

in its simple meaning of incorporeal, as opposed to corporeal, and it is composed mostly of feeling. It is a sense of discrimination, an unreasoning preference for one thing over another, dependent on nothing that is definable, and not to be depended on in the least. It is thus that we meet with it amongst comparatively uneducated people, shown by a great appreciation of the effect of natural beauty, flowers, trees, landscapes; for feeling only is required to discern the beauties of nature, whilst artistic excellence cannot be rightly estimated without knowledge also.

Proceeding from taste as an instinct, which is part of our birthright, we find that in order to its due exercise, knowledge also is required, as we saw was the case with the physical sense, that being a discriminating power. It is impossible a man can exercise it when he does not even descry, so that to expect him to do so were about as reasonable as to expect a blind man to argue on colour, or a deaf man on sound. There must be first a certain degree of merely external knowledge or familiarity, without which we cannot judge of things.

We may notice, in passing, that custom and familiarity affect our taste, and the formation of it, and because when we are attached to places or things, we sometimes become almost unconscious of their merits or their defects; it has been said that custom is an enemy of taste, because this is mere sentiment or prejudice apart from reason and reflection. But I am inclined to think that this is a very shallow view of the matter. In becoming attached to a country or place, we may think it beautiful from association, from the many tales of joy or sorrow of which it reminds us so forcibly, from the recollection of the merry voices that echoed there, and the loved faces that rendered it ever bright, and a deeper, far deeper, sense of taste and appreciation is appealed to than can be roused by greater perfection of external beauty apart from these memories. Besides which, there is no doubt, that in the things, places, and scenes which we know well and love, we can see beauties which a casual observer cannot see—I mean mere external beauties.

But to return, we will take an example in Art, of the necessity of this familiarity. Suppose a man who had never seen an oil painting, got fond of drawings, whether etchings or water colour, or in any other style, suddenly taken into a gallery of old masters. His feelings at first would be those of surprise and bewilderment, rather than of gratification and pleasure, and he would not understand the depth of infinite beauty, veiled, perhaps, sometimes, under a somewhat stiff conventional form. By and bye admiration would begin, not only when he had seen again and again, and the canvas had gradually become to him only the index and faint shadowing of the vision of grace and beauty which the painter

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