant, where, under particular circumstances and occasions of excitement, the hidden soul is stirred up out of its unconscious depths to a momentary revelation of itself, giving us a glimpse of what the man really is, or what he is capable of. This art cannot, it is true, like poetry and music, develop a situation; it cannot pursue an action or event through a succession of changes; it must necessarily seize upon a single moment. But this moment is at its choice. It can seize it at the critical point, the decisive turn, where that which has preceded the action hinges upon its results, where the past and the future stand, as it were, concentrated in the present. It can crowd into that moment the fortunes of an empire, as in the celebrated battle-piece of Raphael, representing the conflict between Constantine and Maxentius at the Milvian bridge, in which the painter has seized the moment of victory when the former already stands on the disputed pass, while the horse of the latter has plunged with him into the Tiber. In a description, or a poem, the minute details of such an action would soon grow tedious; much must necessarily be left to be

filled up by the imagination. But in a picture, the whole, together with the agitated passions of the moment, is represented at once, and may be contemplated in all its details at leisure.

By its power of thus representing under one view a number of simultaneous events, all bearing upon the same point, or tending to illustrate the same character, painting comes nearer to nature than any other art ; for in actual life and nature nothing stands absolutely separated from other things ; but the situation of the individual, what he does, and what he expresses, is always conditioned more or less on the presence of other individuals, or by the objects which are around him. The motive of every action is more or less clearly explained by the attending circumstances under which it is seen to take place. Now painting can make choice of these circumstances, excluding all such as are of no importance to the action in hand, or to the character to be illustrated, and arranging and subordinating the others with reference to this principal point. Thus, what would scarcely deserve to be called beautiful, if considered by itself alone, often becomes truly so, by the appropriateness of its place in a harmonious grouping of figures. Where everything is judiciously arranged with a single reference to some such central point or action, that important end is secured ; in painting, which is called unity of design. A work of this kind is a composition

of which the effect is the conjoint product of the whole.

Painting admits the greatest latitude of variety in the choice of subjects. Hence, what could not be tolerated in sculpture, — a wide departure from purely ideal forms, — may not only be allowed, but is required in a great composition. The limited and characteristic species of beauty which sculpture for the most part rejects, painting courts ; and, next to poetry, there is no art in which the manifoldness and exuberance of life, as it is actually seen in nature, can be so purely reproduced as in painting.

It can descend to little objects, and common characters, to anything except what is simply vulgar. The Spanish painter, Murillo, is equally celebrated for the celestial beauty of his Madonnas, and the admirable truth of his beggar boys. The latter, in their happy simplicity, in the unconscious enjoyment of their dirt and rags, have a power to interest us, as well as the former.

Let me sum up the advantages of painting as a fine art, even above poetry, in the language of a poet : —

“ Words have something told
More than the pencil can, and verily
More than is needed, but the precious art
Forgives their interference. Art divine,
That both creates, and fixes, in despite
Of Death and Time, the marvels it hath wrought.”¹

¹ Wordsworth's *Poems*, “ Lines suggested by a portrait from the pencil of F. Stone.”

In illustration of his meaning in these last two lines, Wordsworth tells the following story of a monk who waited on the painter Wilkie at the time when the latter visited the Escorial palace in Spain.

“ He

Guiding from cell to cell, from room to room
 A British painter (eminent for truth
 In character, and depth of feeling, shown
 By labors that have touched the hearts of kings
 And are endeared to simple cottagers), —
 Came, in that service, to a glorious work,
 Our Lord's last supper, beautiful as when first
 The appropriate picture, fresh from Titian's hand
 Graced the refectory ; and there, while both
 Stood with eyes fixed upon that masterpiece,
 The hoary father in the stranger's ear
 Breathed out these words : Here daily do we sit,
 Thanks given to God for daily bread, and here,
 Pondering the mischiefs of these restless times,
 And thinking of my brethren, dead, dispersed,
 Or changed and changing, I not seldom gaze
 Upon this solemn company, unmoved
 By shock of circumstance, or lapse of years,
 Until I cannot but believe that they —
 They are in truth the substance, we the shadows.”¹

I proceed now to a rapid sketch of the history of the development of this art, as one which, different in this respect from both architecture and sculpture, belongs almost exclusively to modern times. We read, it is true, of celebrated painters in the ancient days of Greece and Rome ; and a few

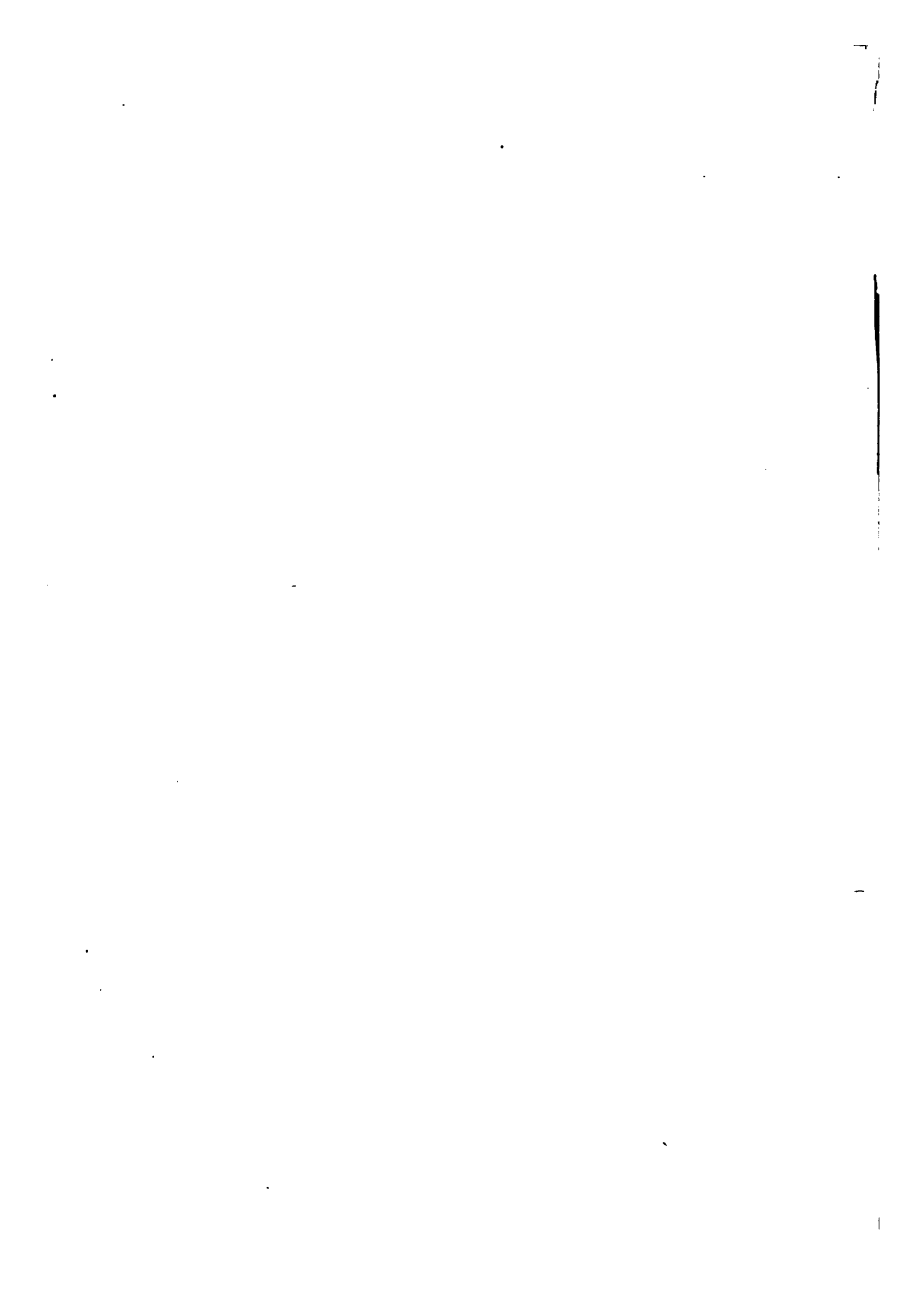
¹ Wordsworth's *Poems*.

copies of frescoes and mosaics preserved on the interior walls of some of the excavated buildings of Pompeii convey to us a very favorable idea of the art of painting as it existed in the ancient world. We see, however, that it differed very widely, as to general character and spirit, from that art as it exists in modern times. It was a style of painting which betrayed its direct origin from sculpture, and which seems never to have succeeded in freeing itself from the dominion of the art out of which it sprung.

Modern painting, on the contrary, is more nearly connected, in its origin, with architecture, than with sculpture ; and grew out of the attempt, which began not long after Christianity became the religion of the Roman empire, to convey a knowledge of the historical facts of the Bible to the illiterate mass of the common people, by means of pictures in the churches. From Byzantium, this custom passed over to Italy ; and for a long time painting in the West continued to follow, not only the same subjects, but also the same traditional forms, and typical modes of treating those subjects, which had been received from the Eastern empire. The Florentine Giotto, a contemporary of Dante, is said to have been the first to break through these restraints, and to introduce a more free imitation of nature. The art, however, was still confined, for the most part, to the representa-

tion of religious subjects. Gradually, others were introduced. Religious events and personages belonging to more modern times were thought not unworthy of being admitted in connection with those of the ancient church. This led to portrait painting, and historical painting generally, which, as early as the times of Raphael, were both carried to the highest point of perfection. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries may be considered as the classical age of painting. Nothing has been done since those periods, which can be compared for power, truth, and originality of conception, and for both freedom and elaborate finish of execution, to the works of the great masters in those extraordinary times. Painting had not as yet stepped down from the dignity of its original calling, to minister to the petty whims and caprices of vulgar luxury. It fulfilled its end in that period of history. Whether an age like it will ever return again may be doubtful ; but that painting, in some form, will never cease to be cultivated as an art, is as certain as that man will never cease to be man.

XIV.
MUSIC.



CHAPTER XIV.

MUSIC.

ARCHITECTURE, sculpture, and painting, complete the entire circle of the fine arts in which the ideas of the mind are realized in outward forms addressed to sense. When we come to Music, we clearly enter into another sphere. The imagination is no longer busy with forms, except as they are awakened by association. Even then, they are altogether vague, flitting, and unsubstantial. They are like such forms as pass before us in a dream, and of which we remember nothing except the pleasure they gave us. The material in music is less outward than in the arts which belonged to the first circle. "Sound," says Lord Bacon, "is one of the most hidden portions of nature, a virtue which may be called incorporeal, and immaterial, whereof there be in nature but few."¹ It is, indeed, a material wholly removed out of the world of space, and confined to that of time. Painting, the most refined of the arts whose material is an actual dimension of space, is confined to surfaces and lines, the

¹ *Nat. Hist.*, § 290.

last visible dimensions in this sphere. In music, we come to a dimension entirely removed out of space, but still within the region of sensuous perception; but this can be only in time, and by means of sound. The remaining fine arts, music, oratory, and poetry, are within this new circle. Sound results from the successive vibrations in time of a natural medium. As it is sound alone, as that natural and universal language which is understood by all, — sound not yet organized into the articulate language of a particular race or nation; tones, in their general, their universal significance to the human heart, — which constitutes the material of music, we see that music holds very nearly the same relation to this new circle of the fine arts as architecture did to the other. It is one of the oldest of the arts, and the basis of oratory and poetry.

I need not refer to the traditions, sacred and profane, which attest the high antiquity of music. Nor, to show that it is the basis of the other elegant arts which have been mentioned as belonging to the same sphere, need I allude to the fact, that the Greeks, with their nice delicacy of tact, classified the whole range of discipline belonging to their higher culture, under the common name of music. Music, in their conception of it, was the original tamer of humanity; the art that reclaimed men from the rudeness of brutal passions, to the

order and decorum of civilized life. I say, I scarcely need mention these historical facts, because, if we consider the matter simply from the philosophical point of view, — I mean from the same fundamental point from which we set out, in endeavoring to understand the relation of the arts to each other, — we shall see, that, as the vague indefinite character of symbolical art must always have the precedence in time before the others, so music, as it partakes wholly of this character, would naturally lie at the foundation of this new series of the fine arts upon which we have now entered. And, with regard to this whole new series, I may here remark, that the material sinks to comparative indifference, — is scarcely regarded at all ; there is a necessary predominance of ideas, and the images suggested, though belonging to the sphere of sense, are yet at the same time, for the most part, or altogether, mental.

Music differs from oratory and poetry in attaching importance to sounds or tones, as the *natural expression of human feelings and passions*. There is scarcely a shade of emotion which has not its appropriate vocal tone ; and the voice, in its unconscious utterances, affords one of the surest interpreters of the heart. Grief, anger, madness, sullenness, joy, gladness, surprise, consternation, fright, have each their expressive, untaught, vocal utterance, which, whether wild or subdued, in man savage or

civilized, speaking a barbarous or a cultivated language, is essentially the same, and is always understood. The tones of nature, moreover, are of the same character ; we do not, as has sometimes been falsely asserted, learn to interpret them by association ; we feel their various power by an immediate and instinctive knowledge. The infant as instinctively shrinks from the sound that brings danger, as it is hushed and quieted to a trustful security by the tones of its mother's voice.

In music, the sensuous element is, if I may so express it, completely blended and identified with the emotion. The one is inseparable from the other. The tone itself is, as it were, an audible emotion, while in tones organized for the purposes of speech, in articulated language, sound is converted into a more artificial sign ; and its quality ceases to be of the same importance. The body, the inarticulate mass of sound, then, is the matter which is to be moulded by the genius of the musician.

The next question that arises, is, How it is to be moulded ; what chance is offered for presenting the simple inarticulate body of sound under the law of form ; and of reconciling, in this case, the opposites of variety and unity in a satisfying whole ? The matter of sound is capable of being reduced to form by means of its two essential properties, *quantity*, or duration in time, and *quality*, or the

key and scale of tone. The one lays the foundation of rhythmical movement, or musical time, the other, of melody and harmony. The rhythmical movement of a melody, with all its accompanying parts arranged according to the laws of harmony, constitutes a musical composition.

Let us consider each of these elements, in the first place, separately. A continuous sound, however sweet, if prolonged, soon becomes annoying. Where there is a succession of sounds, on the other hand, even though these sounds are held on the same note, a certain pleasure is produced, as in the drum, the cymbal, and other monotonous instruments, which can express little more than a rhythmical movement. This essential element, which we first meet with in music, and which answers somewhat to the formal symmetry of outward proportions in architecture, enters also as an essential element into oratory and poetry, but with less formality and constraint in these arts than in music, just in the same manner as the law of proportion is freed from all constraint of mathematical regularity, in sculpture and painting. The power and significance of rhythm, therefore, as a fundamental element in this whole circle of the fine arts, is as incontestible as the power and significance of symmetrical forms in the arts which we have already considered.

The next essential element of music depends on the quality of tones ; and first, on their quality as

simply determined and related to each other on the same natural scale, by a succession of notes with determinate intervals. But, secondly, melody depends, for its particular character, as grand or sweet, gay, pensive, joyous or sad, on the key or dominant note, by which the whole succession of tones is governed. None of these things are arbitrary, but they result from certain laws inhering in the very nature of a musical scale, which are capable of a mathematical analysis. But, independent of all such analysis, and knowledge by the understanding, the melody is not wrought out by calculation, but poured out in the stream of song, by a power which, residing in the feelings, limits itself from within, according to an exact law of mathematical relations. And here, nature and freedom wonderfully conspire together. A popular melody that lives on from age to age, a natural air that unites the hearts of a whole people, is not all nature, and nothing else, like the song of a bird ; but nature as it comes from the fountain of human invention ; nature relieved from the law of necessity, and reproduced with so much of freedom as to give it moral significance.

Finally, when to rhythmical melody we add, also, the combination of sounds in harmony, we have all. The greatest effects of music are produced by these means, and these only. It will be readily seen, however, that these elements, which are so easily

distinguishable in the theory of art, are inseparably connected in the actual production, and in the actual judgment, of any particular musical composition. These various relations of movement, air, and harmony, within themselves and to each other, multifarious and complicated as they are, must be so interwoven together as, like the threads of a beautiful piece of tapestry, to constitute one complete and congruous whole ; and, since the essence of this whole consists not so much in the combination of successive sounds which strike on the outward ear as in the entire harmony of these relations, that power of judgment which we call the musical ear is plainly the mind itself, for which alone such relations have significance.

Having thus considered, in a very general manner, the materials which music has at its disposal, its means for expressing whatever thoughts and feelings may seek this mode of utterance, it follows next in order, to inquire what power it has, as compared with other fine arts, of realizing its object ; that is, of making its conceptions clearly understood, or felt, by the means it has at command. Many interesting points of difference present themselves at once to our notice, in comparing the capabilities of music in this respect, with those of her sister arts. First, in the immediacy and universality of its power of affecting the passions, its superiority is not to be questioned. Hence, the popu-

larity of this art ; its sway over the common mind ; its irresistible attraction for the rude and uncultivated, for natures not to be reached by any other art. Every reader of Wordsworth will remember his inimitable description of the blind fiddler, and the effect of his music on the crowd of a London street :—

“ That errand-bound prentice was passing in haste —
 What matter ! — he ’s caught — and his time runs to waste :
 The newsman is stopped, though he stops on the fret :
 And the half-breathless lamplighter — he ’s in the net !

“ The porter sits down on the weight which he bore ;
 The lass with her barrow wheels hither her store ; —
 If a thief could be here he might pilfer at ease ;
 She sees the musician, ’t is all that she sees !

“ That tall man, a giant in bulk and in height, —
 Not an inch of his body is free from delight ;
 Can he keep himself still, if he would ? Oh, not he ;
 The music stirs in him like wind through a tree.”¹

Secondly, in giving intensity to the expression of feeling, this art stands unrivaled ; also in the power of adapting itself to its evanescent moods, and of passing by rapid transition from one mood to another, thus exciting the most lively play of emotions. But these effects, however great for the moment, are transitory. Moreover, we are affected, we know not why. No distinct image has been

¹ Wordsworth’s *Poems*. “ Power of Music.”

brought before the imagination. Some associations may be awakened, or some old memories revived; save these, nothing is left for the mind to dwell upon, unless it be a vague impression of the mystery of its own being, which can be so deeply affected by the mere power of sound.

" A spirit aerial
Informs the cell of Hearing, dark and blind ;
Intricate labyrinth, more dread for thought
To enter than oracular cave." ¹

But as this art, like every other, always has significance of some sort ; as every composition, every air, embodies a theme possessing a distinct character of its own, it is natural that it should seek in some way to express to intelligence, also, what by itself alone it can express only to the heart. Hence vocal music. In the song, music is wedded to poetry, and its theme interpreted to the understanding. How much in natural music, in the peculiar and popular airs of a country, is due to the words with which those airs are associated ! Such airs, in their true spirit, are as untransferable as the popular poetry of one nation is into the language of another. The music and the poetry which were originally meant for each other must go together ; as a Scottish ballad song, or Italian air, separated from the words, is at best but a spiritless affair. The other

¹ Wordsworth's *Poems*: " On the Power of Sound."

arts are more independent of each other, and able to explain themselves. We need no inscription to inform us what a piece of architecture is intended for. We read its meaning on the very face of it. So a painting, and a statue, tell their own story. But music naturally calls in the aid of poetry to explain its whole meaning, and both gain something of force and expression by being associated together.

We may now consider what is meant by *musical style*, and the general principle upon which correctness of style, in this art, is to be determined. The fundamental principle which regulates style is essentially the same here as in all the other arts. It consists in the nice perception and observance of the relation which ought to exist between the matter and the form, outward expression and the law by which it should be so governed and controlled as never to exceed the necessary limitations of the art. Now the material of music, though differing so widely in kind from that of sculpture, yet resembles the latter in one particular, namely, that it does not admit of any great individuality of expression. Correctness of style, therefore, in this art, requires an exact adjustment of the means of expression which the peculiar material of music admits of, to that mathematical regularity of proportions in the intervals of melody and of harmony, and in the measure of time, which constitutes the fundamental law in the scientific theory of this art.

It is easy to see, then, what would be a deviation from the strict correctness of style in music. The most common fault arises from the striving to make music express more than it possibly can express, the striving to imitate by sound what cannot be so imitated. There may be a certain pleasure in tracing a sort of resemblance between things in nature and common life, and a particular combination of musical sounds. Thus, a thunder storm, or a battle scene, may be represented after a fashion by a combination in music. But we soon perceive the entire inadequacy of the means to the end intended, and prefer even an excess on the side of formal regularity and severe adherence to the theoretic laws of the art, to such attempts at imitation, in which failure must always be so palpably obvious.

The last thing which needs to be noticed in pointing out the relation of music to the other fine arts, is the fact that, in music, composition and execution are two separate things. When the conception of a gifted musician has been realized in a composition, or score as it is called, another step is required in order to its proper execution. In fact, these parts are, in most cases, divided between two entirely different sets of artists. We have the author of the music on one side, and the performers of it on another. As in every other fine art, so also here, the greatest merit lies in the original conception, and in the power and skill of the author to

give it reality. But the author himself can seldom carry his own work into fullest execution. He can but partially realize, for example, by means of his own voice alone, or an instrument, a conception implying so complicated a combination of various qualities and modulations of sound as are to be found in an opera, or oratorio. He realizes his ideas only so far as he is enabled to mark and fix them by certain signs or notations, which, different from written language, have no power by themselves of conveying, except very inadequately, to the imagination, the effects which he aims at producing. This can be done only by the necessary number of vocal and instrumental performers, who, in order to correct execution, must each be an artist in his own particular line. We have here, then, an art in which a conception may be so far brought out and fixed by means of conventional symbols as to be ready at any time for execution, but which, in order to actual and effective execution, requires genius or skill of another sort, such as the author of the music may not himself possess in any extraordinary degree. In this respect there is, to be sure, some analogy between music and poetry. There is something in the effective recitation of poetry. There is much, perhaps, in the "running comment of tone, look, and gesture," and all that "visual language" which the stage employs to bring out the whole force and significance of a dramatic composi-

tion. The case with poetry, however, is, after all, not the same as with music. A drama does not always appear to the best advantage when acted. Many would much prefer to read a poem by themselves, rather than to hear it read by another. But it is to no purpose that music is well composed, unless it be also well executed. It may possess, in itself, the greatest power to move and agitate, or to soothe and tranquilize the passions ; but to do its appropriate work, the fire or the tenderness which is contained in it must first pass into the soul of a performer qualified in all respects to give it a free and truthful expression.

As in Music, so also in Oratory,¹ the material employed is sound ; but exclusively that of the human voice in the form of articulate language. The peculiarity of the material in this case is, that it includes already, within itself, the spiritual element of thought. The tones of the voice are not only the immediate expression of feeling, as in Music, but of feeling connected with thought embodied in distinct conceptions of the understanding. The distinct expression of thought in articulate language, however, is not the end of oratory, so far as it

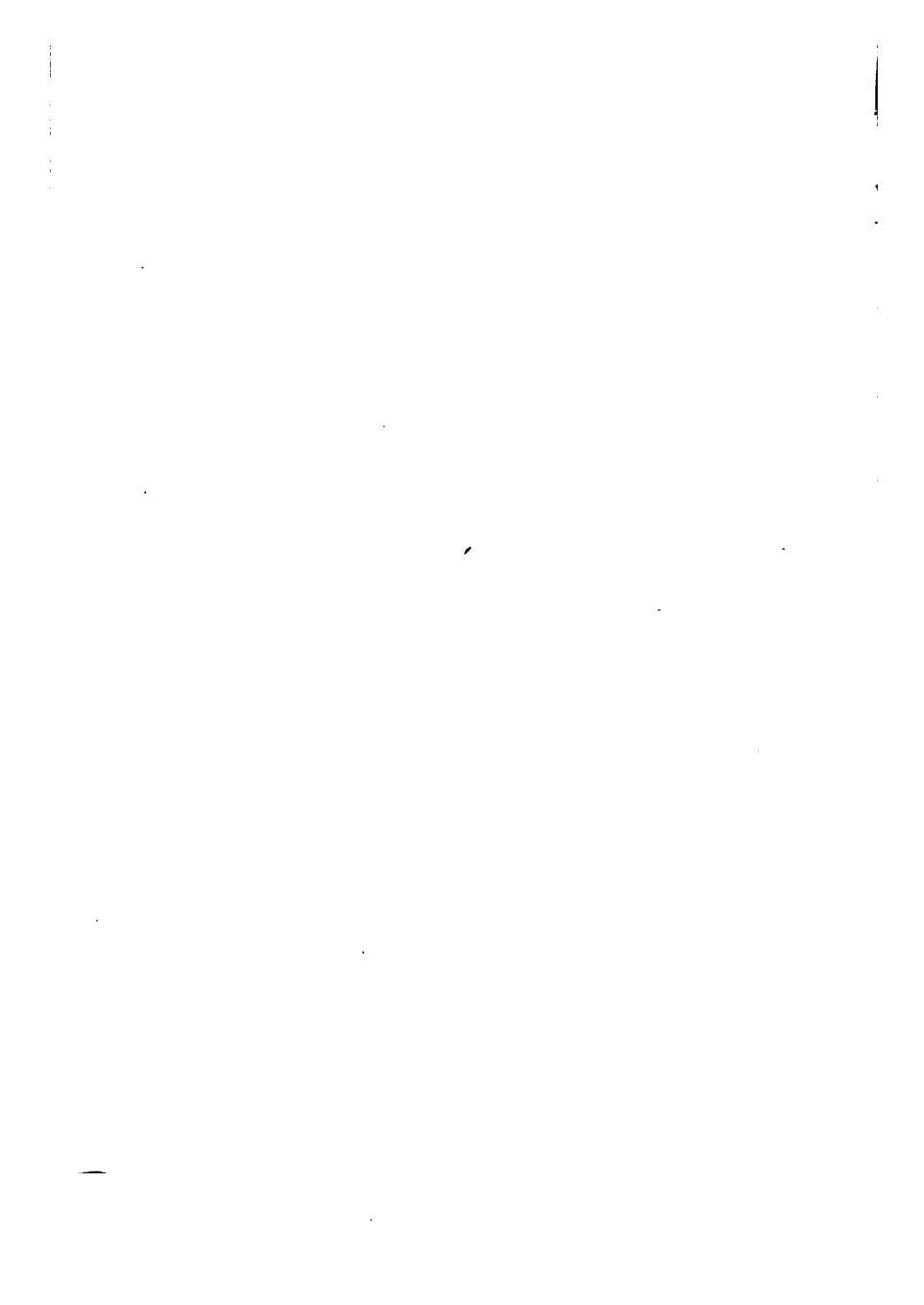
¹ [The Chapter on Oratory, for which this would be the proper place, seems never to have been written ; but the following fragment seems to have been a first sketch of a lecture on this theme. It is accordingly inserted, as illustrating the mode of treatment the subject would probably have received.]

is regarded as a fine art, but only the means to an end. One great thought, with which the speaker's mind overflows, and which he seeks to communicate presently, in all its living force and fullness of meaning, to others, is the end. If this could be done at once, so much the better ; but as this is impossible, he must avail himself of the rhetoric of a great number of well-arranged thoughts welded together by the two fire streams of logic and passion.

Several things belong among the outward conditions of the oratorical art which refer us back to the arts already described. In the first place, oratory requires an audience housed, or encompassed, so as to be brought within the range of the speaker's voice. The other arts, also, stand in some relation to architecture, but no one is so entirely dependent, for its full effect, on an assembly of men. Every oration necessarily implies some audience, real or imaginary, to which it is addressed. In those ancient states where eloquence flourished, the assemblies on which it produced its greatest effects met, it is true, in the open air, as in the Pnyx of Athens, or the Roman Forum, where, however, they were still brought within command of the eye and voice of the orator by a continuous rampart of porticoes and temples. The greatest effects of modern oratory have been displayed for the most part within closed walls.

XV.

POETRY.—CONCLUSION.



CHAPTER XV.

POETRY. — CONCLUSION.

ALL are agreed in assigning the highest place among the fine arts to *Poetry*. The reasons which entitle it to this preëminence may not, at once, be so obvious to every one. I will mention, as among the most important of these reasons, the nature of its material, its unlimited capability of representation and of expression, and its peculiar manner of affecting us. To speak first of the nature of its material ; it is not only more refined and subtle than those of the fine arts belonging to the first circle, and addressing themselves to the sense of sight, but more so than those even of music and oratory. Its materials are taken neither from outward nature, from the quarry, the block of marble, the color-bag or pallet, nor from sound as the natural embodiment of emotion, or language as conveying abstract ideas of the understanding ; but they are the pure creatures of fancy and imagination. Feelings, emotions, thoughts, ideas, are here embodied in a delicate tissue of images, an air-woven fabric, which, to appropriate a figure of Lord Bacon, "the wit and mind of man works, as the spider

worketh his web, out of itself." An art thus creative from the very beginning, and creating all along the very matter it works with, will stand preëminent among the others, which derive their materials, some of them entirely, others in great part, directly from the outer world.

The natural language of poetry is passionate, picturesque, and rhythmical ; and the two latter qualities depend upon the first. Language is picturesque which presents distinct and vivid images to fancy. This is an altogether different thing from giving an accurate description of an object, or a clear and distinct notion of it to the understanding. It is the power of seizing an object in its very type, of bringing out its characteristic feature, that point of it which needs only to be fairly presented, when the imagination will, of its own accord, fill up the details more rapidly and satisfactorily than the thing could be done by mere words. A good poem will present a continuous succession of such pictures, a train of connected imagery, full of nature and of truth, interesting on their own account, more interesting still on account of what they suggest ; for, after all, they are but the means to the poet's end, not the very end which he has chiefly in view. A series of pictures, even though clearly and naturally connected, would soon become excessively tedious, if we could not see all along their common reference to some object or purpose besides and beyond themselves.

The other quality of the language required as the material of poetry is "richness and sweetness of sound," combined with regularity of movement, which constitute the elements of rhythm. There should be music, as well as imagery, in poetry. For, as a matter of fact, words flowing out of emotion naturally adapt themselves, in sound, as well as in the tones and inflections with which they are uttered, to the character of the emotion which they express. At the same time, they spontaneously arrange themselves after a certain rhythmical structure and sequence. Hence the poetry of all nations is distinguished from its prose, sometimes by a peculiarity of dialect called the poetic idiom, but always by a structure which partakes more or less decidedly of the rhythmical character. The true rhythm is that which closely follows the movement of the thoughts, rises as they rise, descends as they descend; where the march of the words varies with the tone and passion of the sentiment, while the sense of melody is ever predominant. Rhythm seems in this case the most natural form of utterance for such images and emotions as poetry expresses. This rhythm will never appear like a mere outward, mechanical measure of syllables. It is not reached in any such way as ever to make the least sacrifice of sense to sound. A true rhythmical period is one in which not a word could be altered for the better, not one could be placed in a more natural position

than precisely the one which it occupies. Matter and manner, sense and sound, are fused into perfect union, both seeming to gush at once and spontaneously from the same fountain.

Poetry, again, is distinguished from all other fine arts by its unlimited capability of representation and expression, by the wide range and diversity of the objects which come lawfully within its sphere. "The Poet," says Wordsworth, "writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a man, with this one restriction, there is no object standing between the poet and the image of things."¹ With the other fine arts the case stands quite different. How many things which could not be represented at all by sculpture or painting, owing to the comparatively limited range to which these arts are necessarily confined, are capable of being not merely pictured forth, but reanimated, and endowed with a new and peculiar life, by poetry. And how many other objects which do actually fall within the compass of the two other arts just mentioned, poetry can also produce in another way, and moreover enhance by manifold touches of truth quite beyond the reach of the chisel or the pencil. The plastic art

¹ Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

and painting, in representing man, are confined to the action of a single moment. In this respect, we see at once the advantage possessed by poetry; the epic breadth and length, the dramatic variety, with which she can present man to us in all the vicissitudes of fortune, trials of character, peculiarity of circumstances which tend to show us what is in him. Many things connected with our modern life, in fact many things which distinguish and characterize it, would not admit of being represented either by sculpture or painting. It is a mechanical age, signalized by the triumphs of physical science in rendering the powers of Nature subservient to man's will. The greatest works are such as utilize rather than beautify Nature. In realizing the ancient fables, in which the great earth-powers were represented as gigantic men, we have stripped them of their picturesqueness. Nature, in being forced by human skill to do more than the work of the old Titans, has dropped the proud, defiant aspect which she expressed in those sturdy sons of the earth, and submitted to the humble service of turning the wheels, and plying the levers, of economical machines. Having betrayed the secret of her strength, she has lost her freedom, and must now labor with shorn locks for those who have found her out. Whatever may be the influence of all this on the *other* arts whose office is simply to embellish and dignify life, poetry is likely to escape unharmed.

“The objects of the poet’s thoughts,” as one of them has well observed, “are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge, — it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labors of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the chemist, the botanist, or mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the poet’s art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus pro-

duced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man." ¹

A third circumstance in which poetry shows superiority over the other arts is its peculiar mode of affecting us, by which I mean the constantly sustained gratification we derive from the gradual unfolding of the subject by a succession of images and situations so presented as each to afford a pleasure by itself, while at the same time all are subsidiary and necessary to the complete exposition of the main idea. Every other fine art requires also, it is true, the same subordination of the parts to the whole ; but in every other, or nearly every other, the parts are seen at once in conjunction with the whole. And there is a certain advantage in this which poetry must always want. The poet, however, does, in the end, bring out his whole subject, his idea, even more completely than it is possible for the plastic art or for painting to do ; and with this advantage above the latter, that each masterly stroke being produced, each speaking line and color laid on, one after the other, before the eye of the reader, we have the gratification, increasing at every moment, of tracing the progress of the picture, through all its stages, from the first hint of the poet's intention, to the last touches which make it live forever in our imagination. Such a poetical picture is not necessarily one that can be con-

¹ Wordsworth. Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

verted into a material picture ; but every stroke, and every combination of several strokes, whereby the poet makes his object so sense-like, that we become more distinctly conscious of *this object* than we are of his words, is called picturesque, because it brings us every moment nearer to, and may finally even surpass, that degree of illusion of which material painting is so eminently capable, and which, as a quality, admits of being most easily abstracted from material painting.

With the above mentioned picturesque and metrical language for its material, with full liberty to range through every province of nature and of life for its subjects, and with that property, peculiar to itself, which has just been described, of keeping up everywhere an equal interest in the *parts*, as they gradually unfold themselves to a completely developed *whole*, poetry proposes, as its grand and ultimate end, the full realization of that which the other fine arts, taken severally, can realize but in part, and each in its own specific way. It does not pretend, it is true, to compete with the other arts, and set itself up as their rival in those points wherein they severally excel, but only proposes to secure, by the means at its disposal, a more full and satisfactory accomplishment of the common end which is aimed at by all art. ' This ultimate aim of all art is not to reduce what in Nature may be rude and shapeless to the law of order and symmetrical

proportion, as in architecture ; it is not to bring wholly out to touch and sight the perfect form of ideal beauty, as in the plastic art ; it is not to fix and perpetuate for admiring contemplation the fleeting expression which the soul paints for a moment on the human countenance, as in painting ; nor is it to awaken impassioned feelings alone, as in music ; but the ultimate purpose of art is to meet an idea of order, beauty, and goodness, dwelling in the human soul, which refuses to be satisfied with these single approximate forms, but would fashion a whole world after its likeness. When the several branches of art above mentioned have done their best to satisfy this restless craving of the human mind, which, in fact, comes from the nobleness of its nature, there still remains a boundless, unoccupied field. Here poetry steps in, and creates a new world, purely out of her own materials, taking hints, indeed, from the actual world, but borrowing nothing directly from it, rather “dissolving, diffusing, dissipating, in order to recreate.”

This new world of *poetic* truth may be placed in the *past*, in the *present*, or in the *future*. If it is placed in the *past*, it is the *heroic age* of *epic poetry* ; if in the *present*, it is the *dramatic* present ; and if it is in the future, it is a future which commonly expresses itself under the *lyric* form, in dissatisfaction with the present, longing after a better world. And these, the Epic, the Dramatic, and the Lyric, are

the three fundamental forms into which poetry naturally divides itself. In carrying the subject thus far, I have done all that is necessary for the present purpose, that being simply to point out the relation of poetry to the other arts.

Having given this general outline of the fine arts with particular reference to their main characteristics, and their relations to one another, I shall now conclude the subject with a few brief remarks relative to the aims, and the prospects, of art in the present age.

It seems to be generally acknowledged that the aim of art at the present day falls much below the standard of former times ; and not a few suspect that there must be a corresponding decline in the public taste ; and that there is but little prospect of its experiencing a speedy revival. Perhaps this impression is not altogether wide of the truth. It would be wrong, no doubt, to assert broadly and without any qualification, that the present age is unfavorable to art in itself, to art in general ; but I think it can hardly be questioned by any one really prepared to form a correct and candid judgment on the subject, that the arts of design, and especially sculpture and painting, not in our own country alone, but in the most favored states of Europe, that enjoy every advantage to be derived from the best models and from traditionary skill, show themselves utterly incapable of achieving the same triumphs which have

been won in days past. This, assuredly, cannot be owing to want of genius, to an inferiority of mental power in the present age, as compared with the ages which have gone before it. But the truth is, that the stronger tendencies of our age are turned in a different direction. And, however decided may be the bent of this or that single individual, yet he cannot help being influenced, more than he is aware of, by the spirit of the times in which he lives. The many years during which one of the greatest painters of this country, and of recent times, Mr. Allston, labored and hesitated upon that work which he looked upon as the great work of his life, the *Belshazzar's Feast*, is one instance to show the extreme difficulty which every true artist must feel, in the present times, of treating any subject containing religious ideas in a manner wholly satisfactory to himself. How different would it have been with this artist if he had lived in a time of more general and profound sympathy for such subjects, as treated by art, than the present age evinces! It seems quite evident that the religious sphere of art, that particular sphere in which painting has exhibited its highest power, and won its noblest triumphs, is, at present, all but abandoned. The painters of the present day resort to other fields for their subjects, to civil history, to national traditions, to landscape, or to allegory. The German school, for example, which appears to take the lead

among the more modern schools, and stands as high as any, if it may not claim the preëminence over all, in painting, devotes itself, for the most part, to subjects wholly allegorical, or else borrowed from the legends of the old Germanic tribes.

It may be admitted that subjects selected from the historical traditions of a people will ever possess strong attractions, and present an ample field for the exercise of painting, and the plastic arts. But they can never take the same strong hold of the mind, either of the artist or of the public, as religious subjects conceived and treated in a manner worthy of them ; and for the simple reason, that the former are really, in themselves, of inferior interest to the latter. They possess, it is true, a great and peculiar power of their own ; and, when so handled as to bring out with clearness and truth the spirit of the actors or the events designed to be represented, are capable of producing a corresponding effect. But they cannot communicate to the artist the highest species of enthusiasm, nor enkindle in the spectator the highest and warmest emotions.

In these respects, then, it must be allowed that the arts languish in a sort of decline. No one of them comes fully up to the mark which has been reached in times past ; some fall vastly below it. Nor is this all. The prospect cannot be considered as very flattering that they will very soon reach the same perfection again in the future. This is cer-

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tainly true in the case of some of the arts ; that is, if I understand the causes which operate to keep them down. But other causes have been assigned.

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“ The true reason,” says an artist himself, “ why art at present is sunk to such a state of inactivity and languor that it may be doubted whether it will exist much longer, is not a particular one, which private patronage, or the will of an individual, however great, can remove ; but a general cause, founded on the bent, the manners, habits, modes, of a nation ; and not of one nation alone, but of all.” This is very true as a general remark, and corresponds to what I have already said, but it does not after all touch the *real* reason, nor does it express exactly the very reason which appears after all to have been in this author’s mind, if we may judge from his further remarks. “ Our age,” he says, “ when compared with former ages, has but little occasion for great works, and that is the reason why so few are produced. The ambition, activity, and spirit, of public life is shrunk to the minute detail of domestic arrangements, — everything that surrounds us tends to show us in private ; is become snug, less, narrow, petty, insignificant. We are not perhaps the less happy on account of all this ; but from such selfish trifling to expect a system of art built on grandeur, without a total revolution, would only be less presumptuous than insane.” Thus the decay of art is here ascribed to the want of public spirit ;

to the fact that men, at the present day, are more exclusively occupied than was ever before the case, with their own petty wants and individual interests. Supposing it to be so: is it certain that a revolution in this particular respect would, at once, tend to restore the arts to their former place and consideration? It may be confidently answered, No. But that there is really less of public spirit, and more of selfish trifling now than has existed in any previous age of the world, or even in those periods when the arts flourished most, is an assumption which has not the least foundation in fact. This, it is true, is often thoughtlessly asserted; but it is not so. Mankind have been very much the same in every age. The simple truth is, that public spirit runs, at present, in entirely different channels; the interest of mankind turns on objects of a wholly different nature. The history of the world moves on with the same momentum as ever. The law is, on the whole, still a law of progress. The condition of progress is not repose. Soon after the fifteenth century other ideas began to take possession of the human mind than those which had hitherto held it and satisfied it: ideas of religious liberty, of free civil constitutions, — these have lain at the bottom of the great movements ever since. The comparative neglect of the arts, if it prove anything, proves only that men have become more thoughtful: that thought, reflection has taken the place of a quiet, unreflecting acquiescence in a

state of things not destined to endure. To many this may seem to be a grievous evil. They sigh for the return of the happy ignorance and quiet contemplative spirit of the Middle Ages, when Christianity was symbolized to the senses, and men were no longer required to think, in religion, but only to look and adore. But such a state of things could not last. The age of Leo the Tenth, of Michael Angelo, and of Raphael, was also the age of the Reformation. We cannot expect, neither should we wish, that such an age of art, an age of art on such conditions, should ever return upon the world again. It is hardly possible to conceive of a revolution which could push the world so far back from the position it has gained as to bring around such another age of public spirit as that was, when not only the wealth wrung out from Europe, and concentrated in Italy and Rome, but when the energies of the greatest men, instead of being directed at all to religious or to social improvements, were expended on splendid churches and masterpieces of painting.¹

¹ [The following fragment, found among the author's papers relating to Art, will further illustrate his views in regard to the subject under discussion.]

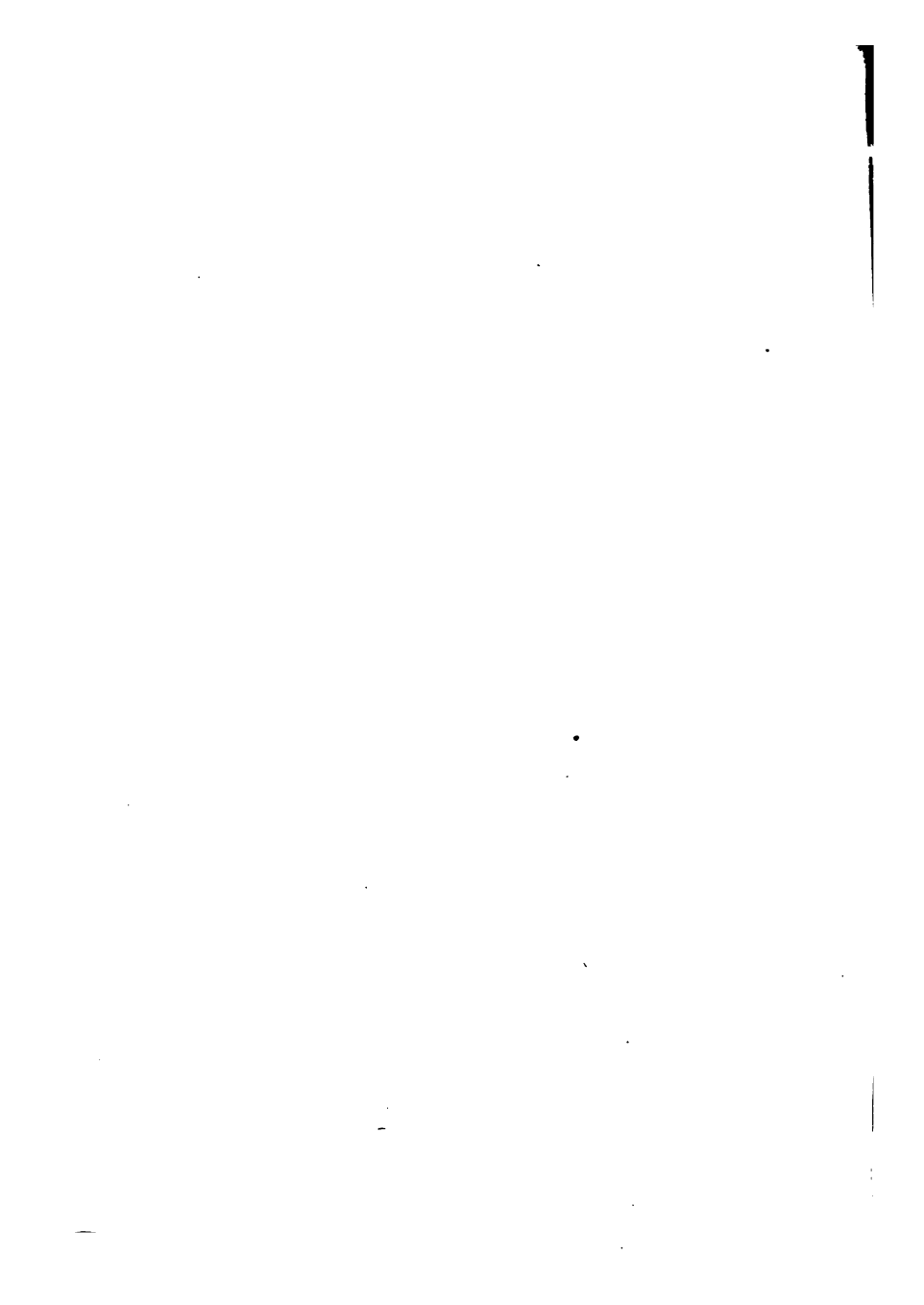
All the arts will still continue to be cultivated; some of them may arrive at a perfection never witnessed as yet; for some of them, as it seems to me, are in their very nature progressive beyond any assignable limit — altering, indeed, with the changing phases of society, but destined ever to keep pace with the progress of man while he continues to dwell on the earth, and to combine a sensuous with an intellectual nature.

But in this new direction of the human mind, how is it with taste? Do we necessarily also lose the faculty to appreciate such works, when that peculiar direction of spirit which led to their production no longer exists to the same degree? Must taste necessarily decline as art declines, and in the same proportion? This by no means follows. It would be absurd, indeed, to suppose it: for if the capacity to appreciate and enjoy must be confined to the age that conceives and produces the great works of art, Homer would have long ago been dead to fame, and the genius of Shakespeare must have been far better understood in his own day, than it now is.

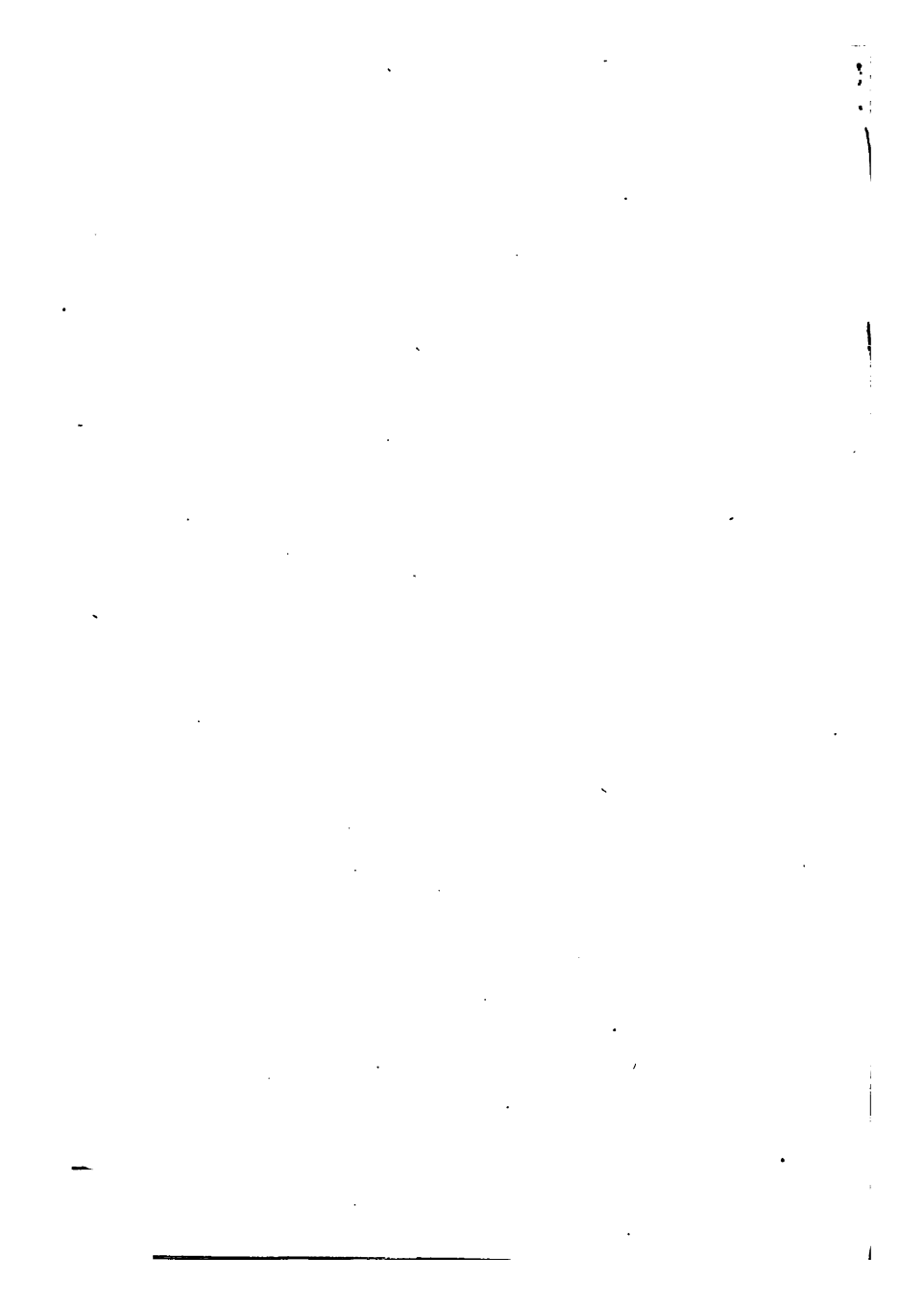
In fact, the capacity to appreciate is not apt to be contemporaneous with the age that produces. The time for genuine criticism and for appreciative admiration is much more commonly in a later generation than in that the author lived in. Genius is too profound a mystery to itself to be understood or appreciated by itself. The judgment of contemporaries is liable to be warped in a thousand ways. The spirit of an age cannot be fairly estimated by those who live in it. To after times is reserved the power and the privilege of sifting the good from the bad, and of fully perceiving and truly enjoying the best things of the past.

While this privilege, then, belongs to us who live in these days, comparatively unpropitious to the

very highest efforts of productive genius : while we may still prize and enjoy, — and, after what this age has done in establishing on their enduring basis the true principles of criticism, enjoy with a better discrimination than was ever possible before, — whatever is worthy of admiration in those works which it is not the special vocation of this age to excel in, we may be well contented with the appointment which thus secures to us all the ennobling influences of the arts, without any of the evils which, in the days of their palmy vigor and greatest fertility, too often accompanied them.



APPENDIX.



APPENDIX TO CHAPTER III.

THE DIMENSIONS OF SPACE IN THEIR RELATION TO ART.

I HAVE thought it would be well to introduce somewhere in the course of this discussion some remarks on the significance of the primary dimensions of space. As all form, therefore everything figurable in space, whether by the operation of natural laws, or by the Imagination, must necessarily come under some one, or two, or all, of these primary dimensions, the importance of inquiring into the original significance of these dimensions, in pursuing a subject which, first and last, has so much to do with form, will, as a general thing, be obvious to all. The imagination, it is true, in the exercise of its high creative power in art, is ever concerned with somewhat that is much greater and higher than mere form. Passion, soul, spirit, animating the form, are the essential elements which can never be wanting in an art which is noble and effective. But this passion, soul, and spirit could never touch or affect us through art, were there not something *originally* significant in the forms themselves, wherein these spiritual elements, which

are the real sources of our emotion, are embodied. For we are to remember that it is not in the plastic arts alone, or in those productions which really occupy outward space, that dimensional forms are employed to express spiritual thoughts and ideas. In the plastic arts, which may rightly be considered as lying at the foundation of art generally, it may be freely granted, that their importance is more immediate and more obvious than in the other arts. But the observance of measure and proportion is equally and alike the fundamental law for every species of artistic production. This fact, as it seems to me, has never been sufficiently appreciated, nor very thoroughly investigated, by writers on art. Hence the undue importance often attached to mere ornamentation, and that tendency to superficiality, which may be said to be the distinguishing mark of modern art as compared with the ancient. The great makers of former times seem to have had an instinctive feeling, that grandeur of effect depended on a certain felicity in seizing upon the radical dimensions and proportions, without which, as the solid basis of expression, the most painstaking elaboration of minor details would avail little or nothing. We cannot doubt that, answering to this instinctive sense which belongs to the genius for high art, is a corresponding meaning in the primary relations and dimensions of space : that each dimension, when the elements and principles of it are fully

expressed, will be found to have a meaning of its own, and which therefore must have existed in it latently from the beginning. What this meaning may be in the case of each dimension considered by itself, and also in its combination with the others, is the question to be discussed in the present lecture.

A word, before proceeding to this discussion, on the history of the whole subject, and on the significance which has been attached to the primary dimensions of space in former times, since it will serve to show, at least, that it is a subject which has arrested attention from the time men began to think in earnest on the interior nature and constitution of things. The importance attributed to number, measure, and the relations of quantity generally, by the ancient Pythagoreans is well known. All corporeality, or corporeal body, according to them, originates in four points or monads. The first conjunction, of two points, which they called the first dyad, is the line; the conjunction of three, not in the same line, which they called the first *Triad*, is the plane or surface. Four points is the number of body,¹ — the conjunction of four, where one is not in the plane, being all that is required for the simplest solid, the three sided pyramid.

It is unnecessary to stop here to speak of the symbolical meaning, oftentimes far-fetched and fanciful,

¹ Ariat., *De Colo*, lib. i., ch. i. 2.

which the Pythagoreans attached to the various shapes and figures arising out of these and other combinations of the fundamental points determining the dimensions of body. Suffice it to say that the three dimensions of body ascertained by this sect of philosophers have ever since been retained. That some principle or other is concerned in these dimensions seems to have been well understood by Aristotle, though he fails of explaining it satisfactorily. Galileo, among the moderns, first demonstrated geometrically that no more than three perpendicular lines can intersect each other at one and the same point. With this demonstration, which left the significance of these lines wholly out of question, modern science for a long time remained satisfied. At the same time, the common sense of mankind, which finds expression in the language of every people, felt that there was a radical difference between the three dimensions of length, breadth, and thickness or depth. But, in an inorganic body, these measurements are indifferent. We may call whichever one we please the length, and whichever we please the breadth or the depth. What particular name is to be given to each measurement seems not to be determined by anything in the nature of the thing. In the case of such bodies, it is, generally speaking, not their elevation or altitude which determines for us their length, but simply what happens to be their longest dimension. In

the determination of the figure of a regular crystal we conventionally assume a certain dimension to be its length or height. Some line crossing this at right angles will then be called the *breadth*, and this latter would of course determine what should be called the *depth*. But we see at once that this mode of fixing and naming the different dimensions of a body is altogether arbitrary. They have no such significance as this in nature. They have the meaning assigned to them simply in their relation to ourselves,¹ and to serve the purpose of a definite nomenclature in science. Neither a crystal, nor a table at which we sit, has a right side or a left side, a top or a bottom, a front or a back, of its own. We are ever making use of these names in determining the dimensions of inanimate objects, feeling that somehow, in intention and aim, if not in reality, they have the meaning we ascribe to them, though why it should be so, whether because we involuntarily ascribe the same significance of the different dimensions which we find so remarkably expressed in our own organic structure, to all the objects that are below us, or from some inexplicable reason in those objects themselves, we seldom stop to inquire.

Some of our thinkers in modern times have conceived that there is a significance in the first dimensions of all bodies, animate and inanimate, depending on the manner in which they arise, or come into

¹ Arist., *De Cælo*, lib. ii., ch. ii. 4.

being. Thus Mr. Coleridge, in some remarks of his on what he calls a productive idea, says, "What a deeply interesting volume might be written on the symbolic import of the primary relations and dimensions of space, long, broad, deep, or depth ; surface ; upper, under, above and below, right, left, horizontal, perpendicular, oblique ; and then the *order of causation*, or that which gives intelligibility ; and the reverse order of effects, or that which gives the conditions of actual existence ! Without the higher, the lower would want its intelligibility ; without the lower, the higher could not have existed."¹ Here it is plainly intimated that the significance of dimensions everywhere is to be explained and understood only by reference to the highest organized forms, where their meaning is for the first time fully and clearly brought to light. In another work, which has been ascribed to Coleridge, though probably it was not written by him, the work entitled "Physiology of Life,"² the attempt is made to explain the significance of the primary dimensions by reference to the three fundamental dynamical forces, so called, which are supposed in this work to be the grand instruments of all production and productive agencies in nature, — magnetism, which works in length, electricity, which works in breadth and sur-

¹ *Literary Remains*. Notes on Hooker.

² Or "*Theory of Life*." See Coleridge's *Works*, Shedd's edition, vol. i.

face, and chemistry, which works in depth. But this would appear to be nothing more than the resuscitation in an English dress of an early hypothesis of Schelling,¹ who is undoubtedly the philosopher to whom we are more indebted than to any other individual in modern times for something like a rational hypothesis covering the whole ground of the subject now before us.²

This may suffice for the history of the question now to be discussed. In proceeding to consider it, let us inquire first, generally, whether there is anything in nature by which we may distinguish length from breadth, and breadth from depth; what are the determining points which belong exclusively to each several dimension; which is the lowest or original dimension with which bodies begin, and which is the leading dimension that gives actual existence and significance to the others?

The first inquiry, whether nature anywhere furnishes indication of what is properly to be called *length*, and what *breadth* and *depth*, may easily be answered. Our own bodies present to us, at once, a type of structure in which the primary dimensions are so clearly expressed as to leave no possibility of ever confounding one of these with either of the

¹ *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur.*

² For the fuller development of the following theory in its philosophical relations, see Schelling. *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie*, Neunzehnte Vorlesung.

others. We see here that length and elevation, altitude or height are always one and the same dimension. We see here that breadth means the measurement from side to side, while what are to be called the sides of a body is determined, beyond all doubt, by a complete parallelism of structure. And we see that the only other measurement that remains must be, and in fact is, what we mean by depth.

At the same time, the second question, as to what are the determining or terminating points of each one of these several dimensions is clearly resolved by reference to the same standard of all bodily structure. The points which determine the dimension, length, are the above and the below. Those which determine breadth are a right and a left; and those, finally, which determine the depth are a front and a back, or a before and a behind. All this was well understood by Aristotle, who says that the principle of length is the above ($\tau\acute{o} \acute{\alpha}\nu\omega$): that of breadth is the right ($\tau\acute{o} \delta\epsilon\acute{\iota}\xi\acute{\iota}\omicron\nu$); and that of depth the before ($\tau\acute{o} \pi\rho\acute{o}\upsilon\theta\epsilon\iota$).¹ True, when we pass downward to animal and organized structures lower than man, all the dimensions do not seem, at first view, to correspond wholly with man's. Length, for instance, seems not to be a perpendicular measurement, and the same with *height*; but a horizontal one, determined by the points before and be-

¹ *De Calo*, lib. ii., ch. ii. 2.

hind, while the dimensions depth and breadth still remain the same. But that this mode of measurement, however natural it may be, is erroneous, becomes apparent by the confusion it immediately introduces. In the first place, it involves the necessity of supposing four dimensions, since, besides the depth and breadth of the animal, we must to its length add its height. Then again, before is confounded, in one part of the body, with above, and in another part, with below ; and the back, which should normally be behind, is above. In a word, nearly all the points which determine the true dimensions, except right and left, are thrown into confusion. But everything is set right, if we conceive the animal to stand erect,¹ which, in fact, every brute strives to do, either in repose or when excited. In the vegetable kingdom, on the other hand, the length of a plant is determined for the most part by its upward growth, and is the same with its height, while the dimensions breadth and depth are either not distinguished at all,² or else feebly, by the spiral growth, and that normal disposition of the branches and leaves called by the botanists, phyllotaxis.

Without stopping here to inquire how far these analogies may be applied to determine the different dimensions in inanimate and inorganic objects, let

¹ Schelling, *Einleitung, etc.*, Vorlesung 13.

² Arist., *De Cælo*, ii., ii. 6.

us proceed to consider the next question, namely, which is the *lowest* and most *material* or matter-like dimension, and which the highest or leading dimension, namely, the first to give not only character and intelligibility, but actual existence, to both the others? The answer to this question, which seems to be the same with that concerning the order of causation, spoken of in the passage quoted from Coleridge, or the order according to which body, in general, originates, may furnish some clue towards the differentiation of the dimensions in all bodies whatever, whether organic or inorganic. We may conjecture then, or, for the present, assume, that the lowest and most matter-like of the dimensions, the one which is the necessary condition, though not the cause of the others, is breadth. Everything begins from below, or from breadth, or matter, this being the necessary condition of its bodily existence. But this breadth has no power of an actual dimension by itself, nor can it ever have any at all, otherwise than as the principle that elevates, that principle of dimension which we have called the above, causes determinate lines of breadth and so also of depth, as soon as the generation of a corporeal being begins. The forming principle, then, so far as dimensions are concerned, is the above, or the direct opposite to the material principle, or the substratum, as it is very properly called, which is the below. This

accords with Aristotle's view, who says that the above is not only the principle of length, but of form (εἶδος).¹

It would appear, therefore, that the first and leading dimension in corporeality is length, or, what is the same thing, height. With the dimension of height we first have actual breadth and actual depth. This might be illustrated by the history of production, through the whole sphere of nature within our experience. Abstractly considered, all the dimensions are simply lines of length, and, abstractly, one dimension does not differ from another. But dynamically considered, the case is otherwise. Each dimension has its proper function and significance as a force; and the leading dimension, that by which any material is raised out of mere materiality to some form of corporeal existence, from the lowest onward to the highest, is the vertical tendency, which, as we have seen, is the same as true length. A great deal might be said to prove and illustrate by any number of examples this fact; but what has been now said must suffice for the present occasion.

We are now prepared to understand the typical significance of the several dimensions. Length, generally, then, while it is the leading dimension, is the one possessed of the highest significance. It is the movement from passive inert

¹*De Caelo*, lib. iv., ch. iv., 10.

materiality to form, life, intelligence, spirituality.¹ It is a dimension measured by the two terms which express the greatest difference, the Above and the Below. The dimension Breadth, on the other hand, is of a more material and passive nature, and the two terms by which it is defined, a Right and a Left, very little differ from each other. Yet for this very reason, symmetry of proportion, and, in bodies having a power of locomotion, the beginning of motion,² the locomotive organs, and all gracefulness of motion, depend on this dimension. But predominance of breadth over elevation always indicates a tendency to the gross and material. In the forms of inorganic nature, breadth on the whole predominates, and where these forms are symmetrical, as in crystals, it is by a force which strives after height simply by placing layer over layer. According to the general rule, the forms of the lower orders of organic beings, both in the vegetable and in the animal kingdom, are marked by the predominance of breadth over the vertical dimension, thus showing, as it were, the comparative feebleness of the force which elevates them above a mere inert and material existence ; but in the very lowest forms of organic life, even breadth itself is not a clearly recognizable dimension, except as dis-

¹ Ἔστι δὲ ἀπὸ μὲν τοῦ ἕνω, ἡ ἀξίτης. Arist., *De Cælo*, ii., ii. 2.

² Arist., *De Anim Incessu*, ch. 4, *De Cæl.*, ii., ii. 2. ἀπο δὲ τῶν δεξιῶν, ἢ [κίνησις] κατὰ τόπον.

tinguished from elevation or length. The first movement from the lowest to a little higher grade of animal existence, is indicated, as remarked by Agassiz, by bilaterality of structure. When an animal has two sides, a right and a left, then we are at no loss any longer about distinguishing both its breadth, and also the third dimension, its depth; for in having a right and a left, it has also a behind and a before, which are the terms or principles of depth. But while there is no observable difference externally, in form, between the right and the left side of an organized body; there is a great and important difference between the part which is properly to be called *before*, and the part behind, or the back. This is what gives significance to the third dimension. The front is the seat of sensibility.¹ In man, and even in the inferior animals, it is the part to which we instinctively look for the expression and character of the species, or the individual. Such, in general, is the difference of radical significance belonging to the different dimensions in all cases where they can be clearly distinguished, and which, we may presume, is at least striven after by *all* corporeal forms, according to the degree of their capability.

Before proceeding to say anything on the bearing, and the more or less unconscious influence, of

¹ Arist. *De Anim. Inc.*, ch. 4, and *De Caelo*, ii., ii. 2. ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἔμπροσθεν ἢ κατὰ τὴν αἰσθησιν.

these facts in nature, on art and its productions, it may be well to observe that the author of the work on the Physiology of Life,¹ of which I have spoken as having been attributed to Coleridge, gives, as the result he arrives at, very nearly the same account of the dimensions, in *their particular relation to life*, as has been presented, in a more broad and general form, in the preceding remarks. "However mere an *ens logicum*," says the author, "space may be, the *dimensions* of space are real, and the works of Galileo, in more than one elegant passage, prove with what awe and amazement they fill the mind that worthily contemplates them. Dismissing, therefore, all facts of degrees, I would . . . designate the three powers in the process of our animal life, each by two correlative terms, the one expressing the *form*, and the other the *object* and *product* of the power. My hypothesis will, therefore, be thus expressed, that the constituent forces of life in the human body are, — first the power of length or *Reproduction*." This writer, then, makes length to be the first or leading dimension, as we do; but he represents its *object* and significance to be reproduction; while we consider it as being not only this, but all striving upwards from mere materiality to the full expression of the Idea of Being, and towards spirituality. The second constituent force, he says,

¹ See Coleridge's *Works*, Shedd's Edition. *Aids to Reflection*, App. C.

is "the power of surface (that is length and breadth), or Irritability." Breadth is also our second dimension, but he confounds breadth with surface, and is thus led to represent its object and significance to be Irritability; but we by strictly defining breadth, whether considered before or behind, by its proper principles a right and a left, limit the irritability to the muscles of locomotion, and make its general significance to consist in symmetry of form and motion. The "third," he says, "is the power of depth or sensibility;" in which he perfectly agrees with us, both in making this dimension the third, and also in making it indicative of sensibility. This writer then goes on to say that "Life itself is neither of these separately, but the copula of all three, — that life, *as* life, supposes a positive or universal principle in Nature, with a negative principle in every particular animal; the latter or limitative power, constantly acting to individualize, and, as it were, *figure* the former." What he means by Life, merely as life, is here plain enough, even though he had not added that "Life itself is not a thing, — a self-existent *hypostasis*, — but an *act* and *process*." But the question is, what does he mean by the negative principle in every particular animal, — or limitative power, constantly acting to individualize, and as it were, *figure*, that is, to give its own individual and ever abiding form to the general processes of life? I confess to my ignorance of *what* it is as a

negative principle. But certainly the constitutive principle, as distinguished from the other merely universal principles of materiality, actuality, and the copula of both, which results in the ground for sensibility, — the really constitutive and essential principle, I say, which directs all these other principles from the beginning, and inspires into them all along the breath of an individual life, is the *soul*.

Now nothing can be admitted into art which is *without soul*. Let an artistic production of any kind observe, ever so closely, regularity of plan and a rigorous law of method, let it abound in all that which on first appearance may seem striking, brilliant, and indeed quite charming, yet what will everything of this sort amount to in the end, if the work after all be wanting in life and soul. In art, we require soul even in things inanimate. They can awaken no emotion in our soul, if they have no soul, or no life looking toward a soul, of their own. Even in the most material of the fine arts, in architecture, a work, in order to inspire that perpetual, though it may be silent, admiration, which any work of architectural pretensions ought, from its necessary publicity, and exposedness, and confinement to one spot, to inspire in every passer by, must, to do this, have something more in it than *exact formal proportions*, the secret of the beautiful in this art, according to one class of critics, or *rich ornamentation*, the secret of the whole effect according to an-

other. It must have that one thing which cannot be touched by the fingers or traced out by the eye, as ornament and proportion may be ; but which will be felt, as the presence of the invisible, impalpable soul is felt which animates a living body. The impossibility of describing a reality of this sort, which can be known only as it *is* felt, is what makes the best language- by which one may attempt to define it seem so misty to some, so altogether senseless to others, and so far short of the thing aimed at to those who understand what is meant. But however difficult it may be to bring the principle of unity and individuality, which exists throughout nature, under a formal definition, we none the less require it, we none the less miss it, if it is absent in anything that claims to be recognized as an artistic production. The spiritual, the ideal, must have a soul, as well as a body. What is called spirit in a work of genius, — another quality difficult to define, but powerful to affect the heart, — cannot reside in anything which has not a soul. This soul is the bond which unites the highest with the lowest, reconciles spirit to body and elevates body to spirit.

Now, as we have seen, body is prepared for soul gradually, by an inworking power, which has no other possible way of expressing itself outwardly, but through the primary dimensions of space. There will be nothing strange to any one generally acquainted with the modern doctrines of physiology

in the statement that the lower forms of corporeal existence are not only preparatory steps to the higher, but that everything is advancing and aspiring, as it were, to that more perfect form of corporeal being which is fitted to serve as the residence of an intelligent soul. Everything strives to have soul as much as it can, and if it cannot have soul itself, at least to contribute its share as a means and a material to that which is capable of having it in full. But not satisfied to be merely a material, in order to be which, it must enter into the being of something else, each corporeal thing, as it exists independently, by itself, strives according to its measure, after that proportion and relation of the dimensions, in its own case, which possesses its full significance only in the highest forms of corporeal being. It is the sense of this which leads every poet who has a true feeling of nature, to personify, or rather to warm and animate with the breath of humanity every humblest object which his fancy may light upon. But it is particularly the sense of this which makes that *proportion* of form which first brings fully to light its significance, and lays the only possible foundation on which soul can appear, such an indispensable necessity in all the arts. Ruskin himself, the advocate of ornament as superior to proportion as the foundation of effect in architecture, still cannot deny this fact. "The fact is," he says in his lectures on Architecture and Painting,¹

¹ Addenda to Lectures i. and ii.

“ that all art and all nature depend on the ‘ disposition of masses.’ Painting, Sculpture, Music, and Poetry depend all equally on the ‘ proportion,’ whether of colors, stones, notes, or words. Proportion is a principle, not of architecture, but of existence. It is by the laws of proportion that stars shine, that mountains stand and rivers flow.” “ In the fine arts it is impossible to move a single step, or to execute the smallest and simplest piece of work, without involving all those laws of proportion in their full complexity.” It is the principle with which “ all great art *begins*.” After admitting all this, however, he calls it the “ one poor æsthetic principle.” But if it is a true saying that “ well begun is half done,” why should he speak thus disparagingly of the principle with which, it is admitted by him, all great art begins. It may be doubted whether this writer, so admirable a judge in the fine arts generally, so far as it relates to their particular motives and effects in detail, had ever taken pains to inform himself how and why the relations of dimension and proportion lie at the foundation of all art, how and why these, and these only, can lay a solid basis for expression by ornament or in any other way ; how the elements which enter into all symmetrical proportion have each of them an independent object and meaning of their own ; how one of these elements prepares the way for the appearance of another, and how the first and leading

one of all, the vertical direction, shows that the tendency points upwards in the meanest thing that grows, and still points upwards even in the highest creature on earth to that part of the human body, supported by all the other framework, where the concentrated dimensions fully express whatever there is to be expressed, depth of sensibility, breadth and solidity of understanding, elevation of soul, and loftiness of spirit.

It is impossible in the course of a few brief remarks to explain all these things as fully as might be desired, or to illustrate them by particular cases from the several fine arts. The principal object I have in view is to show that the significance of forms, through the entire circle of the arts, does not depend in the least upon so casual and fortuitous a circumstance as the mode of operation of the principle of association ; that it does not depend in the least on a conventional symbolism ; or an understanding and agreement among the artists that certain forms shall be held to signify certain moral and spiritual qualities ; and that it depends least of all upon extrinsic embellishment and ornamentation, which often serve only to divert attention from some serious defect in the plan of the work thus embellished, as a whole. But there is no way that I know of to demonstrate this, except by proving that forms are significant, of themselves, and that this significance has its root

in an original positive difference in those dimensions of space, which, though abstractly considered they are one and the same, namely, mere lines of the measurement of a body in different directions, yet everywhere in nature, and in actual corporeal existence, mean different things, and thus constitute the positive elements of different possible relations. And I will now add, to prevent misapprehension, that, in speaking of actual dimensions, the whole contents of each dimension must always be understood to be included, that is to say, every line of breadth, wherever drawn, includes all that is contained within that line, and so of length and depth.

One point only remains to be considered. The question may arise, how are these dimensional principles to be applied in the case of those arts which do not deal with the dimensions of space, as music, oratory, and poetry. The answer is this, as soon as art leaves the dimensions of space, as the means of expression, it does so only to enter into those of another order, intervals of time, intervals of intonation reckoned on an ascending and descending scale, which is founded in nature, and not on convention; and, in music, intervals of unison and concord between different tones. Here, indeed, both in common and technical language, it is customary to apply the term measure only to versification and rhythmical movement. But the interval of a fifth or an octave, whether in melody or

in harmony, or in speaking, is really as much a measure in tone, as rhythm is a measure in time. Again, in considering these different kinds of measure as the means of expression, it is evident that such terms as length, breadth, and depth, which belong exclusively to dimensions of space, are no longer applicable except in an improper and figurative sense. But that which each of these spatial relations respectively represents, — the more material qualities of symmetry of outward form and movement, the more sensuous, of feeling and passion, and the more intellectual and ideal, of soul and spirit, are expressed in a way altogether analogous in the rhythmical movement, in intonation and in melody and harmony.

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