

# The



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## *THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF ART.*

Read by D. V. Phalen, '89, at a Literary Entertainment given by the Senior Class, in Academic Hall, Dec. 27, '88.



THE great St. Augustine, in one of those moments of fierce self-reproach to which his great soul was delivered up at the recollection of an ill spent youth, exclaimed, "O Infinite Beauty! too late have I loved thee!"

It was the cry of a noble human heart, which had failed to find in finite objects that which could satisfy its longings, and which now perceived that whatever of beauty it had already seen was but a shadow of something greater—but a participation of the Eternal Beauty which resides in God himself. All believers in a supernatural order of things above the natural order that surrounds us, agree with us (though but few realize it as did St. Augustine) that God is the source of all beauty, and that the idea of the beautiful is the divine itself in as far as it is considered as the absolute harmony of the divine thought and will with the divine essence. We believe that as Truth is the object of the human intellect, and Good the object of the human will, so is the Beautiful the object of the sentiments of the human heart. We believe that Reason, that god-like faculty whose dictates our will must obey, is capable of knowing the future destiny of man, can ascertain the existence of a Divine Being. And should we not, so believing, employ the truths which reason has ascertained as rules for

the regulation of our conduct? Should not those who possess that clearer vision of finite beauty, use their wondrous gift for the purpose for which reason must tell them it was intended, viz., the elevation of the soul to Eternal Beauty?

But the artist has still a greater power than that of merely perceiving the beautiful forms of the corporeal world; for these forms take shape within his mind, and react upon his imagination, which out of the material received fashions its own ideal types. In the artist not only is the sensibility highly susceptible to all forms of beauty, physical, intellectual or moral, but there dwells within his mind a certain native fire, a creative thirst, which compels its possessor to reproduce his own ideal conceptions in outward form through the media of the different arts. The sculptor spends years in the study of the beautiful in the human form, as exhibited in its noblest types, then making abstraction of all defects which he has found in individuals he groups together in his mind all their perfections into one grand model, and the cold marble under his chisel takes the shape of an Apollo Belvidere or a Venus de Medici, the ideal of manly or womanly beauty. The poet desiring to create a hero first considers what qualities of body and mind are found in those whose names stand forth most prominently from the page of history, then choosing from one bodily strength, from another