

good the pre-eminence. So—with all self-denial, even unto martyrdom—did the old Puritans. Their error was not in subordinating, but in undervaluing the beautiful. There is a true Christian use of it, as accordant with our spiritual aptitudes, as with our emotional and imaginative nature. It has been well termed the shadow of virtue. In all virtue it inheres. We read often in the Scriptures of the “beauty of holiness.” And as God has touched all creation with it, he designed it, doubtless, not only as itself an innocent source of enjoyment, but as a help to the soul in its loftier aspirations. It has a typical significancy. According to that law of correspondence, by which all inferior good has a certain analogy to something higher, we have in all natural loveliness an emblem of spiritual. It has, besides, an assimilating influence. Its tendency, as it passes before us, is to conform us unto itself.

“The attentive mind,

By this harmonious action on its powers,  
Becomes itself harmonious ; wont so oft  
In outward things to meditate the charm  
Of sacred order, soon she seeks at home  
To find a kindred order, to exert  
Within herself this elegance of love,  
This fair inspired delight ; her tempered powers  
Refine at length, and every passion wears  
A chaster, milder, more attractive mien.”

This was but imperfectly understood by the early Puritans. They restrained unduly, besides, what may be called the play-element of our nature. How it struggled for vent may be seen,