

FOREIGN MISSIONS FROM THE STANDPOINT OF ART.

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We all delight in the beautiful. When we travel during the summer we go where there is beautiful scenery. When we build a country house we seek a beautiful site. When we see a beautiful piece of furniture or a beautiful picture we wish that we had it for the adornment of our home. A beautiful face attracts our attention and chains our admiration. A beautiful sentiment we never weary of repeating. A beautiful action gives us the keenest pleasure. A beautiful character fills us with holy joy.

And this joy is peculiar to itself. The beautiful is not necessarily the useful, and it is distinct from the good. Otherwise we should not be at so much pains to decorate our homes. They would be just as useful if their ceilings were not frescoed; and there are kinds of stone that would be more durable and less troublesome than the marble of which the fronts of many of them are made. If the beautiful were not a quality different from, though doubtless in its highest forms dependent on the good, we should not be so anxious to render the good also beautiful. We feel that a good book deserves a beautiful binding. We rejoice when a good man has beautiful surroundings. It is the natural desire of the pious heart to beautify the house of God. The beautiful is, therefore, a distinct quality, and one in which we all delight. Consequently it will be profitable and pleasing to consider that the foreign missionary work, in addition to being useful and good, is pre-eminently beautiful. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things?"!

That we may appreciate this let us try, in the first place, to form some conception of what beauty is, or, at least, of that on which it depends. I say some conception; for the question is difficult. We do not seem to have any such necessary convictions in regard to beauty as we have in regard to certain fundamental intellectual truths and moral qualities. I must believe that the sun exists as an extended body. It would be apprehended as I see it by any inhabitant of Mars or Jupiter endowed with the capacity to perceive the object. I must believe that falsehood is a sin always and everywhere, in the star Sirius as well as on earth—in the case of men, of angels, of devils. But I am not to the same degree compelled to believe that the objects which appear beautiful to me have a beauty independent of my mind. It is, therefore, peculiarly difficult to tell in what beauty consists. We cannot be sure how far things are beautiful or how far we only think them so.

And yet some analysis of beauty is possible. The greatest of German metaphysicians discovers two kinds of beauty. One he calls free or absolute; the other, relative or dependent. In the case of the former it is not necessary to have an idea of what the object ought to be or do before we pronounce it beautiful. Flowers, shells, arabesques, music, are absolutely beautiful; that is, they are beautiful in themselves, and without reference