

strove to reveal, would he be, in any degree, able to form a judgment, or exercise the appreciative faculty of taste. And the more he previously knew of art in general, the more he had studied the beauties of nature, the more thoughts and consideration he had given to the effects conveyed to his mind through his outward senses, by so much the more would he feel and know his own ability; and taste, founded on the knowledge of his own want of knowledge, would come to his aid in another way, and prevent his committing errors and advancing rash opinions on a subject upon which he was ignorant.

But beyond familiarity, of course, comes real knowledge of the subject, and of the rules and laws upon which alone taste can be exercised with regard to it, and not the least is this the case in that branch of taste which regulates our conduct in social matters, and in our intercourse with each other. There are certain conventional rules by which society governs itself, and as these originated in a consideration of what was decorous and desirable, they cannot be transgressed habitually without offences against taste, and therefore acquaintance with them is needful. And the more so because there are cases when the best taste breaks these rules, and sets them aside, to do some kindness, or to give expression to some good or noble feeling, which a strict adherence to conventionality would have forbidden. But this independence of action which is dictated by taste, the instinct, resulting from feeling, is unsafe, unless there is knowledge of exactly how far it has gone, and of how far it may go without defeating its own object.

And here we touch on that main point of harmony, which taste especially appreciates, and which is its perfection. In the instance just mentioned, it is required that the balance should be preserved; that the transgression of the rule should be in exact proportion to the magnitude of the occasion, or the intensity of the feeling; otherwise discord is produced and taste is offended.

Some of the ordinary ways in which we look for the exhibition of taste, are in architecture, and the arrangement of houses and other buildings, in pictures, ornaments, furniture and dress. If we consider what it is in each of these that produces the most tasteful effect, we shall find that it is combination of harmony. That, for instance, which constitutes a beautiful house, is the proper correspondence of all its parts, both in appearance and in fitness for their different purposes, and also to the position in which it is placed; for what is good in one position may be bad in another. Of this I saw an instance lately. A man of comparatively low birth, married a lady of large fortune, and obtained the entire control over her money. He went down into the country, bought some