

you examine and find that there is nothing very costly or remarkable in any way, but only that everything suits the room and the owner of it, and the position it occupies, and seems fitted for the work required of it. Another room, more gorgeously furnished, with finer pictures, handsome books, more costly ornaments, may not afford you the same satisfaction.

Not that this need be the case; for the most costly and rare things may be arranged so as to produce an equally harmonious, and therefore, tasteful effect, if only they suit, and do not impress the eye as if trying to outshine each other, and if they can do their work, as well as stand in their places; and this harmony of arrangement can only be attained by the exercise of a cultivated taste, composed as we have said, of feeling and knowledge, and able to render a reasonable account of its proceedings. It may be contended that this is Art, that high Art, which by careful labour and study, arrives at perfect naturalness, (to borrow a word from Mr. Carlyle.) But, though this may be true, and there be art in the arrangement, it is taste which dictates and appreciates. In the instance just taken, it is evident that more study, more knowledge, we may say, more art, would be required to produce an agreeable and harmonious effect with every artistic and costly material, than with the more humble. There would be more danger of their clashing, more danger of the intrinsic worth or beauty of any one thing overbalancing its neighbours and becoming obtrusive. For obtrusiveness is wholly opposed to taste. A perfect chord strikes on the ear, not as a multitude of sounds, but as one complete and harmonious tone, each component note fulfilling and completing the other; if one predominate the unity is marred.

On towards this perfection of harmony, producing the repose of unity, does taste stretch, as it proceeds from feeling to knowledge, it becomes, from an unreasoning instinct, a reasoning and reasonable faculty.

Taste in its office we may compare to the compass of a ship, which points out the path she should pursue, enables her to keep a direct course, and under the steersman's guidance, to avoid shoals and rocks. Thus does taste direct us in the education of all our powers, point out the best way in which we may combine our energies of mind and body, and, under the guidance of heaven, correct the influence of disturbing and evil agencies, and enable us to avoid many errors and blunders. And, as the value of the compass seems to be increased, in proportion to the value of the vessel and her cargo, so, in proportion to the powers of mind possessed by any individual, does the value of taste seem the greater to direct those powers, and guide them safely and harmoniously onward in their voyage, towards that perfection which should be their ultimate end and aim, and which lies on the other shore of the Ocean of life.