

taste in this branch of the arts. I do not, you will observe, confound good taste with uniform taste; but good taste can only be formed on good models, by study and observation, and no man ought to pretend to condemn what he does not understand, on a first hearing. I lay down this rule for myself. If I do not admire a great work of Handel or Mozart, when I first hear it, (and I honestly confess there are some things I have not yet learned to admire,) I set it down to my own ignorance and stupidity. I try to remember the instance of the Persian going into an English Church and seeing the congregation all standing up and turning round when the organ began to sound, he said that he had seen these people all worshipping a great ugly painted idol, stuck up on a pedestal at the end of the room, which from innumerable mouths, emitted the most frightful groans, and the effect on his mind was so dolorous and horrible that he rushed out of the building in disgust. Some such creature I fancy myself to be, when I criticize Handel or Mozart. What do I know, I say to myself, of the thoughts that burned in their breasts, and the harmony that danced before their eyes? No more than a bat knows of the sun, or an owl of the beauty of the tree in which it goes to roost. *Verbum sat*, as the proverb hath it. Study and observe, and then play the critic if you will, but even then with modesty, and with the respect due to genius.

And not to fatigue you, I must now pass on to another part of Good Taste, without which neither will be useful or beautiful, nor will beauty be combined with utility. This 3rd element is *Propriety*. For I need hardly say that a thing may be both useful and beautiful, yet not becoming our place, position, or fortune, and therefore may be unsuitable to us.

Good Taste will always aim at reality, and will avoid tinsel and meretricious ornament, which neither becomes the person nor the subject. Fine houses beyond the means of the people who live in them, fine clothes which are never paid for, and fine words which have no truth nor hearty good will at the bottom of them, good taste and good sense will eschew.

And there is too much reason to fear that we need wholesome warnings on this subject. What frightful discoveries are continually made of frauds the most extensive, injurious, and heartless, of swindling the most clever and the most audacious, prompted apparently by the wish to outshine others, and to live beyond one's proper station.

What preposterous exhibitions are made, of baby shows; of every kind of folly and extravagance, from the thirst after novelty and excitement; what innumerable bankruptcies are brought about by the wish to be fine, and to make a great figure in the world. And we have too much reason to lament