

Lecture.



"Happy, if full of days—but happier far,
If, ere we yet discern life's evening star,
Sick of the service of a world, that feeds
Its patient drudges with dry chaff and weeds,
We can escape from custom's idiot sway,
To serve the Sovereign we were born to obey.
Then sweet to muse upon his skill display'd
(Infinite skill) in all that he has made!
To trace in nature's most minute design
The signature and stamp of power divine,
Contrivance intricate, expressed with ease,
Where unassisted sight no beauty sees."—*Cowper.*



It must be obvious that the word "Taste" is not here used in its simple form, as applied to the senses. It must be understood to mean an exercise of the intellectual, and often of the moral qualities of the mind; and it must be formed from reflection, experience and practice.

Taste, then, in this sense, is not a simple perception of the beautiful, or of the useful. If it were so, all tastes would be alike. When a green object is presented to the eye, or a sweet or bitter morsel is put into the mouth, all eyes in which the vision is not defective see that it is green, and all mouths taste that it is sweet or bitter. But it is otherwise with taste, as we understand the word in connection with our subject. If taste be a right perception of the BEAUTIFUL, the USEFUL, and the BECOMING, and of their mutual relations, it must be admitted that tastes will be likely to vary on all subjects in which beauty, utility, and propriety intermingle. Even in respect to a sense of beauty, the tastes of mankind differ almost as widely as the state of the thermometer in New Brunswick. All educated persons would prefer the beauty of the Apollo Belvidere or the Venus di Medici, but there are those to be found, for whom large rolling eyes, distended lips, and a head covered with melted butter, would possess greater attraction.* Among the Esquimaux an appearance more revolting still in our eyes, would find admirers.

* See Perkin's description of an Abyssinian dandy—in travels in Abyssinia.