

vestige left in the way of beauty with which to regale herself.

Socrates called beauty a short-lived tyranny. Plato, a privilege of nature; Theophrastus, a silent cheat; Theocritus, a delightful prejudice; and Aristotle affirmed that it was better than all the letters of recommendation in the world.

Fontenelle thus daintily compliments the sex, when he compares women and clocks—the latter serve to point out the hours, the former to make us forget them.

Dean Swift proposed to tax female beauty, and to leave every lady to rate her own charms. He said the tax would be cheerfully paid, and prove very productive.

Lord Bacon justly remarked, that the best part of beauty is that which a picture cannot express. Yes, beauty is indescribable and inexplicable; all we know is, that it fascinates, dazzles, and bewilders us with its mystic power. No wonder the poets define woman as something midway between a flower and an angel.

In truth it is difficult to form any fixed standard of beauty. Qualities of personal attraction, the most opposite imaginable, are each looked upon as beautiful in different countries, or by different people in the same country. That which is deformity at Paris may be beauty at Peking.

—“Beauty, thou wild, fantastic ape—
Who dost in every country change thy shape;
Here black, there brown, here tawny, and there
white!”

The frantic lover sees “Helen’s beauty in an Egyptian brow.” The black teeth, the painted eyelids, the plucked eyebrows of the Chinese fair, have admirers; and should their feet be large enough to walk upon, their owners are regarded as monsters of ugliness.

With the modern Greeks, and other nations on the shores of the Mediterranean, *corpulency* is the perfection of form in a woman; and those very attributes which disgust the western European form the attractions of an Oriental fair. It was from the common and admired shape of his countrywomen that Rubens in his pictures delights so much in a vulgar and odious plumpness:—when this master was desirous to represent the “beautiful,” he had no idea of beauty under two hundredweight.

The hair is a beautiful ornament of woman, but it has always been a disputed point which

colour is most becoming. We account red hair an abomination; but in the time of Elizabeth it found admirers, and was in fashion. Mary of Scotland, though she had exquisite hair of her own, wore what are called red fronts. Cleopatra was red-haired; and the Venetian ladies to this day counterfeit yellow hair.

Lord Shaftesbury asserts that all beauty is truth. True features make the beauty of a face; and true proportions the beauty of architecture, as true measures that of harmony and music. In poetry, which is all fable, truth still is the perfection.

It has been well observed, that homely women are often altogether the best at heart, head, and soul. A pretty face frequently presides over a false heart and a weak head, with the smallest shadow of a soul.

“The bombastic misrepresentations of the encomiasts of Beauty,” observed Ayton, “have exposed her just claims to much odium and ill-will. If a perfect face is the only bait that can tempt an angel from the skies, what is to be the recompense of the unfortunate with a wide mouth and a turn-up nose? The conduct of men, since the Deluge, has proved, however, that love (the true thing) is not mere fealty to a face. If an ugly woman of wit and worth cannot be loved till she is known—a beautiful fool will cease to please when she is found out.”

“After all, is the world so very absurd in its love of pretty women? Is woman so very ridiculous in her chase after beauty? A pretty woman is doing woman’s work in the world—making life sunnier and more beautiful. Man has forsworn beauty altogether. The world of action is a world of ugliness. But woman does for mankind what man has ceased to do. Her aim from very childhood is to be beautiful. . . . There is a charm, however, of life’s after-glow over the gray, quiet head, the pale, tender face, lit up with a sweetness—a pitifulness that only experience and sorrow can give. It is there, at any rate, that we read a subtler and diviner beauty than in the rosy cheek of girlhood—a beauty spiritualized, mobile with every thought and emotion, yet restful with the rest of years. An infinite tenderness and largeness of heart, a touch that has in it all the gentleness of earth, a smile that has in it something of the compassionateness of heaven—this is the apotheosis of pretty women.”