

What, then, is the ultimate end and object of taste? If it be a sense of the soul, given to every child of man, which he must cultivate by the education of his whole being, and which enters into almost every detail of life, we are concerned to know whither it leads us, and whether there be any standard up to which we may bring it.

We have observed, that a lower degree of taste is required to appreciate natural beauty than artistic excellence, and this, partly, from the former being within most people's reach, partly, from its being simple and real, requiring, therefore, little power of imagination or idealisation for its recognition.

Art, which is, in some form or other, the great sphere for the exercise of a refined taste, is not within the comprehension of taste as a mere instinct. Taste is the appreciation of the aims and objects of art, and so, in considering briefly what the end and aim of all true art may be, we shall arrive at the highest function of taste as an appreciative sense, and at its end and aim.

Mr. Ruskin has pronounced Fine Art to be "that in which the hand, the head, and the heart of man go together," employing our triple nature, as we have already said, it must be employed in the cultivation of taste. It is clear, that if the three must be in conjunction to produce the result, they must all be required, though, it may be, in less degree, in order to the appreciation of it. Art has been defined as, "the endeavour after perfection in execution." In all other things we are, and may be, reasonably satisfied if the degree of excellence is as great as the object immediately in view seems to be worth; but, in Art, "the perfection itself is the object," and Art, when really cultivated, is eternally aiming at an ideal beauty. She may never attain it, for continually the vision seems to elude her grasp; and as she seems to be approaching it, it glides away and lures her on and on by ever assuming shapes of new and unexampled loveliness, and so, true Art is never satisfied with imperfection, but is ceaselessly striving after perfection.

"Now this sense of perfection which would make us demand from every creation of man, the very utmost that it ought to give, and render us intolerant of the smallest fault in ourselves or anything that we do, is one of the results of Art-cultivation," and this is, in fact, taste; the appreciation of perfection, or, as alone we can exercise it here, of that which comes nearest to perfection. Therefore, we conclude, that though for every-day purposes, a sort of standard of taste may be formed, on the general consent of educated men, yet there is really no standard at all, but that ideal of perfection which every man may form each for himself, and in our present limited capacity, this will be but poor, though