

they also invert the proposition and hold that whatever is agreeable is beautiful. If this conclusion be accepted their deductions therefrom cannot be rejected. The science of aesthetics, they argue, proposes to itself the investigation of the beautiful, and the duty of art is to depict the beautiful in its various forms. But whatever is agreeable, that is whatever can cause pleasure to the senses is beautiful, therefore whatever gives rise to pleasant sensations may form a legitimate subject for the exercise of art. Hence, they insist, the painter whose brush produces figures glowing with such voluptuousness, that in the words of Byron, "we gaze and turn away, and know not where, dazzled and drunk with beauty, till the heart reels with its fulness," such painter is following the true artistic instinct, as well as that other whose eyes seem to have caught one glimpse of Paradise, during which his hand has transferred to canvas some of the visions of that blest abode. If this be really so, and the object of art be merely to minister to the pleasures of sense, why exclude from the category of artists the maker of bon-bons or the manufacturer of scented waters? Taste and smell are senses as well as sight and hearing. They are considered inferior senses, but why? The sensualists cannot answer, but we know that it is because all the senses are but the servants of reason, and are superior or inferior in as much as they can approach more or less nearly to the throne of their sovereign.

Man is something more than a bundle of fibres endowed with sensibility, he is something more than a delicately wrought nervous organization, he is a being of whom it was said, "thou hast made him a little lower than the angels," he is a being stamped with God's image, and endowed with illimitable aspirations, among them a love for beauty which only the vision of the Eternal Beauty can satisfy. Thus the highest object of art is not to influence our senses, but to purify our hearts and elevate our minds by the contemplation of all that is beautiful and noble and grand. This being granted, the next question which presents itself is whether art, which is so closely allied to religion and morality, is dependent upon them in such a sense as to be subservient to them. The question is one of gravest importance, and has been differently answered in accordance with

the different convictions of the age. There is no doubt that art has gained her greatest triumphs when she was in alliance with religion. Thus the art of Homer, of Aeschylus, of Sophocles, of Phidias, and even of Virgil is permeated and supported by profound religious sentiment. The artist, the poet, in that glorious age was not only to please the eye and delight the ear, he was a seer, a prophet, whose mission it was to raise human life to a higher, nobler plane. And though the ideals drawn from their Olympus were but earthly reflections, nay caricatures of the Infinite as it exists in our Christian consciousness, yet they were types noble and sublime when compared with the loathsome, idolatrous creations of the eastern nations in the early dawn of history. Consequently the heroic characters modelled upon those patterns by those great poets, sculptors and painters stand out in colossal outline against the background of antique life, the wonder and the admiration of all succeeding ages. I do not hesitate to affirm that those artists were the greatest moving forces in the intellectual and moral life of Greece and Rome. And among them Homer stands pre-eminent as the source and fountain head of all that is grand and noble in antiquity. It is true that he has somewhat lowered the gods but he has elevated man.

Again, if we examine the causes of that elevation which art experienced during the period, so-called, of the Italian Renaissance, we find that it resulted from the intimate union with religion. It was under this inspiration from on High that the brush of a Raphael, the chisel of a Michael Angelo, and the pen of a Tasso (and we might add of a Dante, though he is somewhat earlier in date) created masterpieces which like those of old baffle all rivalry and imitation. And even in the time of Corneille and Racine, and of Shakespeare and Milton the religious sentiment though it was not the all-supporting was at least an all-pervading element of life.

The negative side of the argument might be applied with equal force. Thus with the decline of the religious feeling in Greece and Rome, art likewise sank into insignificance. But no more striking picture of the waning of true art without the vitalizing energy of religion has ever been presented than by the condition of art in