

Lectures on Art eBook

Lectures on Art by Washington Allston

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Lectures on Art.

Preliminary Note.

Ideas.

As the word *idea* will frequently occur, and will be found also to hold an important relation to our present subject, we shall endeavour, *in limine*, to possess our readers of the particular sense in which we understand and apply it.

An Idea, then, according to our apprehension, is the highest or most perfect *form* in which any thing, whether of the physical, the intellectual, or the spiritual, may exist to the mind. By form, we do not mean *figure* or *image* (though these may be included in relation to the physical); but that condition, or state, in which such objects become cognizable to the mind, or, in other words, become objects of consciousness.

Ideas are of two kinds; which we shall distinguish by the terms *primary* and *secondary*: the first being the *manifestation* of objective realities; the second, that of the reflex product, so to speak, of the mental constitution. In both cases, they may be said to be self-affirmed,—that is, they carry in themselves their own evidence; being therefore not only independent of the reflective faculties, but constituting the only unchangeable ground of Truth, to which those faculties may ultimately refer. Yet have these Ideas no living energy in themselves; they are but the *forms*, as we have said, through or in which a higher Power manifests to the consciousness the supreme truth of all things real, in respect to the first class; and, in respect to the second, the imaginative truths of the mental products, or mental combinations. Of the nature and mode of operation of the Power to which we refer, we know, and can know, nothing; it is one of those secrets of our being which He who made us has kept to himself. And we should be content with



the assurance, that we have in it a sure and intuitive guide to a reverent knowledge of the beauty and grandeur of his works,—nay, of his own adorable reality. And who shall gainsay it, should we add, that this mysterious Power is essentially immanent in that “breath of life,” by which man becomes “a living soul”?

In the following remarks we shall confine ourself to the first class of Ideas, namely, the Real; leaving the second to be noticed hereafter.

As to number, ideas are limited only by the number of kinds, without direct relation to degrees; every object, therefore, having in itself a *distinctive essential*, has also its distinct idea; while two or more objects of the same kind, however differing in degree, must consequently refer only to one and the same. For instance, though a hundred animals should differ in size, strength, or color, yet, if none of these peculiarities are essential to the species, they would all refer to the same supreme idea.

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The same law applies equally, and with the same limitation, to the essential differences in the intellectual, the moral, and the spiritual. All ideas, however, have but a potential existence until they are called into the consciousness by some real object; the required condition of the object being a predetermined correspondence, or correlation. Every such object we term an *assimilant*.

With respect to those ideas which relate to the physical world, we remark, that, though the assimilants required are supplied by the senses, the senses have in themselves no *productive, cooeperating* energy, being but the passive instruments, or medium, through which they are conveyed. That the senses, in this relation, are merely passive, admits of no question, from the obvious difference between the idea and the objects. The senses can do no more than transmit the external in its actual forms, leaving the images in the mind exactly as they found them; whereas the intuitive power rejects, or assimilates, indefinitely, until they are resolved into the proper perfect form. Now the power which prescribes that form must, of necessity, be antecedent to the presentation of the objects which it thus assimilates, as it could not else give consistence and unity to what was before separate or fragmentary. And every one who has ever realized an idea of the class in which alone we compare the assimilants with the ideal form, be he poet, painter, or philosopher, well knows the wide difference between the materials and their result. When an idea is thus realized and made objective, it affirms its own truth, nor can any process of the understanding shake its foundation; nay, it is to the mind an essential, imperative truth, then emerging, as it were, from the dark potential into the light of reality.

If this be so, the inference is plain, that the relation between the actual and the ideal is one of necessity, and therefore, also, is the predetermined correspondence between the prescribed form of an idea and its assimilant; for how otherwise could the former become recipient of that which was repugnant or indifferent, when the presence of the latter constitutes the very condition by which it is manifested, or can be known to exist? By actual, here, we do not mean the exclusively physical, but whatever, in the strictest sense, can be called an *object*, as forming the opposite to a mere subject of the mind.

It would appear, then, that what we call ourself must have a *dual* reality, that is, in the mind and in the senses, since neither *alone* could possibly explain the phenomena of the other; consequently, in the existence of either we have clearly implied the reality of both. And hence must follow the still more important truth, that, in the *conscious presence* of any *spiritual* idea, we have the surest proof of a spiritual object; nor is this the less certain, though we perceive not the assimilant.

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Nay, a spiritual assimilant cannot be perceived, but, to use the words of St. Paul, is “spiritually discerned,” that is, by a sense, so to speak, of our own spirit. But to illustrate by example: we could not, for instance, have the ideas of good and evil without their objective realities, nor of right and wrong, in any intelligible form, without the moral law to which they refer,—which law we call the Conscience; nor could we have the idea of a moral law without a moral lawgiver, and, if moral, then intelligent, and, if intelligent, then personal; in a word, we could not now have, as we know we have, the idea of conscience, without an objective, personal God. Such ideas may well be called revelations, since, without any perceived assimilant, we find them equally affirmed with those ideas which relate to the purely physical.

But here it may be asked, How are we to distinguish an Idea from a mere *notion*? We answer, By its self-affirmation. For an ideal truth, having its own evidence in itself, can neither be proved nor disproved by any thing out of itself; whatever, then, impresses the mind as truth, *is* truth until it can be *shown* to be false; and consequently, in the converse, whatever can be brought into the sphere of the understanding, as a dialectic subject, is not an Idea. It will be observed, however, that we do not say an idea may not be denied; but to deny is not to disprove. Many things are denied in direct contradiction to fact; for the mind can command, and in no measured degree, the power of self-blinding, so that it cannot see what is actually before it. This is a psychological fact, which may be attested by thousands, who can well remember the time when they had once clearly discerned what has now vanished from their minds. Nor does the actual cessation of these primeval forms, or the after presence of their fragmentary, nay, disfigured relics, disprove their reality, or their original integrity, as we could not else call them up in their proper forms at any future time, to the reacknowledging their truth: a *resuscitation* and result, so to speak, which many have experienced.

In conclusion: though it be but one and the same Power that prescribes the form and determines the truth of all Ideas, there is yet an essential difference between the two classes of ideas to which we have referred; for it may well be doubted whether any Primary Idea can ever be fully realized by a finite mind,—at least in the present state. Take, for instance, the idea of beauty. In its highest form, as presented to the consciousness, we still find it referring to something beyond and above itself, as if it were but an approximation to a still higher form. The truth of this, we think, will be particularly felt by the artist, whether poet or painter, whose mind may be supposed, from his natural bias, to be more peculiarly capable of its highest developement; and what true artist was ever satisfied with any idea



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of beauty of which he is conscious? From this approximated form, however, he doubtless derives a high degree of pleasure, nay, one of the purest of which his nature is capable; yet still is the pleasure modified, if we may so express it, by an undefined yearning for what he feels can never be realized. And wherefore this craving, but for the archetype of that which called it forth?—When we say not satisfied, we do not mean discontented, but simply not in full fruition. And it is better that it should be so, since one of the happiest elements of our nature is that which continually impels it towards the indefinite and unattainable. So far as we know, the like limits may be set to every other primary idea,—as if the Creator had reserved to himself alone the possible contemplation of the archetypes of his universe.

With regard to the other class, that of Secondary Ideas, which we have called the reflex product of the mind, their distinguishing characteristic is, that they not only admit of a perfect realization, but also of outward manifestation, so as to be communicated to others. All works of imagination, so called, present examples of this. Hence they may also be termed imitative or imaginative. For, though they draw their assimilants from the actual world, and are likewise regulated by the unknown Power before mentioned, yet are they but the forms of what, *as a whole*, have no actual existence;—they are nevertheless true to the mind, and are made so by the same Power which affirms their possibility. This species of Truth we shall hereafter have occasion to distinguish as Poetic Truth.

Introductory Discourse.

Next to the developement of our moral nature, to have subordinated the senses to the mind is the highest triumph of the civilized state. Were it possible to embody the present complicated scheme of society, so as to bring it before us as a visible object, there is perhaps nothing in the world of sense that would so fill us with wonder; for what is there in nature that may not fall within its limits? and yet how small a portion of this stupendous fabric will be found to have any direct, much less exclusive, relation to the actual wants of the body! It might seem, indeed, to an unreflecting observer, that our physical necessities, which, truly estimated, are few and simple, have rather been increased than diminished by the civilized man. But this is not true; for, if a wider duty is imposed on the senses, it is only to minister to the increased demands of the imagination, which is now so mingled with our every-day concerns, even with our dress, houses, and furniture, that, except with the brutalized, the purely sensuous wants might almost be said to have become extinct: with the cultivated and refined, they are at least so modified as to be no longer prominent.

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But this refilling on the physical, like every thing else, has had its opponents: it is declaimed against as artificial. If by artificial is meant unnatural, we cannot so consider it; but hold, on the contrary, that the whole multiform scheme of the civilized state is not only in accordance with our nature, but an essential condition to the proper developement of the human being. It is presupposed by the very wants of his mind; nor could it otherwise have been, any more than could have been the cabin of the beaver, or the curious hive of the bee, without their preexisting instincts; it is therefore in the highest sense natural, as growing out of the inherent desires of the mind.

But we would not be misunderstood. When we speak of the refined state as not out of nature, we mean such results as proceed from the legitimate growth of our mental constitution, which we suppose to be grounded in permanent, universal principles; and, whatever modifications, however subtile, and apparently visionary, may follow their operation in the world of sense, so long as that operation diverge not from its original ground, its effect must be, in the strictest sense, natural. Thus the wildest visions of poetry, the unsubstantial forms of painting, and the mysterious harmonies of music, that seem to disembody the spirit, and make us creatures of the air,—even these, unreal as they are, may all have their foundation in immutable truth; and we may moreover know of this truth by its own evidence. Of this species of evidence we shall have occasion to speak hereafter. But there is another kind of growth, which may well be called unnatural; we mean, of those diseased appetites, whose effects are seen in the distorted forms of the *conventional*, having no ground but in weariness of the true; and it cannot be denied that this morbid growth has its full share, inwardly and outwardly, both of space and importance. These, however, must sooner or later end as they began; they perish in the lie they make; and it were well did not other falsehoods take their places, to prolong a life whose only tenure is inconsequential succession,—in other words, Fashion.

If it be true, then, that even the commonplaces of life must all in some degree partake of the mental, there can be but one rule by which to determine the proper rank of any object of pursuit, and that is by its nearer or more remote relation to our inward nature. Every system, therefore, which tends to degrade a mental pleasure to the subordinate or superfluous, is both narrow and false, as virtually reversing its natural order.



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It pleased our Creator, when he endowed us with appetites and functions by which to sustain the economy of life, at the same time to annex to their exercise a sense of pleasure; hence our daily food, and the daily alternation of repose and action, are no less grateful than imperative. That life may be sustained, and most of its functions performed, without any coincident enjoyment, is certainly possible. Our food may be distasteful, action painful, and rest unrefreshing; and yet we may eat, and exercise, and sleep, nay, live thus for years. But this is not our natural condition, and we call it disease. Were man a mere animal, the very act of living, in his natural or healthy state, would be to him a continuous enjoyment. But he is also a moral and an intellectual being; and, in like manner, is the healthful condition of these, the nobler parts of his nature, attended with something more than a consciousness of the mere process of existence. To the exercise of his intellectual faculties and moral attributes the same benevolent law has superadded a sense of pleasure,—of a kind, too, in the same degree transcending the highest bodily sensation, as must that which is immortal transcend the perishable. It is not for us to ask why it is so; much less, because it squares not with the poor notion of material usefulness, to call in question a fact that announces a nature to which the senses are but passing ministers. Let us rather receive this ennobling law, at least without misgiving, lest in our sensuous wisdom we exchange an enduring gift for a transient gratification.

Of the peculiar fruits of this law, which we shall here distinguish by the general term *mental pleasures*, it is our purpose to treat in the present discourse.

It is with no assumed diffidence that we venture on this subject; for, though we shall offer nothing not believed to be true, we are but too sensible how small a portion of truth it is in our power to present. But, were it far greater, and the present writer of a much higher order of intellect, there would still be sufficient cause for humility in view of those impassable bounds that have ever met every self-questioning of the mind.

But whilst the narrowness of human knowledge may well preclude all self-exaltation, it would be worse than folly to hold as naught the many important truths which have been wrought out for us by the mighty intellects of the past. If they have left us nothing for vainglory, they have left us at least enough to be grateful for. Nor is it a little, that they have taught us to look into those mysterious chambers of our being,—the abode of the spirit; and not a little, indeed, if what we are there permitted to know shall have brought with it the conviction, that we are not abandoned to a blind empiricism, to waste life in guesses, and to guess at last that we have all our lives been guessing wrong,—but, unapproachable though it be to the subordinate Understanding,



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that we have still within us an abiding Interpreter, which cannot be gainsaid, which makes our duty to God and man clear as the light, which ever guards the fountain of all true pleasures, nay, which holds in subjection the last high gift of the Creator, that imaginative faculty whereby his exalted creature, made in his image, might mould at will, from his most marvellous world, yet unborn forms, even forms of beauty, grandeur, and majesty, having all of truth but his own divine prerogative,—*the mystery of Life*.

As the greater part of those Pleasures which we propose to discuss are intimately connected with the material world, it may be well, perhaps, to assign some reason for the epithet *mental*. To many, we know, this will seem superfluous; but, when it is remembered how often we hear of this and that object delighting the eye, or of certain sounds charming the ear, it may not be amiss to show that such expressions have really no meaning except as metaphors. When the senses, as the medium of communication, have conveyed to the mind either the sounds or images, their function ceases. So also with respect to the objects: their end is attained, at least as to us, when the sounds or images are thus transmitted, which, so far as they are concerned, must for ever remain the same within as without the mind. For, where the ultimate end is not in mere bodily sensation, neither the senses nor the objects possess, of themselves, any productive power; of the product that follows, the *tertium aliquid*, whether the pleasure we feel be in a beautiful animal or in according sounds, neither the one nor the other is really the cause, but simply the *occasion*. It is clear, then, that the effect realized supposes of necessity another agent, which must therefore exist only in the mind. But of this hereafter.

If the cause of any emotion, which we seem to derive from an outward object, were inherent exclusively in the object itself, there could be no failure in any instance, except where the organs of sense were either diseased or imperfect. But it is a matter of fact that they often do fail where there is no disease or organic defect. Many of us, perhaps, can call to mind certain individuals, whose sense of hearing is as acute as our own, who yet can by no possibility be made to recognize the slightest relation between the according notes of the simplest melody; and, though they can as readily as others distinguish the individual sounds, even to the degrees of flatness and sharpness, the harmonic agreement is to them as mere noise. Let us suppose ourselves present at a concert, in company with one such person and another who possesses what is called musical sensibility. How are they affected, for instance, by a piece of Mozart's? In the sense of hearing they are equal: look at them. In the one we perceive perplexity, annoyance, perhaps pain; he hears nothing but a confused medley of sounds. In the other, the whole being is rapt in ecstasy, the unutterable pleasure gushes from his eyes, he cannot articulate his emotion;—in the words of one, who felt and embodied the subtile mystery in immortal verse, his very soul seems “lapped in Elysium.” Now, could this difference be possible, were the sole cause, strictly speaking, in mere matter?



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Nor do we contradict our position, when we admit, in certain cases,—for instance, in the producer,—the necessity of a nicer organization, in order to the more perfect *transmission* of the finer emotions; inasmuch as what is to be communicated in space and time must needs be by some medium adapted thereto.

Such a person as Paganini, it is said, was able to “discourse most excellent music” on a ballad-monger’s fiddle; yet will any one question that he needed an instrument of somewhat finer construction to show forth his full powers? Nay, we might add, that he needed no less than the most delicate *Cremona*,—some instrument, as it were, articulated into humanity,—to have inhaled and respired those attenuated strains, which, those who heard them think it hardly extravagant to say, seemed almost to embody silence.

Now this mechanical instrument, by means of which such marvels were wrought, is but one of the many visible symbols of that more subtle instrument through which the mind acts when it would manifest itself. It would be too absurd to ask if any one believed that the music we speak of was created, as well as conveyed, by the instrument. The violin of Paganini may still be seen and handled; but the soul that inspired it is buried with its master.

If we admit a distinction between mind and matter, and the result we speak of be purely mental, we should contradict the universal law of nature to assign such a product to mere matter, inasmuch as the natural law forbids in the lower the production of the higher. Take an example from one of the lower forms of organic life,—a common vegetable. Will any one assert that the surrounding inorganic elements of air, earth, heat, and water produce its peculiar form? Though some, or all, of these may be essential to its development, they are so only as its predetermined correlatives, without which its existence could not be manifested; and in like manner must the peculiar form of the vegetable preexist in its life,—in its *idea*,—in order to evolve by these assimilants its own proper organism.

No possible modification in the degrees or proportion of these elements can change the specific form of a plant,—for instance, a cabbage into a cauliflower; it must ever remain a cabbage, *small or large, good or bad*. So, too, is the external world to the mind; which needs, also, as the condition of its manifestation, its objective correlative. Hence the presence of some outward object, predetermined to correspond to the preexisting idea in its living power, is essential to the evolution of its proper end,—the pleasurable emotion. We beg it may be noted that we do not say *sensation*. And hence we hold ourself justified in speaking of such presence as simply the occasion, or condition, and not, *per se*, the cause. And hence, moreover, may be inferred the absolute necessity of Dual Forces in order to the actual existence of any thing. One alone, the incomprehensible Author of all things, is self-subsisting in his perfect Unity.

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We shall now endeavour to establish the following proposition: namely, that the Pleasures in question have their true source in One Intuitive Universal Principle or living Power, and that the three Ideas of Beauty, Truth, and Holiness, which we assume to represent the *perfect* in the physical, intellectual, and moral worlds, are but the several realized phases of this sovereign principle, which we shall call *Harmony*.

Our first step, then, is to possess ourself of the essential or distinctive characteristic of these pleasurable emotions. Apparently, there is nothing more simple. And yet we are acquainted with no single term that shall fully express it. But what every one has more or less felt may certainly be made intelligible in a more extended form, and, we should think, by any one in the slightest degree competent to self-examination. Let a person, then, be appealed to; and let him put the question as to what passes within him when possessed by these emotions; and the spontaneous feeling will answer for us, that what we call *self* has no part in them. Nay, we further assert, that, when singly felt, that is, when unallied to other emotions as modifying forces, they are wholly unmixed with *any personal considerations, or any conscious advantage to the individual*.

Nor is this assigning too high a character to the feelings in question because awakened in so many instances by the purely physical; since their true origin may clearly be traced to a common source with those profounder emotions which we are wont to ascribe to the intellectual and moral. Besides, it should be borne in mind, that no physical object can be otherwise to the mind than a mere *occasion*; its inward product, or mental effect, being from another Power. The proper view therefore is, not that such alliance can ever degrade the higher agent, but that its more humble and material *assimilant* is thus elevated by it. So that nothing in nature should be counted mean, which can thus be exalted; but rather be honored, since no object can become so assimilated except by its predetermined correlation to our better nature.

Neither is it the privilege of the exclusive few, the refined and cultivated, to feel them deeply. If we look beyond ourselves, even to the promiscuous multitude, the instance will be rare, if existing at all, where some transient touch of these purer feelings has not raised the individual to, at least, a momentary exemption from the common thralldom of self. And we greatly err if their universality is not solely limited by those “shades of the prison-house,” which, in the words of the poet, too often “close upon the growing boy.” Nay, so far as we have observed, we cannot admit it as a question whether any person through a whole life has always been wholly insensible,—we will not say (though well we might) to the good and true,—but to beauty; at least, to some one kind, or degree, of the

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beautiful. The most abject wretch, however animalized by vice, may still be able to recall the time when a morning or evening sky, a bird, a flower, or the sight of some other object in nature, has given him a pleasure, which he felt to be distinct from that of his animal appetites, and to which he could attach not a thought of self-interest. And, though crime and misery may close the heart for years, and seal it up for ever to every redeeming thought, they cannot so shut out from the memory these gleams of innocence; even the brutified spirit, the castaway of his kind, has been made to blush at this enduring light; for it tells him of a truth, which might else have never been remembered,—that he has once been a man.

And here may occur a question,—which might well be left to the ultra advocates of the *cui bono*,—whether a simple flower may not sometimes be of higher use than a labor-saving machine.

As to the objects whose effect on the mind is here discussed, it is needless to specify them; they are, in general, all such as are known to affect us in the manner described. The catalogue will vary both in number and kind with different persons, according to the degree of force or developement in the overruling Principle.

We proceed, then, to reply to such objections as will doubtless be urged against the characteristic assumed. And first, as regards the Beautiful, we shall probably be met by the received notion, that we experience in Beauty one of the most powerful incentives to passion; while examples without number will be brought in array to prove it also the wonder-working cause of almost fabulous transformations,—as giving energy to the indolent, patience to the quick, perseverance to the fickle, even courage to the timid; and, *vice versa*, as unmanning the hero,—nay, urging the honorable to falsehood, treason, and murder; in a word, through the mastered, bewildered, sophisticated *self*, as indifferently raising and sinking the fascinated object to the heights and depths of pleasure and misery, of virtue and vice.

Now, if the Beauty here referred to is of the *human being*, we do not gainsay it; but this is beauty in its *mixed mode*,—not in its high, passionless form, its singleness and purity. It is not Beauty as it descended from heaven, in the cloud, the rainbow, the flower, the bird, or in the concord of sweet sounds, that seem to carry back the soul to whence it came.

Could we look, indeed, at the human form in its simple, unallied physical structure,—on that, for instance, of a beautiful woman,—and forget, or rather not feel, that it is other than a *form*, there could be but one feeling: that nothing visible was ever so framed to banish from the soul every ignoble thought, and imbue it, as it were, with primeval innocence.

We are quite aware that the doctrine assumed in our main proposition with regard to Beauty, as holding exclusive relation to the Physical, is not very likely to forestall favor; we therefore beg for it only such candid attention as, for the reasons advanced, it may appear to deserve.

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That such effects as have just been objected could not be from Beauty alone, in its pure and single form, but rather from its coincidence with some real or supposed moral or intellectual quality, or with the animal appetites, seems to us clear; as, were it otherwise, we might infer the same from a beautiful infant,—the very thought of which is revolting to common sense. In such conjunction, indeed, it cannot but have a certain influence, but so modified as often to become a mere accessory, subordinated to the animal or moral object, and for the attainment of an end not its own; in proof of which, we find it almost uniformly partaking the penalty imposed on its incidental associates, should ever their desires result in illusion,—namely, in the aversion that follows. But the result of Beauty can never be such; when it seems otherwise, the effect, we think, can readily be traced to other causes, as we shall presently endeavour to show.

It cannot be a matter of controversy whether Beauty is limited to the human form; the daily experience of the most ordinary man would answer No: he finds it in the woods, the fields, in plants and animals, nay, in a thousand objects, as he looks upon nature; nor, though indefinitely diversified, does he hesitate to assign to each the same epithet. And why? Because the feelings awakened by all are similar in kind, though varying, doubtless, by many degrees in intenseness. Now suppose he is asked of what personal advantage is all this beauty to him. Verily, he would be puzzled to answer. It gives him pleasure, perhaps great pleasure. And this is all he could say. But why should the effect be different, except in degree, from the beauty of a human being? We have already the answer in this concluding term. For what is a human being but one who unites in himself a physical, intellectual, and moral nature, which cannot in one become even an object of thought without at least some obscure shadowings of its natural allies? How, then, can we separate that which has an exclusive relation to his physical form, without some perception of the moral and intellectual with which it is joined? But how do we know that Beauty is limited to such exclusive relation? This brings us to the great problem; so simple and easy of solution in all other cases, yet so intricate and apparently inexplicable in man. In other things, it would be felt absurd to make it a question, whether referring to form, color, or sound. A single instance will suffice. Let us suppose, then, an unfamiliar object, whose habits, disposition, and so forth, are wholly unknown, for instance, a bird of paradise, to be seen for the first time by twenty persons, and they all instantly call it beautiful;—could there be any doubt that the pleasure it produced in each was of the same kind? or would any one of them ascribe his pleasure to any thing but its form and plumage? Concerning natural objects, and those inferior animals which are not under the influence



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of domestic associations, there is little or no difference among men: if they differ, it is only in degree, according to their sensibility. Men do not dispute about a rose. And why? Because there is nothing beside the physical to interfere with the impression it was predetermined to make; and the idea of beauty is realized instantly. So, also, with respect to other objects of an opposite character; they can speak without deliberating, and call them plain, homely, ugly, and so on, thus instinctively expressing even their degree of remoteness from the condition of beauty. Who ever called a pelican beautiful, or even many animals endeared to us by their valuable qualities,—such as the intelligent and docile elephant, or the affectionate orang-outang, or the faithful mastiff? Nay, we may run through a long list of most useful and amiable creatures, that could not, under any circumstances, give birth to an emotion corresponding to that which we ascribe to the beautiful.

But there is scarcely a subject on which mankind are wider at variance, than on the beauty of their own species,—some preferring this, and others that, particular conformation; which can only be accounted for on the supposition of some predominant expression, either moral, intellectual, or sensual, with which they are in sympathy, or else the reverse. While some will task their memory, and resort to the schools, for their supposed infallible *rules*;—forgetting, meanwhile, that ultimate tribunal to which their canon must itself appeal, the ever-living principle which first evolved its truth, and which now, as then, is not to be reasoned about, but *felt*. It need not be added how fruitful of blunders is this mechanical ground.

Now we venture to assert that no mistake was ever made, even in a single glance, concerning any natural object, not disfigured by human caprice, or which the eye had not been trained to look at through some conventional medium. Under this latter circumstance, there are doubtless many things in nature which affect men very differently; and more especially such as, from their familiar nearness, have come under the influence of *opinion*, and been incrustated, as it were, by the successive deposits of many generations. But of the vast and various multitude of objects which have thus been forced from their original state, there is perhaps no one which has undergone so many and such strange disfigurements as the human form; or in relation to which our “ideas,” as we are pleased to call them, but in truth our opinions, have been so fluctuating. If an Idea, indeed, had any thing to do with Fashion, we should call many things monstrous to which custom has reconciled us. Let us suppose a case, by way of illustration. A gentleman and lady, from one of our fashionable cities, are making a tour on the borders of some of our new settlements in the West. They are standing on the edge of a forest, perhaps admiring the grandeur

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of nature; perhaps, also, they are lovers, and sharing with nature their admiration for each other, whose personal charms are set off to the utmost, according to the most approved notions, by the taste and elegance of their dress. Then suppose an Indian hunter, who had never seen one of our civilized world, or heard of our costume, coming suddenly upon them, their faces being turned from him. Would it be possible for him to imagine what kind of animals they were? We think not; and least of all, that he would suppose them to be of his own species. This is no improbable case; and we very much fear, should it ever occur, that the unrefined savage would go home with an impression not very flattering either to the milliner or the tailor.

That, under such disguises, we should consider human beauty as a kind of enigma, or a thing to dispute about, is not surprising; nor even that we should often differ from ourselves, when so much of the outward man is thus made to depend on the shifting humors of some paramount Petronius of the shears. But, admitting it to be an easy matter to divest the form, or, what is still more important, our own minds, of every thing conventional, there is the still greater obstacle to any true effect from the person alone, in that moral admixture, already mentioned, which, more or less, must color the most of our impressions from every individual. Is there not, then, sufficient ground for at least a doubt if, excepting idiots, there is one human being in whom the purely physical is *at all times* the sole agent? We do not say that it does not generally predominate. But, in a compound being like man, it seems next to impossible that the nature within should not at times, in some degree, transpire through the most rigid texture of the outward form. We may not, indeed, always read aright the character thus obscurely indexed, or even be able to guess at it, one way or the other; still, it will affect us; nay, most so, perhaps, when most indefinite. Every man is, to a certain extent, a physiognomist: we do not mean, according to the common acceptation, that he is an interpreter of lines and quantities, which may be reduced to rules; but that he is born one, judging, not by any conscious rule, but by an instinct, which he can neither explain nor comprehend, and which compels him to sit in judgment, whether he will or no. How else can we account for those instantaneous sympathies and antipathies towards an utter stranger?

Now this moral influence has a twofold source, one in the object, and another in ourselves; nor is it easy to determine which is the stronger as a counteracting force. Hitherto we have considered only the former; we now proceed with a few remarks upon the latter.

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Will any man say, that he is wholly without some natural or acquired bias? This is the source of the counteracting influence which we speak of in ourselves; but which, like many other of the secret springs, both of thought and feeling, few men think of. It is nevertheless one which, on this particular subject, is scarcely ever inactive; and according to the bias will be our impressions, whether we be intellectual or sensual, coldly speculative or ardently imaginative. We do not mean that it is always called forth by every thing we approach; we speak only of its usual activity between man and man; for there seems to be a mysterious something in our nature, that, in spite of our wishes, will rarely allow of an absolute indifference towards any of the species; some effect, however slight, even as that of the air which we unconsciously inhale and again respire, must follow, whether directly from the object or reacting from ourselves. Nay, so strong is the law, whether in attraction or repulsion, that we cannot resist it even in relation to those human shadows projected on air by the mere imagination; for we feel it in art only less than in nature, provided, however, that the imagined being possess but the indication of a human soul: yet not so is it, if presenting only the outward form, since a mere form can in itself have no affinity with either the heart or intellect. And here we would ask, Does not this striking exception in the present argument cast back, as it were, a confirmatory reflection?

We have often thought, that the power of the mere form could not be more strongly exemplified than at a common paint-shop. Among the annual importations from the various marts of Europe, how many beautiful faces, without an atom of meaning, attract the passengers,—stopping high and low, people of all descriptions, and actually giving pleasure, if not to every one, at least to the majority; and very justly, for they have beauty, and *nothing else*. But let another artist, some man of genius, copy the same faces, and add character,—breathe into them souls: from that moment the passers-by would see as if with other eyes; the affections and the imagination then become the spectators; and, according to the quickness or dulness, the vulgarity or refinement, of these, would be the impression. Thus a coarse mind may feel the beauty in the hard, soulless forms of Van der Werf, yet turn away with apathy from the sanctified loveliness of a Madonna by Raffaello.

But to return to the individual bias, which is continually inclining to, or repelling, What is more common, especially with women, than a high admiration of a plain person, if connected with wit, or a pleasing address? Can we have a stronger case in point than that of the celebrated Wilkes, one of the ugliest, yet one of the most admired men of his time? Even his own sex, blinded no doubt by their sympathetic bias, could see no fault in him, either in mind or person; for, when it was objected to the latter, that “he squinted confoundedly,” the reply was, “No, Sir, not more than a gentleman ought to squint.”



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Of the tendency to particular pursuits,—to art, science, or any particular course of life,—we do not speak; the bias we allude to is in the more personal disposition of the man,—in that which gives a tone to his internal character; nor is it material of what proportions compounded, of the affections, or the intellect, or the senses,—whether of some only, or the whole; that these form the ground of every man's bias is no less certain, than the fact that there is scarcely any secret which men are in the habit of guarding with such sedulous care. Nay, it would seem as if every one were impelled to it by some superstitious instinct, that every one might have it to say to himself, There is one thing in me which is all *my own*. Be this as it may, there are few things more hazardous than to pronounce with confidence on any man's bias. Indeed, most men would be puzzled to name it to themselves; but its existence in them is not the less a fact, because the form assumed may be so mixed and complicated as to be utterly undefinable. It is enough, however, that every one feels, and is more or less led by it, whether definite or not.

This being the case, how is it possible that it should not in some degree affect our feelings towards every one we meet,—that it should not leave some speck of leaven on each impression, which shall impregnate it with something that we admire and love, or else with that which we hate and despise?

And what is the most beautiful or the most ungainly form before a sorcerer like this, who can endow a fair simpleton with the rarest intellect, or transform, by a glance, the intellectual, noble-hearted dwarf to an angel of light? These, of course, are extreme cases. But if true in these, as we have reason to believe, how formidable the power!

But though, as before observed, we may not read this secret with precision, it is sometimes possible to make a shrewd guess at the prevailing tendency in certain individuals. Perhaps the most obvious cases are among the sanguine and imaginative; and the guess would be, that a beautiful person would presently be enriched with all possible virtues, while the colder speculatist would only see in it, not what it possessed, but the mind that it wanted. Now it would be curious to imagine (and the case is not impossible) how the eyes of each might be opened, with the probable consequence, how each might feel when his eyes were opened, and the object was seen as it really is. Some untoward circumstance comes unawares on the perfect creature: a burst of temper knits the brow, inflames the eye, inflates the nostril, gnashes the teeth, and converts the angel into a storming fury. What then becomes of the visionary virtues? They have passed into air, and taken with them, also, what was the fair creature's right,—her very beauty. Yet a different change takes place with the dry man of intellect. The mindless object has taken shame of her ignorance; she begins to cultivate her powers,

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which are gradually developed until they expand and brighten; they inform her features, so that no one can look upon them without seeing the evidence of no common intellect: the dry man, at last, is struck with their superior intelligence, and what more surprises him is the grace and beauty, which, for the first time, they reveal to his eyes. The learned dust which had so long buried his heart is quickly brushed away, and he weds the embodied mind. What third change may follow, it is not to our purpose to foresee.

Has human beauty, then, no power? When united with virtue and intellect, we might almost answer,—All power. It is the embodied harmony of the true poet; his visible Muse; the guardian angel of his better nature; the inspiring sibyl of his best affections, drawing him to her with a purifying charm, from the selfishness of the world, from poverty and neglect, from the low and base, nay, from his own frailty or vices:—for he cannot approach her with unhallowed thoughts, whom the unlettered and ignorant look up to with awe, as to one of a race above them; before whom the wisest and best bow down without abasement, and would bow in idolatry but for a higher reverence. No! there is no power like this of mortal birth. But against the antagonist moral, the human beauty of itself has no power, no self-sustaining life. While it panders to evil desires, then, indeed, there are few things may parallel its fearful might. But the unholy alliance must at last have an end. Look at it then, when the beautiful serpent has cast her slough.

Let us turn to it for a moment, and behold it in league with elegant accomplishments and a subtile intellect: how complete its triumph! If ever the soul may be said to be intoxicated, it is then, when it feels the full power of a beautiful, bad woman. The fabled enchantments of the East are less strange and wonder-working than the marvellous changes which her spell has wrought. For a time every thought seems bound to her will; the eternal eye of the conscience closes before her; the everlasting truths of right and wrong sleep at her bidding; nay, things most gross and abhorred become suddenly invested with a seeming purity: till the whole mind is hers, and the bewildered victim, drunk with her charms, calls evil good. Then, what may follow? Read the annals of crime; it will tell us what follows the broken spell,—broken by the first degrading theft, the first stroke of the dagger, or the first drop of poison. The felon's eye turns upon the beautiful sorceress with loathing and abhorrence: an asp, a toad, is not more hateful! The story of Milwood has many counterparts.

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But, although Beauty cannot sustain itself permanently against what is morally bad, and has no direct power of producing good, it yet may, and often does, when unobstructed, through its unimpassioned purity, predispose to the good, except, perhaps, in natures grossly depraved; inasmuch as all affinities to the pure are so many reproaches to the vitiated mind, unless convertible to some selfish end. Witness the beautiful wife, wedded for what is misnamed love, yet becoming the scorn of a brutal husband,—the more bitter, perhaps, if she be also good. But, aside from those counteracting causes so often mentioned, it is as we have said: we are predisposed to feel kindly, and to think purely, of every beautiful object, until we have reason to think otherwise; and according to our own hearts will be our thoughts.

We are aware of but one other objection which has not been noticed, and which might be made to the intuitive nature of the Idea. How is it, we may be asked, that artists, who are supposed, from their early discipline, to have overcome all conventional bias, and also to have acquired the more difficult power of analyzing their models, so as to contemplate them in their separate elements, have so often varied as to their ideas of Beauty? Whether artists have really the power thus ascribed to them, we shall not here inquire; it is no doubt, if possible, their business to acquire it. But, admitting it as true, we deny the position: they do not change their ideas. They can have but one Idea of Beauty, inasmuch as that Idea is but a specific phase of one immutable Principle,—if there be such a principle; as we shall hereafter endeavour to show. Nor can they have of it any essentially different, much less opposite, conceptions: but their *apprehension* of it may undergo many apparent changes, which, nevertheless, are but the various degrees that only mark a fuller conception; as their more extended acquaintance with the higher outward assimilants of Beauty brings them, of course, nearer to a perfect realization of the preexisting Idea. By *perfect*, here, we mean only the nearest approximation by man. And we appeal to every artist, competent to answer, if it be not so. Does he ever descend from a higher assimilant to a lower? Suppose him to have been born in Italy; would he go to Holland to realize his Idea? But many a Dutchman has sought in Italy what he could not find in his own country. We do not by this intend any reflection on the latter,—a country so fruitful of genius; it is only saying that the human form in Italy is from a finer mould. Then, what directs the artist from one object to another, and determines him which to choose, if he has not the guide within him? And why else should all nations instinctively bow before the superior forms of Greece?

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We add but one remark. Supposing the artist to be wholly freed from all modifying biases, such is seldom the case with those who criticize his work,—especially those who would show their superiority by detecting faults, and who frequently condemn the painter simply for not expressing what he never aimed at. As to some, they are never content if they do not find beauty, whatever the subject, though it may neutralize the character, if not render it ridiculous. Were Raffaello, who seldom sought the purely beautiful, to be judged by the want of it, he would fall below Guido. But his object was much higher,—in the intellect and the affections; it was the human being in his endless inflections of thought and passion, in which there is little probability he will ever be approached. Yet false criticism has been as prodigal to him in the ascription of beauty, as parsimonious and unjust to many others.

In conclusion, may there not be, in the difficulty we have thus endeavoured to solve, a probable significance of the responsible, as well as distinct, position which the Human being holds in the world of life? Are there no shadowings, in that reciprocal influence between soul and soul, of some mysterious chain which links together the human family in its two extremes, giving to the very lowest an indefeasible claim on the highest, so that we cannot be independent if we would, or indifferent even to the very meanest, without violation of an imperative law of our nature? And does it not at least *hint* of duties and affections towards the most deformed in body, the most depraved in mind,—of interminable consequences? If man were a mere animal, though the highest animal, could these inscrutable influences affect us as they do? Would not the animal appetites be our true and sole end? What even would Beauty be to the sated appetite? If it did not, as in the last instance, of the brutal husband, become an object of scorn,—which it could not be, from the necessary absence of moral obliquity,—would it be better than a picked bone to a gorged dog? Least of all could it resemble the visible sign of that pure idea, in which so many lofty minds have recognized the type of a far higher love than that of earth, which the soul shall know, when, in a better world, she shall realize the ultimate reunion of Beauty with the coeternal forms of Truth and Holiness.

We will now apply the characteristic assumed to the second leading Idea, namely, to Truth. In the first place, we take it for granted, that no one will deny to the perception of truth some positive pleasure; no one, at least, who is not at the same time prepared to contradict the general sense of mankind, nay, we will add, their universal experience. The moment we begin to think, we begin to acquire, whether it be in trifles or otherwise, some kind of knowledge; and of two things presented to our notice, supposing one to be true and the other false, no one ever knowingly,

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and for its own sake, chooses the false: whatever he may do in after life, for some selfish purpose, he cannot do so in childhood, where there is no such motive, without violence to his nature. And here we are supposing the understanding, with its triumphant pride and subtilty, out of the question, and the child making his choice under the spontaneous sense of the true and the false. For, were it otherwise, and the choice indifferent, what possible foundation for the commonest acts of life, even as it respects himself, would there be to him who should sow with lies the very soil of his growing nature. It is time enough in manhood to begin to lie to one's self; but a self-lying youth can have no proper self to rest on, at any period. So that the greatest liar, even Ferdinand Mendez Pinto, must have loved the truth,—at least at one time of his life. We say *loved*; for a voluntary choice implies of necessity some degree of pleasure in the choosing, however faint the emotion or insignificant the object. It is, therefore, *caeteris paribus*, not only necessary, but natural, to find pleasure in truth.

Now the question is, whether the pleasurable emotion, which is, so to speak, the indigenous growth of Truth, can in any case be free of self, or some personal gratification. To this, we apprehend, there will be no lack of answer. Nay, the answer has already been given from the dark antiquity of ages, that even for her own exceeding loveliness has Truth been canonized. If there was any thing of self in the *Eureka* of Pythagoras, there was not in the acclamations of his country who rejoiced with him. But we may doubt the feeling, if applied to him. If wealth or fame has sometimes followed in the track of Genius, it has followed as an accident, but never preceded, as the efficient conductor to any great discovery. For what is Genius but the prophetic revealer of the unseen True, that can neither be purchased nor bribed into light? If it come, then, at all, it must needs be evoked by a kindred love as pure as itself. Shall we appeal to the artist? If he deserve the name, he will disdain the imputation that either wealth or fame has ever aided at the birth of his ideal offspring: it was Truth that smiled upon him, that made light his travail, that blessed their birth, and, by her fond recognition, imparted to his breast her own most pure, unimpassioned emotion. But, whatever mixed feeling, through the infirmity of the agent, may have influenced the artist, whether poet or painter, there can be but one feeling in the reader or spectator.

Indeed, so imperishable is this property of Truth, that it seems to lose nothing of its power, even when causing itself to be reflected from things that in themselves have, properly speaking, no truth. Of this we have abundant examples in some of the Dutch pictures, where the principal object is simply a dish of oysters or a pickled herring. We remember a picture of this kind, consisting solely of these

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very objects, from which we experienced a pleasure *almost* exquisite. And we would here remark, that the appetite then was in no way concerned. The pleasure, therefore, must have been from the imitated truth. It is certainly a curious question why this should be, while the things themselves, that is, the actual objects, should produce no such effect. And it seems to be because, in the latter case, there was no truth involved. The real oysters, &c., were indeed so far true as they were actual objects, but they did not contain a *truth* in *relation* to any thing. Whereas, in the pictured oysters, their relation to the actual was shown and verified in the mutual resemblance.

If this be true, as we doubt not, we have at least one evidence, where it might not be looked for, that there is that in Truth which is satisfying of itself. But a stronger testimony may still be found where, from all *a priori* reasoning, we might expect, if not positive pain, at least no pleasure; and that is, where we find it united with human suffering, as in the deep scenes of tragedy. Now it cannot be doubted, that some of our most refined pleasures are often derived from this source, and from scenes that in nature we could not look upon. And why is this, but for the reason assigned in the preceding instance of a still-life picture? the only difference being, that the latter is addressed to the senses, and the former to the heart and intellect: which difference, however, well accounts for their vast disparity of effect. But may not these tragic pleasures have their source in sympathy alone? We answer, No. For who ever felt it in watching the progress of actual villany or the betrayal of innocence, or in being an eyewitness of murder? Now, though we revolt at these and the like atrocities in actual life, it would be both new and false to assert that they have no attraction in Art.

Nor do we believe that this acknowledged interest can well be traced to any other source than the one assumed; namely, to the truth of *relation*. And in this capacity does Truth stand to the Imagination, which is the proper medium through which the artist, whether poet or painter, projects his scenes.

The seat of interest here, then, being *in* the imagination, it is precisely on that account, and because it cannot be brought home to self, that the pleasure ensues; which is plainly, therefore, derived from its verisimilitude to the actual, and, though together with its appropriate excitement, yet without its imperative condition, namely, its call of *life* on the living affections.

The proper word here is *interest*, not sympathy, for sympathy with actual suffering, be the object good or bad, is in its nature painful; an obvious reason why so few in the more prosaic world have the virtue to seek it.

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But is it not the business of the artist to touch the heart? True,—and it is his high privilege, as its liege-lord, to sound its very depths; nay, from its lowest deep to touch alike its loftiest breathing pinnacle. Yet he may not even approach it, except through the transforming atmosphere of the imagination, where alone the saddest notes of woe, even the appalling shriek of despair, are softened, as it were, by the tempering dews of this visionary region, ere they fall upon the heart. Else how could we stand the smothered moan of Desdemona, or the fiendish adjuration of Lady Macbeth,—more frightful even than the after-deed of her husband,—or look upon the agony of the wretched Judas, in the terrible picture of Rembrandt, when he returns the purchase of blood to the impenetrable Sanhedrim? Ay, how could we ever stand these but for that ideal panoply through which we feel only their modified vibrations?

Let the imitation, or rather copy, be so close as to trench on deception, the effect will be far different; for, the *condition of relation* being thus virtually lost, the copy becomes as the original,—circumscribed by its own qualities, repulsive or attractive, as the case may be. I remember a striking instance of this in a celebrated actress, whose copies of actual suffering were so painfully accurate, that I was forced to turn away from the scene, unable to endure it; her scream of agony in *Belvidera* seemed to ring in my ears for hours after. Not so was it with the great Mrs. Siddons, who moved not a step but in a poetic atmosphere, through which the fiercest passions seemed rather to *loom* like distant mountains when first descried at sea,—massive and solid, yet resting on air.

It would appear, then, that there is something in truth, though but seen in the dim shadow of relation, that enforces interest,—and, so it be without pain, at least some degree of pleasure; which, however slight, is not unimportant, as presenting an impassable barrier to the mere animal. We must not, however, be understood as claiming for this Relative Truth the power of exciting a pleasurable interest in all possible cases; there are exceptions, as in the horrible, the loathsome, &c., which under no condition can be otherwise than revolting. It is enough for our purpose, to have shown that its effect is in most cases similar to that we have ascribed to Truth absolute.

But objections are the natural adversaries of every adventurer: there is one in our path which we soon descried at our first setting out. And we find it especially opposed to the assertion respecting children; namely, that between two things, where there is no personal advantage to bias the decision, they will always choose that which seems to them true, rather than the other which appears false. To this is opposed the notorious fact of the remarkable propensity which children have to lying. This is readily admitted; but it does not meet us, unless



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it can be shown that they have not in the act of lying an eye to its *reward*,—setting aside any outward advantage,—in the shape of self-complacent thought at their superior wit or ingenuity. Now it is equally notorious, that such secret triumph will often betray itself by a smile, or wink, or some other sign from the chuckling urchin, which proves any thing but that the lie was gratuitous. No, not even a child can love a lie purely for its own sake; he would else love it in another, which is against fact. Indeed, so far from it, that, long before he can have had any notion of what is meant by honor, the word *liar* becomes one of his first and most opprobrious terms of reproach. Look at any child's face when he tells his companion he lies. We ask no more than that most logical expression; and, if it speak not of a natural abhorrence only to be overcome by self-interest, there is no trust in any thing. No. We cannot believe that man or child, however depraved, *could* tell an *unproductive, gratuitous lie*.

Of the last and highest source of our pleasurable emotions we need say little; since no one will question that, if sought at all, it can only be for its own sake. But it does not become us—at least in this place—to enter on the subject of Holiness; of that angelic state, whose only manifestation is in the perfect unison with the Divine Will. We may, however, consider it in the next degree, as it is known, and as we believe often realized, among men: we mean Goodness.

We presume it is superfluous to define a good act; for every one knows, or ought to know, that no act is good in its true sense, which has any, the least, reference to the agent's self. Nor is it necessary to adduce examples; our object being rather to show that the recognition of goodness—and we beg that the word be especially noted—must result, of necessity, in such an emotion as shall partake of its own character, that is, be entirely devoid of self-interest.

This will no doubt appear to many a startling position. But let it be observed, that we have not said it will *always* be recognized. There are many reasons why it should not be, and is not. We all know how easy it is to turn away from what gives us no pleasure. A long course of vice, together with the consciousness that goodness has departed from ourselves, may make it painful to look upon it. Nay, the contemplation of it may become, on this account, so painful as to amount to agony. But that Goodness can be hated for its own sake we do not believe, except by a devil, or some irredeemable incarnation of evil, if such there be on this side the grave. But it is objected, that bad men have sometimes a pleasure in Evil from which they neither derive nor hope for any personal advantage, that is, simply *because it is evil*. But we deny the fact. We deny that an unmixed pleasure, which is purely abstracted from all reference to self, is in the power of Evil. Should any



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man assert this even of himself, he is not to be believed; he lies to his own heart,—and this he may do without being conscious of it. But how can this be? Nothing more easy: by a simple dislocation of words; by the aid of that false nomenclature which began with the first Fratricide, and has continued to accumulate through successive ages, till it reached its consummation, for every possible sin, in the French Revolution. Indeed, there are few things more easy; it is only to transfer to the evil the name of its opposite. Some of us, perhaps, may have witnessed the savage exultation of some hardened wretch, when the accidental spectator of an atrocious act. But is such exultation pleasure? Is it at all akin to what is recognized as pleasure even by this hardened wretch? Yet so he may call it. But should we, could we look into his heart? Should we not rather pause for a time, from mere ignorance of the true vernacular of sin. What he feels may thus be a mystery to all but the reprobate; but it is not pleasure either in the deed or the doer: for, as the law of Good is Harmony, so is Discord that of Evil; and as sympathy to Harmony, so is revulsion to Discord. And where is hatred deepest and deadliest? Among the wicked. Yet they often hate the good. True: but not goodness, not the good man's virtues; these they envy, and hate him for possessing them. But more commonly the object of dislike is first stripped of his virtues by detraction; the detractor then supplies their place by the needful vices,—perhaps with his own; then, indeed, he is ripe for hatred. When a sinful act is made personal, it is another affair; it then becomes a *part of the man*; and he may then worship it with the idolatry of a devil. But there is a vast gulf between his own idol and that of another.

To prevent misapprehension, we would here observe, that we do not affirm of either Good or Evil any irresistible power of enforcing love or exciting abhorrence, having evidence to the contrary in the multitudes about us; all we affirm is, that, when contemplated abstractly, they cannot be viewed otherwise. Nor is the fact of their inefficiency in many cases difficult of solution, when it is remembered that the very condition to their *true* effect is the complete absence of self, that they must clearly be viewed *ab extra*; a hard, not to say impracticable, condition to the very depraved; for it may well be doubted if to such minds any act or object having a moral nature can be presented without some personal relation. It is not therefore surprising, that, where the condition is so precluded, there should be, not only no proper response to the law of Good or Evil, but such frequent misapprehension of their true character. Were it possible to see with the eyes of others, this might not so often occur; for it need not be remarked, that few things, if any, ever retain their proper forms in the atmosphere of self-love; a fact that will account

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for many obliquities besides the one in question. To this we may add, that the existence of a compulsory power in either Good or Evil could not, in respect to man, consist with his free agency,—without which there could be no conscience; nor does it follow, that, because men, with the free power of choice, yet so often choose wrong, there is any natural indistinctness in the absolute character of Evil, which, as before hinted, is sufficiently apparent to them when referring to others; in such cases the obliquitous choice only shows, that, with the full force of right perception, their interposing passions or interests have also the power of giving their own color to every object having the least relation to themselves.

Admitting this personal modification, we may then safely repeat our position,—that to hate Good or to love Evil, solely for their own sakes, is only possible with the irredeemably wicked, in other words, with devils.

We now proceed to the latter clause of our general proposition. And here it may be asked, on what ground we assume one intuitive universal Principle as the true source of all those emotions which have just been discussed. To this we reply, On the ground of their common agreement. As we shall here use the words *effect* and *emotion* as convertible terms, we wish it to be understood, that, when we apply the epithet *common* or *same* to *effect*, we do so only in relation to *kind*, and for the sake of brevity, instead of saying the same *class* of effects; implying also in the word *kind* the existence of many degrees, but no other difference. For instance, if a beautiful flower and a noble act shall be found to excite a kindred emotion, however slight from the one or deep from the other, they come in effect under the same category. And this we are forced to admit, however heterogeneous, since a common ground is necessarily predicated of a common result. How else, for instance, can we account for a scene in nature, a bird, an animal, a human form, affecting us each in a similar way? There is certainly no similitude in the objects that compose a landscape, and the form of an animal and man; they have no resemblance either in shape, or texture, or color, in roughness, smoothness, or any other known quality; while their several effects are so near akin, that we do not stop to measure even the wide degrees by which they are marked, but class them in a breath by some common term. It is very plain that this singular property of assimilating to one what is so widely unlike cannot proceed from any similar conformation, or quality, or attribute of mere being, that is, of any thing essential to distinctive existence. There must needs, then, be some common ground for their common effect. For if they agree not in themselves one with the other, it follows of necessity that the ground of their agreement must be in relation to something within our own minds, since only *there* is this common effect known as a fact.



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We are now brought to the important question, *Where* and *what* is this reconciling ground? Certainly not in sensation, for that could only reflect their distinctive differences. Neither can it be in the reflective faculties, since the effect in question, being co-instantaneous, is wholly independent of any process of reasoning; for we do not feel it because we understand, but only because we are conscious of its presence. Nay, it is because we neither do nor can understand it, being therefore a matter aloof from all the powers of reasoning, that its character is such as has been asserted, and, as such, universal.

Where, then, shall we search for this mysterious ground but in the mind, since only there, as before observed, is this common effect known as a fact? and where in the mind but in some inherent Principle, which is both intuitive and universal, since, in a greater or less degree, all men feel it *without knowing why?*

But since an inward Principle can, of necessity, have only a potential existence, until called into action by some outward object, it is also clear that any similar effect, which shall then be recognized through it, from any number of differing and distinct objects, can only arise from some mutual relation between a *something* in the objects and in the Principle supposed, as their joint result and proper product.

And, since it would appear that we cannot avoid the admission of some such Principle, having a reciprocal relation to certain outward objects, to account for these kindred emotions from so many distinct and heterogeneous sources, it remains only that we give it a name; which has already been anticipated in the term Harmony.

The next question here is, In what consists this *peculiar relation?* We have seen that it cannot be in any thing that is essential to any condition of mere being or existence; it must therefore consist in some *undiscoverable* condition indifferently applicable to the Physical, Intellectual, and Moral, yet only applicable in each to certain kinds.

And this is all that we do or *can* know of it. But of this we may be as certain as that we live and breathe.

It is true that, for particular purposes, we may analyze certain combinations of sounds and colors and forms, so as to ascertain their relative quantities or collocation; and these facts (of which we shall hereafter have occasion to speak) may be of importance both in Art and Science. Still, when thus obtained, they will be no more than mere facts, on which we can predicate nothing but that, when they are imitated,—that is, when similar combinations of quantities, &c., are repeated in a work of art,—they will produce the same effect. But *why* they should is a mystery which the reflective faculties do not solve; and never can, because it refers to a living Power that is above the understanding. In the human figure, for instance, we can give no reason why eight



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heads to the stature please us better than six, or why three or twelve heads seem to us monstrous. If we say, in the latter case, *because* the head of the one is too small and of the other too large, we give no *reason*; we only state the *fact* of their disagreeable effect on us. And, if we make the proportion of eight heads our rule, it is because of the fact of its being more pleasing to us than any other; and, from the same feeling, we prefer those statures which approach it the nearest. Suppose we analyze a certain combination of sounds and colors, so as to ascertain the exact relative quantities of the one and the collocation of the other, and then compare them. What possible resemblance can the understanding perceive between these sounds and colors? And yet a something within us responds to both in a similar emotion. And so with a thousand things, nay, with myriads of objects that have no other affinity but with that mysterious harmony which began with our being, which slept with our infancy, and which their presence only seems to have *awakened*. If we cannot go back to our own childhood, we may see its illustration in those about us who are now emerging into that unsophisticated state. Look at them in the fields, among the birds and flowers; their happy faces speak the harmony within them: the divine instrument, which these have touched, gives them a joy which, perhaps, only childhood in its first fresh consciousness can know. Yet what do they understand of musical quantities, or of the theory of colors?

And so with respect to Truth and Goodness; whose preexisting Ideas, being in the living constituents of an immortal spirit, need but the slightest breath of some outward condition of the true and good,—a simple problem, or a kind act,—to awake them, as it were, from their unconscious sleep, and start them for eternity.

We may venture to assert, that no philosopher, however ingenious, could communicate to a child the abstract idea of Right, had the latter nothing beyond or above the understanding. He might, indeed, be taught, like the inferior animals,—a dog, for instance,—that, if he took certain forbidden things, he would be punished, and thus do right through fear. Still he would desire the forbidden thing, though belonging to another; nor could he conceive why he should not appropriate to himself, and thus allay his appetite, what was held by another, could he do so undetected; nor attain to any higher notion of right than that of the strongest. But the child has something higher than the mere power of apprehending consequences. The simplest exposition, whether of right or wrong, even by an ignorant nurse, is instantly responded to by something *within him*, which, thus awakened, becomes to him a living voice ever after; and the good and the true must thenceforth answer its call, even though succeeding years would fain overlay them with the suffocating crowds of evil and falsehood.



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We do not say that these eternal Ideas of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness will, strictly speaking, always act. Though indestructible, they may be banished for a time by the perverted Will, and mockeries of the brain, like the fume-born phantoms from the witches' caldron in Macbeth, take their places, and assume their functions. We have examples of this in every age, and perhaps in none more startling than in the present. But we mean only that they cannot be *forgotten*: nay, they are but, too often recalled with unwelcome distinctness. Could we read the annals which must needs be scored on every heart,—could we look upon those of the aged reprobate,—who will doubt that their darkest passages are those made visible by the distant gleams from these angelic Forms, that, like the Three which stood before the tent of Abraham, once looked upon his youth?

And we doubt not that the truest witness to the common source of these inborn Ideas would readily be acknowledged by all, could they return to it now with their matured power of introspection, which is, at least, one of the few advantages of advancing years. But, though we cannot bring back youth, we may still recover much of its purer revelations of our nature from what has been left in the memory. From the dim present, then, we would appeal to that fresher time, ere the young spirit had shrunk from the overbearing pride of the understanding, and confidently ask, if the emotions we then felt from the Beautiful, the True, and the Good, did not seem in some way to refer to a common origin. And we would also ask, if it was then frequent that the influence from one was *singly* felt,—if it did not rather bring with it, however remotely, a sense of something, though widely differing, yet still akin to it. When we have basked in the beauty of a summer sunset, was there nothing in the sky that spoke to the soul of Truth and Goodness? And when the opening intellect first received the truth of the great law of gravitation, or felt itself mounting through the profound of space, to travel with the planets in their unerring rounds, did never then the kindred Ideas of Goodness and Beauty chime in, as it were, with the fabled music,—not fabled to the soul,—which led you on like one entranced?

And again, when, in the passive quiet of your moral nature, so predisposed in youth to all things genial, you have looked abroad on this marvellous, ever teeming Earth,—ever teeming alike for mind and body,—and have felt upon you flow, as from ten thousand springs of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, ten thousand streams of innocent enjoyment; did you not then *almost hear* them shout in confluence, and almost see them gushing upwards, as if they would prove their unity, in one harmonious fountain?

But, though the preceding be admitted as all true in respect to certain “gifted” individuals, it may yet be denied that it is equally true with respect to all, in other words, that the Principle assumed is an inherent constituent of the human being. To this we reply, that universality does not necessarily imply equality.



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The universality of a Principle does not imply *everywhere* equal energy or activity, or even the same mode of manifestation, any more than do the essential Faculties of the Understanding. Of this we have an analogous illustration in the faculty of Memory; which is almost indefinitely differenced in different men, both in degree and mode. In some, its greatest power is shown in the retention of thoughts, but not of words, that is, not of the original words in which they were presented. Others possess it in a very remarkable degree as to forms, places, &c., and but imperfectly for other things; others, again, never forget names, dates, or figures, yet cannot repeat a conversation the day after it took place; while some few have the doubtful happiness of forgetting nothing. We might go on with a long list of the various modes and degrees in which this faculty, so essential to the human being, is everywhere manifested. But this is sufficient for our purpose. In like manner is the Principle of Harmony manifested; in one person as it relates to Form, in another to Sound; so, too, may it vary as to the degrees of truth and goodness. We say degrees; for we may well doubt whether, even in the faculty of memory, its apparent absence as to any one essential object is any thing more than a feeble degree of activity: and the doubt is strengthened by the fact, that in many seemingly hopeless cases it has been actually, as it were, brought into birth. And we are still indisposed to admit its entire absence in any one particular for which it was bestowed on man. An imperfect developement, especially as relating to the intellectual and moral, we know to depend, in no slight measure, on the *will* of the subject. Nay, (with the exception of idiots,) it may safely be affirmed, that no individual ever existed who could not perceive the difference between what is true and false, and right and wrong. We here, of course, except those who have so ingeniously *unmade* themselves, in order to reconstruct their "humanity" after a better fashion. As to the "*why*" of these differences, we know nothing; it is one of those unfathomable mysteries which to the finite mind must ever be hidden.

Though it has been our purpose, throughout this discourse, to direct our inquiries mainly to the essential Elements of the subject, it may not be amiss here to take a brief notice of their collateral product in those mixed modes from which we derive so large a portion of our mental gratification: we allude to the various combinations of the several Ideas, which have just been examined, with each other as well as with their opposites. To this prolific source may be traced much of that many-colored interest which we take in their various forms as presented by the imagination,—in every thing, indeed, which is true, or even partially true, to the great Principle of Harmony, both in nature and in art. It is to these mixed modes more especially,

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that we owe all that mysterious interest which gives the illusion of life to a work of fiction, and fills us with delight or melts with woe, whether in the happiness or the suffering of some imagined being, uniting goodness with beauty, or virtue with plainness, or uncommon purity and intellect even with deformity; for even that may be so overpowered in the prominent harmony of superior intellect and moral worth, as to be virtually neutralized, at least, to become unobtrusive as a discordant force. Besides, it cannot be expected that *complete* harmony is ever to be realized in our imperfect state; we should else, perhaps, with such expectation, have no pleasures of the kind we speak of: nor is this necessary, the imagination being always ready to supply deficiencies, whenever the approximation is sufficiently near to call it forth. Nay, if the interest felt be nothing more than mere curiosity, we still refer to this presiding Principle; which is no less essential to a simple combination of events, than to the higher demands of Form or Character. But its presence must be felt, however slightly. Of this we have the evidence in many cases, and, perhaps, most conclusive where the partial harmony is felt to verge on a powerful discord; or where the effort to unite them produces that singular alternation of what is both revolting and pleasing: as in the startling union of evil passions with some noble quality, or with a master intellect. And here we have a solution of that paradoxical feeling of interest and abhorrence, which we experience in such a character as King Richard.

And may it not be that we are permitted this interest for a deeper purpose than we are wont to suppose; because Sin is best seen in the light of Virtue,—and then most fearfully when she holds the torch to herself? Be this as it may, with pure, unintellectual, brutal evil it is very different. We cannot look upon it undismayed: we take no interest in it, nor can we. In Richard there is scarce a glimmer of his better nature; yet we do not despise him, for his intellect and courage command our respect. But the fiend Iago,—who ever followed him through the weaving of his spider-like web, without perpetual recurrence to its venomous source,—his devilish heart? Even the intellect he shows seems actually animalized, and we shudder at its subtlety, as at the cunning of a reptile. Whatever interest may have been imputed to him should be placed to the account of his hapless victim; to the first striving with distrust of a generous nature; to the vague sense of misery, then its gradual developement, then the final overthrow of absolute faith; and, last of all, to the throes of agony of the noble Moor, as he writhes and gasps in his accursed toils.



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To these mixed modes may be added another branch, which we shall term the class of Imputed Attributes. In this class are concerned all those natural objects with which we connect (not by individual association, but by a general law of the mind) certain moral or intellectual attributes; which are not, indeed, supposed to exist in the objects themselves, but which, by some unknown affinity, they awaken or occasion in us, and which we, in our turn, impute to them. However this be, there are multitudes of objects in the inanimate world, which we cannot contemplate without associating with them many of the characteristics which we ascribe to the human being; and the ideas so awakened we involuntarily express by the ascription of such significant epithets as *stately*, *majestic*, *grand*, and so on. It is so with us, when we call some tall forest stately, or qualify as majestic some broad and slowly-winding river, or some vast, yet unbroken waterfall, or some solitary, gigantic pine, seeming to disdain the earth, and to hold of right its eternal communion with air; or when to the smooth and far-reaching expanse of our inland waters, with their bordering and receding mountains, as they seem to march from the shores, in the pomp of their dark draperies of wood and mist, we apply the terms *grand* and *magnificent*: and so onward to an endless succession of objects, imputing, as it were, our own nature, and lending our sympathies, till the headlong rush of some mighty cataract suddenly thunders upon us. But how is it then? In the twinkling of an eye, the outflowing sympathies ebb back upon the heart; the whole mind seems severed from earth, and the awful feeling to suspend the breath;—there is nothing human to which we can liken it. And here begins another kind of emotion, which we call Sublime.

We are not aware that this particular class of objects has hitherto been noticed, at least as holding a distinct position. And, if we may be allowed to supply the omission, we should assign to it the intermediate place between the Beautiful and the Sublime. Indeed, there seems to be no other station so peculiarly proper; inasmuch as they would thus form, in a consecutive series, a regular ascent from the sensible material to the invisible spiritual: hence naturally uniting into one harmonious whole every possible emotion of our higher nature.

In the preceding discussion, we have considered the outward world only in its immediate relation to Man, and the Human Being as the predetermined centre to which it was designed to converge. As the subject, however, of what are called the sublime emotions, he holds a different position; for the centre here is not himself, nor, indeed, can he approach it within conceivable distance: yet still he is drawn to it, though baffled for ever. Now the question is, Where, and in what bias, is this mysterious attraction? It must needs be in something having a clear affinity with us, or we could not feel it. But the attraction



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is also both pure and pleasurable; and it has just been shown, that we have in ourselves but one principle by which to recognize any corresponding emotion,—namely, the principle of Harmony. May we not then infer a similar Principle without us, an Infinite Harmony, to which our own is attracted? and may we not further,—if we may so speak without irreverence,—suppose our own to have emanated thence when “man became a living soul”? And though this relation may not be consciously acknowledged in every instance, or even in one, by the mass of men, does it therefore follow that it does not exist? How many things act upon us of which we have no knowledge? If we find, as in the case of the Beautiful, the same, or a similar, effect to follow from a great variety of objects which have no resemblance or agreement with one another, is it not a necessary inference, that for their common effect they must all refer to something without and distinct from themselves? Now in the case of the Sublime, the something referred to is not in man: for the emotion excited has an outward tendency; the mind cannot contain it; and the effort to follow it towards its mysterious object, if long continued, becomes, in the excess of interest, positively painful.

Could any finite object account for this? But, supposing the Infinite, we have an adequate cause. If these emotions, then, from whatever object or circumstance, be to prompt the mind beyond its prescribed limits, whether carrying it back to the primitive past, the incomprehensible *beginning*, or sending it into the future, to the unknown *end*, the ever-present Idea of the mighty Author of all these mysteries must still be implied, though we think not of it. It is this Idea, or rather its influence, whether we be conscious of it or not, which we hold to be the source of every sublime emotion. To make our meaning plainer, we should say, that that which has the power of possessing the mind, to the exclusion, for the time, of all other thought, and which presents no *comprehensible* sense of a whole, though still impressing us with a full apprehension of such as a reality,—in other words, which cannot be circumscribed by the forms of the understanding while it strains them to the utmost,—that we should term a sublime object. But whether this effect be occasioned directly by the object itself, or be indirectly suggested by its relations to some other object, its unknown cause, it matters not; since the apparent power of calling forth the emotion, by whatever means, is, *quoad* ourselves, its sublime condition. Hence, if a minute insect, an ant, for instance, through its marvellous instinct, lift the mind of the amazed spectator to the still more inscrutable Creator, it must possess, as to *him*, the same power. This is, indeed, an extreme case, and may be objected to as depending on the individual mind; on a mind prepared by cultivation and previous reflection for the effect in question. But to



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this it may be replied, that some degree of cultivation, or, more properly speaking, of development by the exercise of its reflective faculties, is obviously essential ere the mind can attain to mature growth,—we might almost say to its natural state, since nothing can be said to have attained its true nature until all its capacities are at least called into birth. No one, for example, would refer to the savages of Australia for a true specimen of what was proper or natural to the human mind; we should rather seek it, if such were the alternative, in a civilized child of five years old. Be this as it may, it will not be denied that ignorance, brutality, and many other deteriorating causes, do practically incapacitate thousands for even an approximation, not only to this, but to many of the inferior emotions, the character of which is purely mental. And this, we think, is quite sufficient to neutralize the objection, if not, indeed, to justify the application of the term to all cases where the *immediate* effect, whether directly or indirectly, is such as has been described. But, to reduce this to a common-sense view, it is only saying, —what no one will deny,—that a man of education and refinement has not only more, but higher, pleasures of the mind than a mere clown.

But though the position here advanced must necessarily exclude many objects which have hitherto, though, as we think, improperly, been classed with the sublime, it will still leave enough, and more than enough, for the utmost exercise of our limited powers; inasmuch as, in addition to the multitude of objects in the material world, not only the actions, passions, and thoughts of men, but whatever concerns the human being, that in any way—by a hint merely—leads the mind, though indirectly, to the Infinite attributes, —all come of right within the ground assumed.

It will be borne in mind, that the conscious presence of the Infinite Idea is not only *not* insisted on, but expressly admitted to be, in most cases, unthought of; it is also admitted, that a sublime effect is often powerfully felt in many instances where this Idea could not truly be predicated of the apparent object. In such cases, however, some kind of resemblance, or, at least, a seeming analogy to an infinite attribute, is nevertheless essential. It must *appear* to us, for the time, either limitless, indefinite, or in some other way beyond the grasp of the mind: and, whatever an object may *seem* to be, it must needs *in effect* be to *us* even that which it seems. Nor does this transfer the emotion to a different source; for the Infinite Idea, or something analogous, being thus imputed, is in reality its true cause.



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It is still the unattainable, the *ever-stimulating*, yet *ever-eluding*, in the character of the sublime object, that gives to it both its term and its effect. And whence the conception of this mysterious character, but from its mysterious prototype, the Idea of the Infinite? Neither does it matter, as we have said, whether actual or supposed; for what the imagination cannot master will master the imagination. Take, for instance, but a single *passion*, and clothe it with this character; in the same instant it becomes sublime. So, too, with a single thought. In the Mosaic words so often quoted, "Let there be light, and there was light," we have the sublime of thought, of mere naked thought; but what could more awe the mind with the power of God? Of like nature is the conjecture of Newton, when he imagined stars so distant from the sun that their coeval light has not yet reached us. Let us endeavour for one moment to conceive of this; does not the soul seem to dilate within us, and the body to shrink as to a grain of dust? "Woe is me! unclean, unclean!" said the holy Prophet, when the Infinite Holiness stood before him. Could a more terrible distance be measured, than by these fearful words, between God and man?

If it be objected to this view, that many cases occur, having the same conditions with those assumed in our general proposition, which are yet exclusively painful, unmitigated even by a transient moment of pleasure,—in Despair, for instance,—as who can limit it?—to this we reply, that no emotion having its sole, or circle of existence in the individual mind itself, can be to that mind other than a *subject*. A man in despair, or under any mode of extreme suffering of like nature, may, indeed, if all interfering sympathy have been removed by time or after-description, be to *another* a sublime object,—at least in one of those suggestive forms just noticed; but not to *himself*. The source of the sublime—as all along implied—is essentially *ab extra*. The human mind is not its centre, nor can it be realized except by a contemplative act.

Besides, as a mental pleasure,—indeed the highest known,—to be recognized as such, it must needs be accompanied by the same *relative character* by which is tested every other pleasure coming under that denomination; namely, by the entire absence of *self*, that is, by the same freedom from all personal consideration which has been shown to characterize the true effect of the Three leading Ideas already considered. But if to this also it be further objected, that in certain particular cases, as of personal danger,—from which the sublime emotion has often been experienced,—some personal consideration must necessarily be involved, as without a sense of security we could not enjoy it; we answer, that, if it be meant only that the mind should be in such a state as to enable us to receive an unembarrassed impression, it seems to us superfluous,—an

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obvious truism placed in opposition to an absurd impossibility. We needed not to be told, that no pleasurable emotion is likely to occur while we are unmanned by fear. The same might be said, also, in respect to the Beautiful: for who was ever alive to it under a paroxysm of terror, or pain of any kind? A terrified person is in any thing but a fit state for such emotion. He may indeed *afterwards*, when his fear is passed off, contemplate the circumstance that occasioned it with a different feeling; but the object of his dismay is *then* projected, as it were, completely from himself; and he feels the sublimity in a contemplative state: he can feel it in no other. Nor is that state incompatible with a consciousness of peril, though it can never be with personal terror. And, if it is meant that we should have a positive, present conviction that we are in no danger, this we must deny, as we find it contradicted in innumerable instances. So far, indeed, is a sense of security from being essential to the condition of a sublime emotion, that the sense of danger, on the contrary, is one of its most exciting accompaniments. There is a fascination in danger which some persons neither can nor would resist; which seems, as it were, to disenfranchise them of self;—as if the mysterious Infinite were actually drawing them on by an invisible power.

Was it mere scientific curiosity that cost the elder Pliny his life? Might it not have been rather this sublime fascination? But we have repeated examples of it in our own time. Many who will read this may have been in a storm at sea. Did they never feel its sublimity while they knew their danger? We will answer for ourselves; for we have been in one, when the dismayed vessels that surrounded us permitted no mistake as to our peril; it was strongly felt, but still stronger was the sublime emotion in the awful scene. The crater of Vesuvius is even now, perhaps for the thousandth time, reflecting from its lake of fire some ghastly face, with indrawn breath and hair bristling, bent, as by fate, over its sulphurous brink.

Let us turn to Mont Blanc, that mighty pyramid of ice, in whose shadow might repose all the tombs of the Pharaohs. It rises before the traveller like the accumulating mausoleum of Europe: perhaps he looks upon it as his own before his natural time; yet he cannot away from it. A terrible charm hurries him over frightful chasms, whose blue depths seem like those of the ocean; he cuts his way up a polished precipice, shining like steel,—as elusive to the touch; he creeps slowly and warily around and beneath huge cliffs of snow; now he looks up, and sees their brows fretted by the percolating waters like a Gothic ceiling, and he fears even to whisper, lest an audible breath should awaken the avalanche: and thus he climbs and climbs, till the dizzy summit fills up his measure of fearful ecstasy.



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Now, though cases may occur where the emotion in question is attended with a sense of security, as in the reading or hearing the description of an earthquake, such as that of 1768 in Lisbon, while we are safely housed and by a comfortable fire, it does not therefore follow, that this consciousness of safety is its essential condition. It is merely an accidental circumstance. It cannot, therefore, apply, either as a rule or an objection. Besides, even if supported by fact, we might well dismiss it on the ground of irrelevancy, since a sense of personal safety cannot be placed in opposition to and as inconsistent with a disinterested or unselfish state; which is that claimed for the emotion as its true condition. If there be not, then, a sounder objection, we may safely admit the characteristic in question; for the reception of which we have, on the other hand, the weight of experience,—at least negatively, since, strictly speaking, we cannot experience the absence of any thing.

But though, according to our theory, there are many things now called sublime that would properly come under a different classification, such as many objects of Art, many sentiments, and many actions, which are strictly human, as well in their *end* as in their origin; it is not to be inferred that the exclusion of any work of man is *because of its apparent origin*, but of its *end*, the end only being the determining point, as referring to its *Idea*. Now, if the Idea referred to be of the Infinite, which is *out* of his nature, it cannot strictly be said to originate with man,—that is, absolutely; but it is rather, as it were, a reflected form of it from the Maker of his mind. If we are led to such an Idea, then, by any work of imagination, a poem, a picture, a statue, or a building, it is as truly sublime as any natural object. This, it appears to us, is the sole mystery, without which neither sound, nor color, nor form, nor magnitude, is a true correlative to the unseen cause. And here, as with Beauty, though the test of that be within us, is the *modus operandi* equally baffling to the scrutiny of the understanding. We feel ourselves, as it were, lifted from the earth, and look upon the outward objects that have so affected us, yet learn not how; and the mystery deepens as we compare them with other objects from which have followed the same effects, and find no resemblance. For instance; the roar of the ocean, and the intricate unity of a Gothic cathedral, whose beginning and end are alike intangible, while its climbing tower seems visibly even to rise to the Idea which it strives to embody,—these have nothing in common,—hardly two things could be named that are more unlike; yet in relation to man they have but one end: for who can hear the ocean when breathing in wrath, and limit it in his mind, though he think not of Him who gives it voice? or ascend that spire without feeling his faculties vanish, as it were with its vanishing point, into the abyss of space? If there be a difference in the effect from these and other objects, it is only in the intensity, the degree of impetus given; as between that from the sudden explosion of a volcano and from the slow and heavy movement of a rising thunder-cloud; its character and its office are the same,—in its awful harmony to connect the created with its Infinite Cause.



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But let us compare this effect with that from Beauty. Would the Parthenon, for instance, with its beautiful forms,—made still more beautiful under its native sky,—seeming almost endued with the breath of life, as if its conscious purple were a living suffusion brought forth in sympathy by the enamoured blushes of a Grecian sunset;—would this beautiful object even then elevate the soul above its own roof? No: we should be filled with a pure delight,—but with no longing to rise still higher. It would satisfy us; which the sublime does not; for the feeling is too vast to be circumscribed by human content.

On the supernatural it is needless to enlarge; for, in whatever form the beings of the invisible world are supposed to visit us, they are immediately connected in the mind with the unknown Infinite; whether the faith be in the heart or in the imagination; whether they bubble up from the earth, like the Witches in Macbeth, taking shape at will, or self-dissolving into air, and no less marvellous, foreknowing thoughts ere formed in man; or like the Ghost in Hamlet, an unsubstantial shadow, having the functions of life, motion, will, and speech; a fearful mystery invests them with a spell not to be withstood; the bewildered imagination follows like a child, leaving the finite world for one unknown, till it aches in darkness, trackless, endless.

Perhaps, as being nearest in station to the unsearchable Author of all things, the highest example of this would be found in the Angelic Nature. If it be objected, that the poets have not always so represented it, it rests with them to show cause why they have not. Milton, no doubt, could have assigned a sufficient reason in *the time chosen for his poem*,—that of the creation of the first man, when his intercourse with the highest order of created beings was not only essential to the plan of the poem, but according with the express will of the Creator: hence, he might have considered it no violation of the *then* relation between man and angels to assign even the epithet *affable* to the archangel Raphael; for man was then sinless, and in all points save knowledge a fit object of regard, and certainly a fit pupil to his heavenly instructor. But, suppose the poet, throughout his work, (as in the process of his story he was forced to do near the end,)—suppose he had chosen, assuming the philosopher, to assign to Adam the *altered relation of one of his fallen posterity*, how could he have endured a holy spiritual presence? To be consistent, Adam must have been dumb with awe, incapable of holding converse such as is described. Between sinless man and his sinful progeny, the distance is immeasurable. And so, too, must be the effect on the latter, in such a presence; and for this conclusion we have the authority of Scripture, in the dismay of the soldiers at the Saviour's sepulchre, on which more directly. If there be no like effect attending the other angelic



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visits recorded in Scripture, such as those to Lot and Abraham, the reason is obvious in the *special mission* to those individuals, who were doubtless *divinely prepared* for their reception; for it is reasonable to suppose the mission had else been useless. But with the Roman soldiers, where there was no such qualifying circumstance, the case was different; indeed, it was in striking contrast with that of the two Marys, who, though struck with awe, yet being led there, as witnesses, by the Spirit, were not so overpowered.

And here, as the Idea of Angels is universally associated with every perfection of *form*, may naturally occur the question so often agitated,—namely, whether Beauty and Sublimity are, under any circumstances, compatible. To us it seems of easy solution. For we see no reason why Beauty, as the condition of a subordinated object or component part, may not incidentally enter into the Sublime, as well as a thousand other conditions of opposite characters, which pertain to the multifarious assimilants that often form its other components.

When Beauty is not made *essential*, but enters as a mere contingent, its admission or rejection is a matter of indifference. In an angel, for instance, beauty is the condition of his mere form; but the angel has also an intellectual and moral or spiritual nature, which is essentially paramount: the former being but the condition, so to speak, of his visibility, the latter, his very life,—an Essence next to the inconceivable Giver of life.

Could we stand in the presence of one of these holy beings, (if to stand were possible,) what of the Sublime in this lower world would so shake us? Though his beauty were such as never mortal dreamed of, it would be as nothing,—swallowed up as darkness, —in the awful, spiritual brightness of the messenger of God. Even as the soldiers in Scripture, at the sepulchre of the Saviour, we should fall before him,—we should “become,” like them, “as dead men.”

But though Milton does not unveil the “face like lightning”; and though the angel Raphael is made to hold converse with man, and the “severe in youthful beauty” gives even the individual impress to Zephon, and Michael and Abdiel are set apart in their prowess; there is not one he names that does not breathe of Heaven, that is not encompassed with the glory of the Infinite. And why the reader is not overwhelmed in their supposed presence is because he is a beholder *through Adam*,—through him also a listener; but whenever he is made, by the poet’s spell, to forget Adam, and to see, as it were in his own person, the embattled hosts....

If we dwell upon Form *alone*, though it should be of surpassing beauty, the idea would not rise above that of man, for this is conceivable of man: but the moment the angelic nature is touched, we have the higher ideas of supernal intelligence and perfect holiness, to which all the charms and graces of mere form immediately become

subordinate, and, though the beauty remain, its agency is comparatively negative under the overpowering transcendence of a celestial spirit.



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As we have already seen that the Beautiful is limited to no particular form, but possesses its power in some mysterious *condition*, which is applicable to many distinct objects; in like manner does the Sublime include within its sphere, and subdue to its condition, an indefinite variety of objects, with their distinctive conditions; and among them we find that of the Beautiful, as well as, to a *certain degree*, its reverse, so that, though we may truly recognize their coexistence in the same object, it is not possible that their effect upon us should be otherwise than unequal, and that the higher law should not subordinate the lower. We do not deny that the Beautiful may, so to speak, mitigate the awful intensity of the Sublime; but it cannot change its character, much less impart its own; the one will still be awful, the other, of itself, never.

When at Rome, we once asked a foreigner, who seemed to be talking somewhat vaguely on the subject, what he understood by the Sublime. His answer was, "Le plus beau"; making it only a matter of degree. Now let us only imagine (if we can) a beautiful earthquake, or a beautiful hurricane. And yet the foreigner is not alone in this. D'Azzara, the biographer of Mengs, speaking of Beauty, talks of "this sublime quality," and in another place, for certain reasons assigned, he says, "The grand style is beautiful." Nay, many writers, otherwise of high authority, seem to have taken the same view; while others who could have had no such notion, having used the words Beauty and the Beautiful in an allegorical or metaphorical sense, have sometimes been misinterpreted literally. Hence Winckelmann reproaches Michael Angelo for his continual talk about Beauty, when he showed nothing of it in his works. But it is very evident that the *Bella* and *Bellezza* of Michael Angelo were never used by him in a literal sense, nor intended to be so understood by others: he adopted the terms solely to express abstract Perfection, which he allegorized as the mistress of his mind, to whose exclusive worship his whole life was devoted. Whether it was the most appropriate term he could have chosen, we shall not inquire. It is certain, however, that the literal adoption of it by subsequent writers has been the cause of much confusion, as well as vagueness.

For ourselves, we are quite at a loss to imagine how a notion so obviously groundless has ever had a single supporter; for, if a distinct effect implies a distinct cause, we do not see why distinct terms should not be employed to express the difference, or how the legitimate term for one can in any way be applied to signify a particular degree of the other. Like the two Dromios, they sometimes require a conjurer to tell which is which. If only Perfection, which is a generic term implying the summit of all things, be meant, there is surely nothing to be gained (if we except *intended* obscurity) by substituting a specific term which is limited to a few. We speak not here of allegorical or metaphorical propriety, which is not now the question, but of the literal and didactic; and we may add, that we have never known but one result from this arbitrary union,—which is, to procreate words.



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In further illustration of our position, it may be well here to notice one mistaken source of the Sublime, which seems to have been sometimes resorted to, both in poems and pictures; namely, in the sympathy excited by excruciating bodily suffering. Suppose a man on the rack to be placed before us,—perhaps some miserable victim of the Inquisition; the cracking of his joints is made frightfully audible; his calamitous “Ah!” goes to our marrow; then the cruel precision of the mechanical familiar, as he lays bare to the sight his whole anatomy of horrors. And suppose, too, the executioner *compelled* to his task,—consequently an irresponsible agent, whom we cannot curse; and, finally, that these two objects compose the whole scene. What could we feel but an agony even like that of the sufferer, the only difference being that one is physical, the other mental? And this is all that mere sympathy has any power to effect; it has led us to its extreme point,—our flesh creeps, and we turn away with almost bodily sickness. But let another actor be added to the drama in the presiding Inquisitor, the cool methodizer of this process of torture; in an instant the scene is changed, and, strange to say, our feelings become less painful,—nay, we feel a momentary interest,—from an instant revulsion of our moral nature: we are lost in wonder at the excess of human wickedness, and the hateful wonder, as if partaking of the infinite, now distends the faculties to their utmost tension; for who can set bounds to passion when it seizes the whole soul? It is as the soul itself, without form or limit. We may not think even of the after judgment; we become ourselves *justice*, and we award a hatred commensurate with the sin, so indefinite and monstrous that we stand aghast at our own judgment.

Why this extreme tension of the mind, when thus outwardly occasioned, should create in us an interest, we know not; but such is the fact, and we are not only content to endure it for a time, but even crave it, and give to the feeling the epithet *sublime*.

We do not deny that much bodily suffering may be admitted with effect as a subordinate agent, when, as in the example last added, it is made to serve as a necessary expositor of moral deformity. Then, indeed, in the hands of a great artist, it becomes one of the most powerful auxiliaries to a sublime end. All that we contend for is that sympathy alone is insufficient as a cause of sublimity.

There are yet other sources of the false sublime, (if we may so call it,) which are sometimes resorted to also by poets and painters; such as the horrible, the loathsome, the hideous, and the monstrous: these form the impassable boundaries to the true Sublime. Indeed, there appears to be in almost every emotion a certain point beyond which we cannot pass without recoiling,—as if we instinctively shrunk from what is forbidden to our nature.



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It would seem, then, that, in relation to man, Beauty is the extreme point, or last summit, of the natural world, since it is in that that we recognize the highest emotion of which we are susceptible from the purely physical. If we ascend thence into the moral, we shall find its influence diminish in the same ratio with our upward progress. In the continuous chain of creation of which it forms a part, the link above it where the moral modification begins seems scarcely changed, yet the difference, though slight, demands another name, and the nomenclator within us calls it Elegance; in the next connecting link, the moral adjunct becomes more predominant, and we call it Majesty; in the next, the physical becomes still fainter, and we call the union Grandeur; in the next, it seems almost to vanish, and a new form rises before us, so mysterious, so undefined and elusive to the senses, that we turn, as if for its more distinct image, within ourselves, and there, with wonder, amazement, awe, we see it filling, distending, stretching every faculty, till, like the Giant of Otranto, it seems almost to burst the imagination: under this strange confluence of opposite emotions, this terrible pleasure, we call the awful form Sublimity. This was the still, small voice that shook the Prophet on Horeb;—though small to his ear, it was more than his imagination could contain; he could not hear it again and live.

It is not to be supposed that we have enumerated all the forms of gradation between the Beautiful and the Sublime; such was not our purpose; it is sufficient to have noted the most prominent, leaving the intermediate modifications to be supplied (as they can readily be) by the reader. If we descend from the Beautiful, we shall pass in like manner through an equal variety of forms gradually modified by the grosser material influences, as the Handsome, the Pretty, the Comely, the Plain, &c., till we fall to the Ugly.

There ends the chain of pleasurable excitement; but not the chain of Forms; which, taking now as if a literal curve, again bends upward, till, meeting the descending extreme of the moral, it seems to complete the mighty circle. And in this dark segment will be found the startling union of deepening discords,—still deepening, as it rises from the Ugly to the Loathsome, the Horrible, the Frightful,[1] the Appalling.

As we follow the chain through this last region of disease, misery, and sin, of embodied Discord, and feel, as we must, in the mutilated affinities of its revolting forms, their fearful relation to this fair, harmonious creation,—how does the awful fact, in these its breathing fragments, speak to us of a fallen world!

As the living centre of this stupendous circle stands the Soul of Man; the *conscious Reality*, to which the vast inclosure is but the symbol. How vast, then, his being! If space could measure it, the remotest star would fall within its limits. Well, then, may he tremble to essay it even in thought; for where must it carry him,—that winged messenger, fleeter than light? Where but to the confines of the Infinite; even to the presence of the unutterable *Life*, on which nothing finite can look and live?

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Finally, we shall conclude our Discourse with a few words on the master Principle, which we have supposed to be, by the will of the Creator, the realizing life to all things fair and true and good: and more especially would we revert to its spiritual purity, emphatically manifested through all its manifold operations,—so impossible of alliance with any thing sordid, or false, or wicked,—so unapprehensible, even, except for its own most sinless sake. Indeed, we cannot look upon it as other than the universal and eternal witness of God's goodness and love, to draw man to himself, and to testify to the meanest, most obliquitous mind,—at least once in life, be it though in childhood,—that there *is* such a thing as *good without self*. It will be remembered, that, in all the various examples adduced, in which we have endeavoured to illustrate the operation of Harmony, there was but one character to all its effects, whatever the difference in the objects that occasioned them; that it was ever untinged with any personal taint: and we concluded thence its supernal source. We may now advance another evidence still more conclusive of its spiritual origin, namely, in the fact, that it cannot be realized in the Human Being *quoad* himself. With the fullest consciousness of the possession of this principle, and with the power to realize it in other objects, he has still no power in relation to himself,—that is, to become the object to himself.

Now, as the condition of Harmony, so far as we can know it through its effect, is that of *impletion*, where nothing can be added or taken away, it is evident that such a condition can never be realized by the mind in itself. And yet the desire to this end is as evidently implied in that incessant, yet unsatisfying activity, which, under all circumstances, is an imperative, universal law of our nature.

It might seem needless to enlarge on what must be generally felt as an obvious truth; still, it may not be amiss to offer a few remarks, by way of bringing it, though a truism, more distinctly before us. In all ages the majority of mankind have been more or less compelled to some kind of exertion for their mere subsistence. Like all compulsion, this has no doubt been considered a hardship. Yet we never find, when by their own industry, or any fortunate circumstance, they have been relieved from this exigency, that any one individual has been contented with doing nothing. Some, indeed, before their liberation, have conceived of idleness as a kind of synonyme with happiness; but a short experience has never failed to prove it no less remote from that desirable state. The most offensive employments, for the want of a better, have often been resumed, to relieve the mind from the intolerable load of *nothing*,—the heaviest of all weights,—as it needs must be to an immortal spirit: for the mind cannot stop, except it be in a mad-house; there, indeed, it may rest, or rather stagnate, on one thought,—its



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little circle, perhaps of misery. From the very moment of consciousness, the active Principle begins to busy itself with the things about it: it shows itself in the infant, stretching its little hands towards the candle; in the schoolboy, filling up, if alone, his play-hour with the mimic toils of after age; and so on, through every stage and condition of life; from the wealthy spend-thrift, begging himself at the gaming-table for employment, to the poor prisoner in the Bastile, who, for the want of something to occupy his thoughts, overcame the antipathy of his nature, and found his companion in a spider. Nay, were there need, we might draw out the catalogue till it darkened with suicide. But enough has been said to show, that, aside from guilt, a more terrible fiend has hardly been imagined than the little word Nothing, when embodied and realized as the master of the mind. And well for the world that it is so; since to this wise law of our nature, to say nothing of conveniences, we owe the endless sources of innocent enjoyment with which the industry and ingenuity of man have supplied us.

But the wisdom of the law in question is not merely that it is a preventive to the mind preying on itself; we see in it a higher purpose,—no less than what involves the developement of the human being; and, if we look to its final bearing, it is of the deepest import. It might seem at first a paradox, that, the natural condition of the mind being averse to inactivity, it should still have so strong a desire for rest; but a little reflection will show that this involves no real contradiction. The mind only mistakes the *name* of its object, neither rest nor action being its real aim; for in a state of rest it desires action, and in a state of action, rest. Now all action supposes a purpose, which purpose can consist of but one of two things; either the attainment of some immediate object as its completion, or the causing of one or more future acts, that shall follow as a consequence. But whether the action terminates in an immediate object, or serves as the procreating cause of an indefinite series of acts, it must have some ultimate object in which it ends,—or is to end. Even supposing such a series of acts to be continued through a whole life, and yet remain incomplete, it would not alter the case. It is well known that many such series have employed the minds of mathematicians and astronomers to their last hour; nay, that those acts have been taken up by others, and continued through successive generations: still, whether the point be arrived at or no, there must have been an end in contemplation. Now no one can believe that, in similar cases, any man would voluntarily devote all his days to the adding link after link to an endless chain, for the mere pleasure of labor. It is true he may be aware of the wholesomeness of such labor as one of the means of cheerfulness; but, if he have no further aim, his being aware of this result makes an equable flow of spirits a positive



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object. Without *hope*, uncompelled labor is an impossibility; and hope implies an object. Nor would the veriest idler, who passes a whole day in whittling a stick, if he could be brought to look into himself, deny it. So far from having no object, he would and must acknowledge that he was in fact hoping to relieve himself of an oppressive portion of time by whittling away its minutes and hours. Here we have an extreme instance of that which constitutes the real business of life, from the most idle to the most industrious; namely, to attain to a *satisfying state*.

But no one will assert that such a state was ever a consequence of the attainment of any object, however exalted. And why? Because the motive of action is left behind, and we have nothing before us.

Something to desire, something to look forward to, we *must* have, or we perish,—even of suicidal rest. If we find it not here in the world about us, it must be sought for in another; to which, as we conceive, that secret ruler of the soul, the inscrutable, ever-present spirit of Harmony, for ever points. Nor is it essential that the thought of harmony should even cross the mind; for a want may be felt without any distinct consciousness of the form of that which is desired. And, for the most part, it is only in this negative way that its influence is acknowledged. But this is sufficient to account for the universal longing, whether definite or indefinite, and the consequent universal disappointment.

We have said that man cannot to himself become the object of Harmony,—that is, find its proper correlative in himself; and we have seen that, in his present state, the position is true. How is it, then, in the world of spirit? Who can answer? And yet, perhaps,—if without irreverence we might hazard the conjecture,—as a finite creature, having no centre in himself on which to revolve, may it not be that his true correlative will there be revealed (if, indeed, it be not before) to the disembodied man, in the Being that made him? And may it not also follow, that the Principle we speak of will cease to be potential, and flow out, as it were, and harmonize with the eternal form of Hope,—even that Hope whose living end is in the unapproachable Infinite?

Let us suppose this form of hope to be taken away from an immortal being who has no self-satisfying power within him, what would be his condition? A conscious, interminable vacuum, were such a thing possible, would but faintly image it. Hope, then, though in its nature unrealizable, is not a mere *notion*; for so long as it continues hope, it is to the mind an object and an object *to be* realized; so, where its form is eternal, it cannot but be to it an ever-during object. Hence we may conceive of a never-ending approximation to what can never be realized.

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From this it would appear, that, while we cannot to ourselves become the object of Harmony, it is nevertheless certain, from the universal desire so to realize it, that we cannot suppress the continual impulse of this paramount Principle; which, therefore, as it seems to us, must have a double purpose; first, by its outward manifestation, which we all recognize, to confirm its reality, and secondly, to convince the mind that its true object is not merely out of, but above, itself,—and only to be found in the Infinite Creator.

Art.

In treating on Art, which, in its highest sense, and more especially in relation to Painting and Sculpture, is the subject proposed for our present examination, the first question that occurs is, In what consists its peculiar character? or rather, What are the characteristics that distinguish it from Nature, which it professes to imitate?

To this we reply, that Art is characterized,—

First, by Originality.

Secondly, by what we shall call Human or Poetic Truth; which is the verifying principle by which we recognize the first.

Thirdly, by Invention; the product of the Imagination, as grounded on the first, and verified by the second. And,

Fourthly, by Unity, the synthesis of all.

As the first step to the right understanding of any discourse is a clear apprehension of the terms used, we add, that by Originality we mean any thing (admitted by the mind as *true*) which is peculiar to the Author, and which distinguishes his production from that of all others; by Human or Poetic Truth, that which may be said to exist exclusively in and for the mind, and as contradistinguished from the truth of things in the natural or external world; by Invention, any unpractised mode of presenting a subject, whether by the combination of entire objects already known, or by the union and modification of known but fragmentary parts into new and consistent forms; and, lastly, by Unity, such an agreement and interdependence of all the parts, as shall constitute a whole.

It will be our attempt to show, that, by the presence or absence of any one of these characteristics, we shall be able to affirm or deny in respect to the pretension of any object as a work of Art; and also that we shall find within ourselves the corresponding law, or by whatever word we choose to designate it, by which each will be recognized; that is, in the degree proportioned to the development, or active force, of the law so judging.



Supposing the reader to have gone along with us in what has been said of the *Universal*, in our Preliminary Discourse, and as assenting to the position, that any faculty, law, or principle, which can be shown to be *essential* to *any one* mind, must necessarily be also predicated of every other sound mind, even where the particular faculty or law is so feebly developed as apparently to amount to its absence, in which case it is inferred potentially,—we shall now assume, on the same grounds, that the originating *cause*, notwithstanding its apparent absence in the majority of men, is an essential reality in the condition of the Human Being; its potential existence in all being of necessity affirmed from its existence in one.

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Assuming, then, its reality,—or rather leaving it to be evidenced from its known effects,—we proceed to inquire *in what* consists this originating power.

And, first, as to its most simple form. If it be true, (as we hope to set forth more at large in a future discourse,) that no two minds were ever found to be identical, there must then in every individual mind be *something* which is not in any other. And, if this unknown something is also found to give its peculiar hue, so to speak, to every impression from outward objects, it seems but a natural inference, that, whatever it be, it *must* possess a pervading force over the entire mind,—at least, in relation to what is external. But, though this may truly be affirmed of man generally, from its evidence in any one person, we shall be far from the fact, should we therefore affirm, that, otherwise than potentially, the power of outwardly manifesting it is also universal. We know that it is not,—and our daily experience proves that the power of reproducing or giving out the individualized impressions is widely different in different men. With some it is so feeble as apparently never to act; and, so far as our subject is concerned, it may practically be said not to exist; of which we have abundant examples in other mental phenomena, where an imperfect activity often renders the existence of some essential faculty a virtual nullity. When it acts in the higher decrees, so as to make another see or feel as the Individual saw or felt,—this, in relation to Art, is what we mean, in its strictest sense, by Originality. He, therefore, who possesses the power of presenting to another the *precise* images or emotions as they existed in himself, presents that which can be found nowhere else, and was first found by and within himself; and, however light or trifling, where these are true as to his own mind, their author is so far an originator.

But let us take an example, and suppose two *portraits*; simple heads, without accessories, that is, with blank backgrounds, such as we often see, where no attempt is made at composition; and both by artists of equal talent, employing the same materials, and conducting their work according to the same technical process. We will also suppose ourselves acquainted with the person represented, with whom to compare them. Who, that has ever made a similar comparison, will expect to find them identical? On the contrary, though in all respects equal, in execution, likeness, &c., we shall still perceive a certain *exclusive something* that will instantly distinguish the one from the other, and both from the original. And yet they shall both seem to us true. But they will be true to us also in a double sense; namely, as to the living original and as to the individuality of the different painters. Where such is the result, both artists must originate, inasmuch as they both outwardly realize the individual image of their distinctive minds.



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Nor can the truth they present be ascribed to the technic process, which we have supposed the same with each; as, on such a supposition, with their equal skill, the result must have been identical. No; by whatever it is that one man's mental impression, or his mode of thought, is made to differ from another's, it is that something, which our imaginary artists have here transferred to their pencil, that makes them different, yet both original.

Now, whether the medium through which the impressions, conceptions, or emotions of the mind are thus externally realized be that of colors, words, or any thing else, this mysterious though certain principle is, as we believe, the true and only source of all originality.

In the power of assimilating what is foreign, or external, to our own particular nature consists the individualizing law, and in the power of reproducing what is thus modified consists the originating cause.

Let us turn now to an opposite example,—to a mere mechanical copy of some natural object, where the marks in question are wholly wanting. Will any one be truly affected by it? We think not; we do not say that he will not praise it,—this he may do from various motives; but his *feeling*—if we may so name the index of the law within—will not be called forth to any spontaneous correspondence with the object before him.

But why talk of feeling, says the pseudo-connoisseur, where we should only, or at least first, bring knowledge? This is the common cant of those who become critics for the sake of distinction. Let the Artist avoid them, if he would not disfranchise himself in the suppression of that uncompromising *test* within him, which is the only sure guide to the truth without.

It is a poor ambition to desire the office of a judge merely for the sake of passing sentence. But such an ambition is not likely to possess a person of true sensibility. There are some, however, in whom there is no deficiency of sensibility, yet who, either from self-distrust, or from some mistaken notion of Art, are easily persuaded to give up a right feeling, in exchange for what they may suppose to be knowledge,—the barren knowledge of faults; as if there could be a human production without them! Nevertheless, there is little to be apprehended from any conventional theory, by one who is forewarned of its mere negative power,—that it can, at best, only suppress feeling; for no one ever was, or ever can be, argued into a real liking for what he has once felt to be false. But, where the feeling is genuine, and not the mere reflex of a popular notion, so far as it goes it must be true. Let no one, therefore, distrust it, to take counsel of his head, when he finds himself standing before a work of Art. Does he feel its truth? is the only question,—if, indeed, the impertinence of the understanding should then propound one; which we think it will not, where the feeling is powerful. To such a one, the characteristic of Art upon which we are now discoursing will force its way with

the power of light; nor will he ever be in danger of mistaking a mechanical copy for a living imitation.

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But we sometimes hear of “faithful transcripts,” nay, of fac-similes. If by these be implied neither more nor less than exists in their originals, they must still, in that case, find their true place in the dead category of Copy. Yet we need not be detained by any inquiry concerning the merits of a fac-simile, since we firmly deny that a fac-simile, in the true sense of the term, is a thing possible.

That an absolute identity between any natural object and its represented image is a thing impossible, will hardly be questioned by any one who thinks, and will give the subject a moment’s reflection; and the difficulty lies in the nature of things, the one being the work of the Creator, and the other of the creature. We shall therefore assume as a fact, the eternal and insuperable difference between Art and Nature. That our pleasure from Art is nevertheless similar, not to say equal, to that which we derive from Nature, is also a fact established by experience; to account for which we are necessarily led to the admission of another fact, namely, that there exists in Art a *peculiar something* which we receive as equivalent to the admitted difference. Now, whether we call this equivalent, individualized truth, or human or poetic truth, it matters not; we know by its *effects*, that some such principle does exist, and that it acts upon us, and in a way corresponding to the operation of that which we call Truth and Life in the natural world. Of the various laws growing out of this principle, which take the name of Rules when applied to Art, we shall have occasion to speak in a future discourse. At present we shall confine ourselves to the inquiry, how far the difference alluded to may be safely allowed in any work professing to be an imitation of Nature.

The fact, that truth may subsist with a very considerable admixture of falsehood, is too well known to require an argument. However reprehensible such an admixture may be in morals, it becomes in Art, from the limited nature of our powers, a matter of necessity.

For the same reason, even the realizing of a thought, or that which is properly and exclusively human, must ever be imperfect. If Truth, then, form but the greater proportion, it is quite as much as we may reasonably look for in a work of Art. But why, it may be asked, where the false predominates, do we still derive pleasure? Simply because of the Truth that remains. If it be further demanded, What is the minimum of truth in order to a pleasurable effect? we reply, So much only as will cause us to feel that the truth *exists*. It is this feeling alone that determines, not only the true, but the degrees of truth, and consequently the degrees of pleasure.



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Where no such feeling is awakened, and supposing no deficiency in the recipient, he may safely, from its absence, pronounce the work false; nor could any ingenious theory of the understanding convince him to the contrary. He may, indeed, as some are wont to do, make a random guess, and *call* the work true; but he can never so *feel* it by any effort of reasoning. But may not men differ as to their impressions of truth? Certainly as to the degrees of it, and in this according to their sensibility, in which we know that men are not equal. By sensibility here we mean the power or capacity of receiving impressions. All men, indeed, with equal organs, may be said in a certain sense to see alike. But will the same natural object, conveyed through these organs, leave the same impression? The fact is otherwise. What, then, causes the difference, if it be not (as before observed) a peculiar something in the individual mind, that modifies the image? If so, there must of necessity be in every true work of Art—if we may venture the expression—another, or distinctive, truth. To recognize this, therefore,—as we have elsewhere endeavoured to show,—supposes in the recipient something akin to it. And, though it be in reality but a *sign* of life, it is still a sign of which we no sooner receive the impress, than, by a law of our mind, we feel it to be acting upon our thoughts and sympathies, without our knowing how or wherefore. Admitting, therefore, the corresponding instinct, or whatever else it may be called, to vary in men,—which there is no reason to doubt,—the solution of their unequal impression appears at once. Hence it would be no extravagant metaphor, should we affirm that some persons see more with their minds than others with their eyes. Nay, it must be obvious to all who are conversant with Art, that much, if not the greater part, in its higher branches is especially addressed to this mental vision. And it is very certain, if there were no truth beyond the reach of the senses, that little would remain to us of what we now consider our highest and most refined pleasure.

But it must not be inferred that originality consists in any contradiction to Nature; for, were this allowed and carried out, it would bring us to the conclusion, that, the greater the contradiction, the higher the Art. We insist only on the modification of the natural by the personal; for Nature is, and ever must be, at least the sensuous ground of all Art: and where the outward and inward are so united that we cannot separate them, there shall we find the perfection of Art. So complete a union has, perhaps, never been accomplished, and *may* be impossible; it is certain, however, that no approach to excellence can ever be made, if the *idea* of such a union be not constantly looked to by the artist as his ultimate aim. Nor can the idea be admitted without supposing a *third* as the product of the two,—which we call Art; between which and Nature, in its strictest sense, there must ever be a difference; indeed, a *difference with resemblance* is that which constitutes its essential condition.

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It has doubtless been observed, that, in this inquiry concerning the nature and operation of the first characteristic, the presence of the second, or verifying principle, has been all along implied; nor could it be otherwise, because of their mutual dependence. Still more will its active agency be supposed in our examination of the third, namely, Invention. But before we proceed to that, the paramount index of the highest art, it may not be amiss to obtain, if possible, some distinct apprehension of what we have termed Poetic Truth; to which, it will be remembered, was also prefixed the epithet Human, our object therein being to prepare the mind, by a single word, for its peculiar sphere; and we think it applicable also for a more important reason, namely, that this kind of Truth is the *true ground of the poetical*,—for in what consists the poetry of the natural world, if not in the sentiment and reacting life it receives from the human fancy and affections? And, until it can be shown that sentiment and fancy are also shared by the brute creation, this seeming effluence from the beautiful in nature must rightfully revert to man. What, for instance, can we suppose to be the effect of the purple haze of a summer sunset on the cows and sheep, or even on the more delicate inhabitants of the air? From what we know of their habits, we cannot suppose more than the mere physical enjoyment of its genial temperature. But how is it with the poet, whom we shall suppose an object in the same scene, stretched on the same bank with the ruminating cattle, and basking in the same light that flickers from the skimming birds. Does he feel nothing more than the genial warmth? Ask him, and he perhaps will say,—“This is my soul’s hour; this purpled air the heart’s atmosphere, melting by its breath the sealed fountains of love, which the cold commonplace of the world had frozen: I feel them gushing forth on every thing around me; and how worthy of love now appear to me these innocent animals, nay, these whispering leaves, that seem to kiss the passing air, and blush the while at their own fondness! Surely they are happy, and grateful too that they are so; for hark! how the little birds send up their song of praise! and see how the waving trees and waving grass, in mute accordance, keep time with the hymn!”

This is but one of the thousand forms in which the human spirit is wont to effuse itself on the things without, making to the mind a new and fairer world,—even the shadowing of that which its immortal craving will sometimes dream of in the unknown future. Nay, there is scarcely an object so familiar or humble, that its magical touch cannot invest it with some poetic charm. Let us take an extreme instance,—a pig in his sty. The painter, Morland, was able to convert even this disgusting object into a source of pleasure,—and a pleasure as real as any that is known to the palate.

Leaving this to have the weight it may be found to deserve, we turn to the original question; namely, What do we mean by Human or Poetic Truth?



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When, in respect to certain objects, the effects are found to be uniformly of the same kind, not only upon ourselves, but also upon others, we may reasonably infer that the efficient cause is of one nature, and that its uniformity is a necessary result. And, when we also find that these effects, though differing in degree, are yet uniform in their character, while they seem to proceed from objects which in themselves are indefinitely variant, both in kind and degree, we are still more forcibly drawn to the conclusion, that the *cause* is not only *one*, but not inherent in the object.[2] The question now arises, What, then, is that which seems to us so like an *alter et idem*,—which appears to act upon, and is recognized by us, through an animal, a bird, a tree, and a thousand different, nay, opposing objects, in the same way, and to the same end? The inference follows of necessity, that the mysterious cause must be in some general law, which is absolute and *imperative* in relation to every such object under certain conditions. And we receive the solution as true,—because we cannot help it. The reality, then, of such a law becomes a fixture in the mind.

But we do not stop here: we would know something concerning the conditions supposed. And in order to this, we go back to the effect. And the answer is returned in the form of a question,—May it not be something *from ourselves*, which is reflected back by the object,—something with which, as it were, we imbue the object, making it correspond to a *reality* within us? Now we recognize the reality within; we recognize it also in the object,—and the affirming light flashes upon us, not in the form of *deduction*, but of inherent Truth, which we cannot get rid of; and we *call* it Truth,—for it will take no other name.

It now remains to discover, so to speak, its location. In what part, then, of man may this self-evidenced, yet elusive, Truth or power be said to reside? It cannot be in the senses; for the senses can impart no more than they receive. Is it, then, in the mind? Here we are compelled to ask, What is understood by the mind? Do we mean the understanding? We can trace no relation between the Truth we would class and the reflective faculties. Or in the moral principle? Surely not; for we can predicate neither good nor evil by the Truth in question. Finally, do we find it identified with the truth of the Spirit? But what is the truth of the Spirit but the Spirit itself,—the conscious *I*? which is never even thought of in connection with it. In what form, then, shall we recognize it? In its own,—the form of Life,—the life of the Human Being; that self-projecting, realizing power, which is ever present, ever acting and giving judgment on the instant on all things corresponding with its inscrutable self. We now assign it a distinctive epithet, and call it Human.

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It is a common saying, that there is more in a name than we are apt to imagine. And the saying is not without reason; for when the name happens to be the true one, being proved in its application, it becomes no unimportant indicator as to the particular offices for which the thing named was designed. So we find it with respect to the Truth of which we speak; its distinctive epithet marking out to us, as its sphere of action, the mysterious intercourse between man and man; whether the medium consist in words or colors, in thought or form, or in any thing else on which the human agent may impress, be it in a sign only, his own marvellous life. As to the process or *modus operandi*, it were a vain endeavour to seek it out: that divine secret must ever to man be an humbling darkness. It is enough for him to know that there is that within him which is ever answering to that without, as life to life,—which must be life, and which must be true.

We proceed now to the third characteristic. It has already been stated, in the general definition, what we would be understood to mean by the term Invention, in its particular relation to Art; namely, any unpractised mode of presenting a subject, whether by the combination of forms already known, or by the union and modification of known but fragmentary parts into a new and consistent whole: in both cases tested by the two preceding characteristics.

We shall consider first that division of the subject which stands first in order,—the Invention which consists in the new combination of known forms. This may be said to be governed by its exclusive relation either to *what is*, or *has been*, or, when limited by the *probable*, to what strictly may be. It may therefore be distinguished by the term Natural. But though we so name it, inasmuch as all its forms have their prototypes in the Actual, it must still be remembered that these existing forms do substantially constitute no more than mere *parts* to be combined into a *whole*, for which Nature has provided no original. For examples in this, the most comprehensive class, we need not refer to any particular school; they are to be found in all and in every gallery: from the histories of Raffaele, the landscapes of Claude and Poussin and others, to the familiar scenes of Jan Steen, Ostade, and Brower. In each of these an adherence to the actual, if not strictly observed, is at least supposed in all its parts; not so in the whole, as that relates to the probable; by which we mean such a result as *would be* true, were the same combination to occur in nature. Nor must we be understood to mean, by adherence to the actual, that one part is to be taken for an exact portrait; we mean only such an imitation as precludes an intentional deviation from already existing and known forms.

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It must be very obvious, that, in classing together any of the productions of the artists above named, it cannot be intended to reduce them to a level; such an attempt (did our argument require it) must instantly revolt the common sense and feeling of every one at all acquainted with Art. And therefore, perhaps, it may be thought that their striking difference, both in kind and degree, might justly call for some further division. But admitting, as all must, a wide, nay, almost impassable, interval between the familiar subjects of the lower Dutch and Flemish painters, and the higher intellectual works of the great Italian masters, we see no reason why they may not be left to draw their own line of demarcation as to their respective provinces, even as is every day done by actual objects; which are all equally natural, though widely differenced as well in kind as in quality. It is no degradation to the greatest genius to say of him and of the most unlettered boor, that they are both men.

Besides, as a more minute division would be wholly irrelevant to the present purpose, we shall defer the examination of their individual differences to another occasion. In order, however, more distinctly to exhibit their common ground of Invention, we will briefly examine a picture by Ostade, and then compare it with one by Raffaele, than whom no two artists could well be imagined having less in common.

The interior of a Dutch cottage forms the scene of Ostade's work, presenting something between a kitchen and a stable. Its principal object is the carcass of a hog, newly washed and hung up to dry; subordinate to which is a woman nursing an infant; the accessories, various garments, pots, kettles, and other culinary utensils.

The bare enumeration of these coarse materials would naturally predispose the mind of one, unacquainted with the Dutch school, to expect any thing but pleasure; indifference, not to say disgust, would seem to be the only possible impression from a picture composed of such ingredients. And such, indeed, would be their effect under the hand of any but a real Artist. Let us look into the picture and follow Ostade's *mind*, as it leaves its impress on the several objects. Observe how he spreads his principal light, from the suspended carcass to the surrounding objects, moulding it, so to speak, into agreeable shapes, here by extending it to a bit of drapery, there to an earthen pot; then connecting it, by the flash from a brass kettle, with his second light, the woman and child; and again turning the eye into the dark recesses through a labyrinth of broken chairs, old baskets, roosting fowls, and bits of straw, till a glimpse of sunshine, from a half-open window, gleams on the eye, as it were, like an echo, and sending it back to the principal object, which now seems to act on the mind as the luminous source of all these diverging lights. But the magical whole is not yet completed; the mystery of color has been called

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in to the aid of light, and so subtly blends that we can hardly separate them; at least, until their united effect has first been felt, and after we have begun the process of cold analysis. Yet even then we cannot long proceed before we find the charm returning; as we pass from the blaze of light on the carcass, where all the tints of the prism seem to be faintly subdued, we are met on its borders by the dark harslet, glowing like rubies; then we repose awhile on the white cap and kerchief of the nursing mother; then we are roused again by the flickering strife of the antagonist colors on a blue jacket and red petticoat; then the strife is softened by the low yellow of a straw-bottomed chair; and thus with alternating excitement and repose do we travel through the picture, till the scientific explorer loses the analyst in the unresisting passiveness of a poetic dream. Now all this will no doubt appear to many, if not absurd, at least exaggerated: but not so to those who have ever felt the sorcery of color. They, we are sure, will be the last to question the character of the feeling because of the ingredients which worked the spell, and, if true to themselves, they must call it poetry. Nor will they consider it any disparagement to the all-accomplished Raffaele to say of Ostade that he also was an Artist.

We turn now to a work of the great Italian,—the Death of Ananias. The scene is laid in a plain apartment, which is wholly devoid of ornament, as became the hall of audience of the primitive Christians. The Apostles (then eleven in number) have assembled to transact the temporal business of the Church, and are standing together on a slightly elevated platform, about which, in various attitudes, some standing, others kneeling, is gathered a promiscuous assemblage of their new converts, male and female. This quiet assembly (for we still feel its quietness in the midst of the awful judgment) is suddenly roused by the sudden fall of one of their brethren; some of them turn and see him struggling in the agonies of death. A moment before he was in the vigor of life,—as his muscular limbs still bear evidence; but he had uttered a falsehood, and an instant after his frame is convulsed from head to foot. Nor do we doubt for a moment as to the awful cause: it is almost expressed in voice by those nearest to him, and, though varied by their different temperaments, by terror, astonishment, and submissive faith, this voice has yet but one meaning,—“Ananias has lied to the Holy Ghost.” The terrible words, as if audible to the mind, now direct us to him who pronounced his doom, and the singly-raised finger of the Apostle marks him the judge; yet not of himself,—for neither his attitude, air, nor expression has any thing in unison with the impetuous Peter,—he is now the simple, passive, yet awful instrument of the Almighty: while another on the right, with equal calmness, though with more severity, by his elevated arm, as beckoning to judgment,



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anticipates the fate of the entering Sapphira. Yet all is not done; lest a question remain, the Apostle on the left confirms the judgment. No one can mistake what passes within him; like one transfixed in adoration, his uplifted eyes seem to ray out his soul, as if in recognition of the divine tribunal. But the overpowering thought of Omnipotence is now tempered by the human sympathy of his companion, whose open hands, connecting the past with the present, seem almost to articulate, "Alas, my brother!" By this exquisite turn, we are next brought to John, the gentle almoner of the Church, who is dealing out their portions to the needy brethren. And here, as most remote from the judged Ananias, whose suffering seems not yet to have reached it, we find a spot of repose,—not to pass by, but to linger upon, till we feel its quiet influence diffusing itself over the whole mind; nay, till, connecting it with the beloved Disciple, we find it leading us back through the exciting scene, modifying even our deepest emotions with a kindred tranquillity.

This is Invention; we have not moved a step through the picture but at the will of the Artist. He invented the chain which we have followed, link by link, through every emotion, assimilating many into one; and this is the secret by which he prepared us, without exciting horror, to contemplate the struggle of mortal agony.

This too is Art; and the highest art, when thus the awful power, without losing its character, is tempered, as it were, to our mysterious desires. In the work of Ostade, we see the same inventive power, no less effective, though acting through the medium of the humblest materials.

We have now exhibited two pictures, and by two painters who may be said to stand at opposite poles. And yet, widely apart as are their apparent stations, they are nevertheless tenants of the same ground, namely, actual nature; the only difference being, that one is the sovereign of the purely physical, the other of the moral and intellectual, while their common medium is the catholic ground of the imagination.

We do not fear either skeptical demur or direct contradiction, when we assert that the imagination is as much the medium of the homely Ostade, as of the refined Raffaele. For what is that, which has just wrapped us as in a spell when we entered his humble cottage,—which, as we wandered through it, invested the coarsest object with a strange charm? Was it the *truth* of these objects that we there acknowledged? In part, certainly, but not simply the truth that belongs to their originals; it was the truth of his own individual mind superadded to that of nature, nay, clothed upon besides by his imagination, imbuing it with all the poetic hues which float in the opposite regions of night and day, and which only a poet can mingle and make visible in one pervading atmosphere. To all this our own minds, our own imaginations, respond, and we pronounce it true to both. We have no other rule, and well may the artists of every age and country thank the great Lawgiver that there *is no other*. The despised *feeling* which

the schools have scouted is yet the mother of that science of which they vainly boast. But of this we may have more to say in another place.



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We shall now ascend from the *probable* to the *possible*, to that branch of Invention whose proper office is from the known but fragmentary to realize the unknown; in other words, to embody the possible, having its sphere of action in the world of Ideas. To this class, therefore, may properly be assigned the term *Ideal*.

And here, as being its most important scene, it will be necessary to take a more particular view of the verifying principle, the agent, so to speak, that gives reality to the inward, when outwardly manifested.

Now, whether we call this Human or Poetic Truth, or *inward life*, it matters not; we know by *its effects*, (as we have already said, and we now repeat,) that some such principle does exist, and that it acts upon us, and in a way analogous to the operation of that which we call truth and life in the world about us. And that the cause of this analogy is a real affinity between the two powers seems to us confirmed, not only *positively* by this acknowledged fact, but also *negatively* by the absence of the effect above mentioned in all those productions of the mind which we pronounce unnatural. It is therefore in effect, or *quoad* ourselves, both truth and life, addressed, if we may use the expression, to that inscrutable *instinct* of the imagination which conducts us to the knowledge of all invisible realities.

A distinct apprehension of the reality and of the office of this important principle, we cannot but think, will enable us to ascertain with some degree of precision, at least so far as relates to art, the true limits of the Possible,—the sphere, as premised, of Ideal Invention.

As to what some have called our *creative* powers, we take it for granted that no correct thinker has ever applied such expressions literally. Strictly speaking, we can *make* nothing: we can only construct. But how vast a theatre is here laid open to the constructive powers of the finite creature; where the physical eye is permitted to travel for millions and millions of miles, while that of the mind may, swifter than light, follow out the journey, from star to star, till it falls back on itself with the humbling conviction that the measureless journey is then but begun! It is needless to dwell on the immeasurable mass of materials which a world like this may supply to the Artist.

The very thought of its vastness darkens into wonder. Yet how much deeper the wonder, when the created mind looks into itself, and contemplates the power of impressing its thoughts on all things visible; nay, of giving the likeness of life to things inanimate; and, still more marvellous, by the mere combination of words or colors, of evolving into shape its own Idea, till some unknown form, having no type in the actual, is made to seem to us an organized being. When such is the result of any unknown combination, then it is that we achieve the Possible. And here the Realizing Principle may strictly be said to prove itself.



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That such an effect should follow a cause which we know to be purely imaginary, supposes, as we have said, something in ourselves which holds, of necessity, a predetermined relation to every object either outwardly existing or projected from the mind, which we thus recognize as true. If so, then the Possible and the Ideal are convertible terms; having their existence, *ab initio*, in the nature of the mind. The soundness of this inference is also supported negatively, as just observed, by the opposite result, as in the case of those fantastic combinations, which we sometimes meet with both in Poetry and Painting, and which we do not hesitate to pronounce unnatural, that is, false.

And here we would not be understood as implying the preexistence of all possible forms, as so many *patterns*, but only of that constructive Power which imparts its own Truth to the unseen *real*, and, under certain conditions, reflects the image or semblance of its truth on all things imagined; and which must be assumed in order to account for the phenomena presented in the frequent coincident effect between the real and the feigned. Nor does the absence of consciousness in particular individuals, as to this Power in themselves, fairly affect its universality, at least potentially: since by the same rule there would be equal ground for denying the existence of any faculty of the mind which is of slow or gradual developement; all that we may reasonably infer in such cases is, that the whole mind is not yet revealed to itself. In some of the greatest artists, the inventive powers have been of late developement; as in Claude, and the sculptor Falconet. And can any one believe that, while the latter was hewing his master's marble, and the former making pastry, either of them was conscious of the sublime Ideas which afterwards took form for the admiration of the world? When Raffaele, then a youth, was selected to execute the noble works which now live on the walls of the Vatican, "he had done little or nothing," says Reynolds, "to justify so high a trust." Nor could he have been certain, from what he knew of himself, that he was equal to the task. He could only hope to succeed; and his hope was no doubt founded on his experience of the progressive developement of his mind in former efforts; rationally concluding, that the originally seeming blank from which had arisen so many admirable forms was still teeming with others, that only wanted the occasion, or excitement, to come forth at his bidding.

To return to that which, as the interpreting medium of his thoughts and conceptions, connects the artist with his fellow-men, we remark, that only on the ground of some self-realizing power, like what we have termed Poetic Truth, could what we call the Ideal ever be intelligible.



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That some such power is inherent and fundamental in our nature, though differenced in individuals by more or less activity, seems more especially confirmed in this latter branch of the subject, where the phenomena presented are exclusively of the Possible. Indeed, we cannot conceive how without it there could ever be such a thing as true Art; for what might be received as such in one age might also be overruled in the next: as we know to be the case with most things depending on opinion. But, happily for Art, if once established on this immutable base, there it must rest: and rest unchanged, amidst the endless fluctuations of manners, habits, and opinions; for its truth of a thousand years is as the truth of yesterday. Hence the beings described by Homer, Shakspeare, and Milton are as true to us now, as the recent characters of Scott. Nor is it the least characteristic of this important Truth, that the only thing needed for its full reception is simply its presence,—being its own evidence.

How otherwise could such a being as Caliban ever be true to us? We have never seen his race; nay, we knew not that such a creature *could* exist, until he started upon us from the mind of Shakspeare. Yet who ever stopped to ask if he were a real being? His existence to the mind is instantly felt;—not as a matter of faith, but of fact, and a fact, too, which the imagination cannot get rid of if it would, but which must ever remain there, verifying itself, from the first to the last moment of consciousness. From whatever point we view this singular creature, his reality is felt. His very language, his habits, his feelings, whenever they recur to us, are all issues from a living thing, acting upon us, nay, forcing the mind, in some instances, even to speculate on his nature, till it finds itself classing him in the chain of being as the intermediate link between man and the brute. And this we do, not by an ingenious effort, but almost by involuntary induction; for we perceive speech and intellect, and yet without a soul. What but an intellectual brute could have uttered the imprecations of Caliban? They would not be natural in man, whether savage or civilized. Hear him, in his wrath against Prospero and Miranda:

—
“A wicked dew as e’er my mother brushed
With raven’s feather from unwholesome fen,
Light on you both!”

The wild malignity of this curse, fierce as it is, yet wants the moral venom, the devilish leaven, of a consenting spirit: it is all but human.

To this we may add a similar example, from our own art, in the Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Who can look at this exquisite little creature, seated on its toadstool cushion, and not acknowledge its prerogative of life,—that mysterious influence which in spite of the stubborn understanding masters the mind,—sending it back to days long past, when care was but a dream, and its most serious business a childish frolic?

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But we no longer think of childhood as the past, still less as an abstraction; we see it embodied before us, in all its mirth and fun and glee; and the grave man becomes again a child, to feel as a child, and to follow the little enchanter through all his wiles and never-ending labyrinth of pranks. What can be real, if that is not which so takes us out of our present selves, that the weight of years falls from us as a garment,—that the freshness of life seems to begin anew, and the heart and the fancy, resuming their first joyous consciousness, to launch again into this moving world, as on a sunny sea, whose pliant waves yield to the touch, yet, sparkling and buoyant, carry them onward in their merry gambols? Where all the purposes of reality are answered, if there be no philosophy in admitting, we see no wisdom in disputing it.

Of the immutable nature of this peculiar Truth, we have a like instance in the Farnese Hercules; the work of the Grecian sculptor Glycon,—we had almost said his immortal offspring. Since the time of its birth, cities and empires, even whole nations, have disappeared, giving place to others, more or less barbarous or civilized; yet these are as nothing to the countless revolutions which have marked the interval in the manners, habits, and opinions of men. Is it reasonable, then, to suppose that any thing not immutable in its nature could possibly have withstood such continual fluctuation? But how have all these changes affected this *visible image of Truth*? In no wise; not a jot; and because what is *true* is independent of opinion: it is the same to us now as it was to the men of the dust of antiquity. The unlearned spectator of the present day may not, indeed, see in it the Demigod of Greece; but he can never mistake it for a mere exaggeration of the human form; though of mortal mould, he cannot doubt its possession of more than mortal powers; he feels its *essential life*, for he feels before it as in the stirring presence of a superior being.

Perhaps the attempt to give form and substance to a pure Idea was never so perfectly accomplished as in this wonderful figure. Who has ever seen the ocean in repose, in its awful sleep, that smooths it like glass, yet cannot level its unfathomed swell? So seems to us the repose of this tremendous personification of strength: the laboring eye heaves on its slumbering sea of muscles, and trembles like a skiff as it passes over them: but the silent intimations of the spirit beneath at length become audible; the startled imagination hears it in its rage, sees it in motion, and sees its resistless might in the passive wrecks that follow the uproar. And this from a piece of marble, cold, immovable, lifeless! Surely there is that in man, which the senses cannot reach, nor the plumb of the understanding sound.



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Let us turn now to the Apollo called Belvedere. In this supernal being, the human form seems to have been assumed as if to make visible the harmonious confluence of the pure ideas of grace, fleetness, and majesty; nor do we think it too fanciful to add celestial splendor; for such, in effect, are the thoughts which crowd, or rather rush, into the mind on first beholding it. Who that saw it in what may be called the place of its glory, the Gallery of Napoleon, ever thought of it as a man, much less as a statue; but did not feel rather as if the vision before him were of another world,—of one who had just lighted on the earth, and with a step so ethereal, that the next instant he would vault into the air? If I may be permitted to recall the impression which it made on myself, I know not that I could better describe it than as a sudden intellectual flash, filling the whole mind with light,—and light in motion. It seemed to the mind what the first sight of the sun is to the senses, as it emerges from the ocean; when from a point of light the whole orb at once appears to bound from the waters, and to dart its rays, as by a visible explosion, through the profound of space. But, as the deified Sun, how completely is the conception verified in the thoughts that follow the effulgent original and its marble counterpart! Perennial youth, perennial brightness, follow them both. Who can imagine the old age of the sun? As soon may we think of an old Apollo. Now all this may be ascribed to the imagination of the beholder. Granted,—yet will it not thus be explained away. For that is the very faculty addressed by every work of Genius,—whose nature is *suggestive*; and only when it excites to or awakens congenial thoughts and emotions, filling the imagination with corresponding images, does it attain its proper end. The false and the commonplace can never do this.

It were easy to multiply similar examples; the bare mention of a single name in modern art might conjure up a host,—the name of Michael Angelo, the mighty sovereign of the Ideal, than whom no one ever trod so near, yet so securely, the dizzy brink of the Impossible.

Of Unity, the fourth and last characteristic, we shall say but little; for we know in truth little or nothing of the law which governs it: indeed, all that we know but amounts to this,—that, wherever existing, it presents to the mind the Idea of a Whole,—which is itself a mystery. For what answer can we give to the question, What is a Whole? If we reply, That which has neither more nor less than it ought to have, we do not advance a step towards a definite notion; for the *rule* (if there be one) is yet undiscovered, by which to measure either the too much or the too little. Nevertheless, incomprehensible as it certainly is, it is what the mind will not dispense with in a work of Art; nay, it will not concede even a right to the name to any production where this is wanting. Nor is it a sound objection, that we



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also receive pleasure from many things which seem to us fragmentary; for instance, from actual views in Nature,—as we shall hope to show in another place. It is sufficient at present, that, in relation to Art, the law of the imagination demands a whole; in order to which not a single part must be felt to be wanting; all must be there, however imperfectly rendered; nay, such is the craving of this active faculty, that, be they but mere hints, it will often fill them out to the desired end; the only condition being, that the part hinted be founded in truth. It is well known to artists, that a sketch, consisting of little more than hints, will frequently produce the desired effect, and by the same means,—the hints being true so far as expressed, and without an hiatus. But let the artist attempt to *finish* his sketch, that is, to fill out the parts, and suppose him deficient in the necessary skill, the consequence must be, that the true hints, becoming transformed to elaborate falsehoods, will be all at variance, while the revolted imagination turns away with disgust. Nor is this a thing of rare occurrence: indeed, he is a most fortunate artist, who has never had to deplore a well-hinted whole thus reduced to fragments.

These are facts; from which we may learn, that with less than a whole, either already wrought, or so indicated that the excited imagination can of itself complete it, no genuine response will ever be given to any production of man. And we learn from it also this twofold truth; first, that the Idea of a Whole contains in itself a preexisting law; and, secondly, that Art, the peculiar product of the Imagination, is one of its true and predetermined ends.

As to its practical application, it were fruitless to speculate. It applies itself, even as truth, both in action and reaction, verifying itself: and our minds submit, as if it had said, There is nothing wanting; so, in the converse, its dictum is absolute when it announces a deficiency.

To return to the objection, that we often receive pleasure from many things in Nature which seem to us fragmentary, we observe, that nothing in Nature can be fragmentary, except in the seeming, and then, too, to the understanding only,—to the feelings never; for a grain of sand, no less than a planet, being an essential part of that mighty whole which we call the universe, cannot be separated from the Idea of the world without a positive act of the reflective faculties, an act of volition; but until then even a grain of sand cannot cease to imply it. To the mere understanding, indeed, even the greatest extent of actual objects which the finite creature can possibly imagine must ever fall short of the vast works of the Creator. Yet we nevertheless can, and do, apprehend the existence of the universe. Now we would ask here, whether the influence of a *real*,—and the epithet here is not unimportant,—whether the influence of a real Whole is at no time felt without an act of consciousness,



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that is, without thinking of a whole. Is this impossible? Is it altogether out of experience? We have already shown (as we think) that no *unmodified copy* of actual objects, whether single or multifarious, ever satisfies the imagination,—which imperatively demands a something more, or at least different. And yet we often find that the very objects from which these copies are made *do* satisfy us. How and why is this? A question more easily put than answered. We may suggest, however, what appears to us a clue, that in abler hands may possibly lead to its solution; namely, the fact, that, among the innumerable emotions of a pleasurable kind derived from the actual, there is not one, perhaps, which is strictly confined to the objects before us, and which we do not, either directly or indirectly, refer to something beyond and not present. Now have we at all times a distinct consciousness of the things referred to? Are they not rather more often vague, and only indicated in some *undefined* feeling? Nay, is its source more intelligible where the feeling is more definite, when taking the form of a sense of harmony, as from something that diffuses, yet deepens, unbroken in its progress through endless variations, the melody as it were of the pleasurable object? Who has never felt, under certain circumstances, an expansion of the heart, an elevation of mind, nay, a striving of the whole being to pass its limited bounds, for which he could find no adequate solution in the objects around him,—the apparent cause? Or who can account for every mood that thralls him,—at times like one entranced in a dream by airs from Paradise,—at other times steeped in darkness, when the spirit of discord seems to marshal his every thought, one against another?

Whether it be that the Living Principle, which permeates all things throughout the physical world, cannot be touched in a single point without conducting to its centre, its source, and confluence, thus giving by a part, though obscurely and indefinitely, a sense of the whole,—we know not. But this we may venture to assert, and on no improbable ground,—that a ray of light is not more continuously linked in its luminous particles than our moral being with the whole moral universe. If this be so, may it not give us, in a faint shadowing at least, some intimation of the many real, though unknown relations, which everywhere surround and bear upon us? In the deeper emotions, we have, sometimes, what seems to us a fearful proof of it. But let us look at it negatively; and suppose a case where this chain is broken,—of a human being who is thus cut off from all possible sympathies, and shut up, as it were, in the hopeless solitude of his own mind. What is this horrible avulsion, this impenetrable self-imprisonment, but the appalling state of *despair*? And what if we should see it realized in some forsaken outcast, and hear his forlorn cry, “Alone! alone!” while to his living spirit that single word is all that is left him to fill the blank of space? In such a state, the very proudest autocrat would yearn for the sympathy of the veriest wretch.



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It would seem, then, since this living cement which is diffused through nature, binding all things in one, so that no part can be contemplated that does not, of necessity, even though unconsciously to us, act on the mind with reference to the whole,—since this, as we find, cannot be transferred to any copy of the actual, it must needs follow, if we would imitate Nature in its true effects, that recourse must be had to another, though similar principle, which shall so pervade our production as to satisfy the mind with an efficient equivalent. Now, in order to this there are two conditions required: first, the personal modification, (already discussed) of every separate part,—which may be considered as its proper life; and, secondly, the uniting of the parts by such an interdependence that they shall appear to us as essential, one to another, and all to each. When this is done, the result is a whole. But how do we obtain this mutual dependence? We refer the questioner to the law of Harmony,—that mysterious power, which is only apprehended by its imperative effect.

But, be the above as it may, we know it to be a fact, that, whilst nothing in Nature ever affects us as fragmentary, no unmodified copy of her by man is ever felt by us as otherwise.

We have thus—and, we trust, on no fanciful ground—endeavoured to establish the real and distinctive character of Art. And, if our argument be admitted, it will be found to have brought us to the following conclusions:—first, that the true ground of all originality lies in the *individualizing law*, that is, in that modifying power, which causes the difference between man and man as to their mental impressions; secondly, that only in a *true* reproduction consists its evidence; thirdly, that in the involuntary response from other minds lies the truth of the evidence; fourthly, that in order to this response there must therefore exist some universal kindred principle, which is essential to the human mind, though widely differenced in the degree of its activity in different individuals; and finally, that this principle, which we have here denominated Human or Poetic Truth, being independent both of the will and of the reflective faculties, is in its nature *imperative*, to affirm or deny, in relation to every production pretending to Art, from the simple imitation of the actual to the probable, and from the probable to the possible;—in one word, that the several characteristics, Originality, Poetic Truth, Invention, each imply a something not inherent in the objects imitated, but which must emanate alone from the mind of the Artist.



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And here it may be well to notice an apparent objection, that will probably occur to many, especially among painters. How, then, they may ask, if the principle in question be universal and imperative, do we account for the mistakes which even great Artists have sometimes made as to the realizing of their conceptions? We hope to show, that, so far from opposing, the very fact on which the objection is grounded will be found, on the contrary, to confirm our doctrine. Were such mistakes uniformly permanent, they might, perhaps, have a rational weight; but that this is not the case is clearly evident from the additional fact of the change in the Artist's judgment, which almost invariably follows any considerable interval of time. Nay, should a case occur where a similar mistake is never rectified,—which is hardly probable,—we might well consider it as one of those exceptions that prove the rule,—of which we have abundant examples in other relations, where a true principle is so feebly developed as to be virtually excluded from the sphere of consciousness, or, at least, where its imperfect activity is for all practical purposes a mere nullity. But, without supposing any mental weakness, the case may be resolved by the no less formidable obstacle of a too inveterate memory: and there have been such,—where a thought or an image once impressed is never erased. In Art it is certainly an advantage to be able sometimes to forget. Nor is this a new notion; for Horace, it seems, must have had the same, or he would hardly have recommended so long a time as nine years for the revision of a poem. That Titian also was not unaware of the advantage of forgetting is recorded by Boschini, who relates, that, during the progress of a work, he was in the habit of occasionally turning it to the wall, until it had somewhat faded from his memory, so that, on resuming his labor, he might see with fresh eyes; when (to use his expression) he would criticize the picture with as much severity as his worst enemy. If, instead of the picture on the canvas, Boschini had referred to that in his mind, as what Titian sought to forget, he would have been, as we think, more correct. This practice is not uncommon with Artists, though few, perhaps, are aware of its real object.

It has doubtless the appearance of a singular anomaly in the judgment, that it should not always be as correct in relation to our own works as to those of another. Yet nothing is more common than perfect truth in the one case, and complete delusion in the other. Our surprise, however, would be sensibly diminished, if we considered that the reasoning or reflective faculties have nothing to do with either case. It is the Principle of which we have been speaking, the life, or truth within, answering to the life, or rather its sign, before us, that here sits in judgment. Still the question remains unanswered; and again we are asked, Why is it that our own works do not always respond with equal veracity? Simply because we

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do not always see them,—that is, as they are,—but, looking as it were *through them*, see only their originals in the mind; the mind here acting, instead of being acted upon. And thus it is, that an Artist may suppose his conception realized, while that which gave life to it in his mind is outwardly wanting. But let time erase, as we know it often does, the mental image, and its embodied representative will then appear to its author as it is,—true or false. There is one case, however, where the effect cannot deceive; namely, where it comes upon us as from a foreign source; where our own seems no longer ours. This, indeed, is rare; and powerful must be the pictured Truth, that, as soon as embodied, shall thus displace its own original.

Nor does it in any wise affect the essential nature of the Principle in question, or that of the other Characteristics, that the effect which follows is not always of a pleasurable kind; it may even be disagreeable. What we contend for is simply its *reality*; the character of the perception, like that of every other truth, depending on the individual character of the percipient. The common truth of existence in a living person, for instance, may be to us either a matter of interest or indifference, nay, even of disgust. So also may it be with what is true in Art. Temperament, ignorance, cultivation, vulgarity, and refinement have all, in a greater or less degree, an influence in our impressions; so that any reality may be to us either an offence or a pleasure, yet still a reality. In Art, as in Nature, the True is imperative, and must be *felt*, even where a timid, a proud, or a selfish motive refuses to acknowledge it.

These last remarks very naturally lead us to another subject, and one of no minor importance; we mean, the education of an Artist; on this, however, we shall at present add but a few words. We use the word *education* in its widest sense, as involving not only the growth and expansion of the intellect, but a corresponding developement of the moral being; for the wisdom of the intellect is of little worth, if it be not in harmony with the higher spiritual truth. Nor will a moderate, incidental cultivation suffice to him who would become a great Artist. He must sound no less than the full depths of his being ere he is fitted for his calling; a calling in its very condition lofty, demanding an agent by whom, from the actual, living world, is to be wrought an imagined consistent world of Art,—not fantastic, or objectless, but having a purpose, and that purpose, in all its figments, a distinct relation to man's nature, and all that pertains to it, from the humblest emotion to the highest aspiration; the circle that bounds it being that only which bounds his spirit,—even the confines of that higher world, where ideal glimpses of angelic forms are sometimes permitted to his sublimated vision. Art may, in truth, be called the *human world*; for it is so far the work of man, that

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his beneficent Creator has especially endowed him with the powers to construct it; and, if so, surely not for his mere amusement, but as a part (small though it be) of that mighty plan which the Infinite Wisdom has ordained for the evolution of the human spirit; whereby is intended, not alone the enlargement of his sphere of pleasure, but of his higher capacities of adoration;—as if, in the gift, he had said unto man, Thou shalt know me by the powers I have given thee. The calling of an Artist, then, is one of no common responsibility; and it well becomes him to consider at the threshold, whether he shall assume it for high and noble purposes, or for the low and licentious.

Form.

The subject proposed for the following discourse is the Human Form; a subject, perhaps, of all others connected with Art, the most obscured by vague theories. It is one, at least, of such acknowledged difficulty as to constrain the writer to confess, that he enters upon it with more distrust than hope of success. Should he succeed, however, in disencumbering this perplexed theme of some of its useless dogmas, it will be quite as much as he has allowed himself to expect.

The object, therefore, of the present attempt will be to show, first, that the notion of one or more standard Forms, which shall in all cases serve as exemplars, is essentially false, and of impracticable application for any true purpose of Art; secondly, that the only approach to Science, which the subject admits, is in a few general rules relating to Stature, and these, too, serving rather as convenient *expedients* than exact guides, inasmuch as, in most cases, they allow of indefinite variations; and, thirdly, that the only efficient Rule must be found in the Artist's mind,—in those intuitive Powers, which are above, and beyond, both the senses and the understanding; which, nevertheless, are so far from precluding knowledge, as, on the contrary, to require, as their effective condition, the widest intimacy with the things external,—without which their very existence must remain unknown to the Artist himself.

Supposing, then, certain standard Forms to have been admitted, it may not be amiss to take a brief view of the nature of the Being to whom they are intended to be applied; and to consider them more especially as auxiliaries to the Artist.

In the first place, we observe, that the purpose of Art is not to represent any given number of men, but the Human Race; and so that the representation shall affect us, not indeed as living to the senses, but as true to the mind. In order to this, there must be *all* in the imitation (though it be but hinted) which the mind will recognize as true to the human being: hence the first business of the Artist is to become acquainted with his subject in all its properties. He then naturally inquires, what is its general characteristic; and his own consciousness informs him, that, besides an animal nature, there



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is also a moral intelligence, and that they together form the man. This important truism (we say important, for it seems to have been not seldom overlooked) makes the foundation of all his future observations; nor can he advance a step without continual reference to this double nature. We find him accordingly in the daily habit of mentally distinguishing this person from that, as a moral being, and of assigning to each a separate character; and this not voluntarily, but simply because he cannot avoid it. Yet, by what does he presume to judge of strangers? He will probably answer, By their general exterior. And what is the inference? There can be but one; namely, that there must be—at least to him—some efficient correspondence between the physical and the moral. This is so plain, that the wonder is, how it ever came to be doubted. Nor is it directly denied, except by those who from habitual disgust reject the guesswork of the various pretenders to scientific systems; yet even these, no less than others, do practically admit it in their common intercourse with the world. And it cannot be otherwise; for what the Creator has joined must have some affinity, although the palpable signs may elude our cognizance. And that they do elude it, except perhaps in a very slight degree, is actually the case, as is well proved by the signal failure of all attempts to reduce them to a science; for neither diagram nor axiom has ever yet corrected an instinctive impression. But man does not live by science; he feels, acts, and judges right in a thousand things without the consciousness of any rule by which he so feels, acts, or judges. And, happily for him, he has a surer guide than human science in that unknown Power within him,—without which he had been without knowledge. But of this we shall have occasion to speak again in another part of our discourse.

Though the medium through which the soul acts be, as we have said, elusive to the senses,—in so far as to be irreducible to any distinct form,—it is not therefore the less real, as every one may verify by his own experience; and, though seemingly invisible, it must nevertheless, constituted as we are, act through the physical, and a physical medium expressly constructed for its peculiar action; nay, it does this continually, without our confounding for a moment the soul with its instrument. Who can look into the human eye, and doubt of an influence not of the body? The form and color leave but a momentary impression, or, if we remember them, it is only as we remember the glass through which we have read the dark problems of the sky. But in this mysterious organ we see not even the signs of its mystery. We see, in truth, nothing; for what is there has neither form, nor symbol, nor any thing reducible to a sensuous distinctness; and yet who can look into it, and not be conscious of a real though invisible presence? In the eye of a brute, we see only a part of the animal; it gives us little beyond the palpable outward; at



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most, it is but the focal point of its fierce, or gentle, affectionate, or timorous character,—the character of the species, But in man, neither gentleness nor fierceness can be more than as relative conditions,—the outward moods of his unseen spirit; while the spirit itself, that daily and hourly sends forth its good and evil, to take shape from the body, still sits in darkness. Yet have we that which can surely reach it; even our own spirit. By this it is that we can enter into another's soul, sound its very depths, and bring up his dark thoughts, nay, place them before him till he starts at himself; and more,—it is by this we *know* that even the tangible, audible, visible world is not more real than a spiritual intercourse. And yet without the physical organ who can hold it? We can never indeed understand, but we may not doubt, that which has its power of proof in a single act of consciousness. Nay, we may add that we cannot even conceive of a soul without a correlative form,—though it be in the abstract; and *vice versa*.

For, among the many impossibilities, it is not the least to look upon a living human form as a thing; in its pictured copies, as already shown in a former discourse, it may be a thing, and a beautiful thing; but the moment we conceive of it as living, if it show not a soul, we give it one by a moral necessity; and according to the outward will be the spirit with which we endow it. No poetic being, supposed of our species, ever lived to the imagination without some indication of the moral; it is the breath of its life: and this is also true in the converse; if there be but a hint of it, it will instantly clothe itself in a human shape; for the mind cannot separate them. In the whole range of the poetic creations of the great master of truth,—we need hardly say Shakspeare,—not an instance can be found where this condition of life is ever wanting; his men and women all have souls. So, too, when he peoples the air, though he describe no form, he never leaves these creatures of the brain without a shape, for he will sometimes, by a single touch of the moral, enable us to supply one. Of this we have a striking instance in one of his most unsubstantial creations, the “delicate Ariel.” Not an allusion to its shape or figure is made throughout the play; yet we assign it a form on its very first entrance, as soon as Prospero speaks of its refusing to comply with the “abhorred commands” of the witch, Sycorax. And again, in the fifth act, when Ariel, after recounting the sufferings of the wretched usurper and his followers, gently adds,—

“Your charm so strongly works them,
That, if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.”

On which Prospero remarks,—

“Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions?”



Now, whether Shakspeare intended it or not, it is not possible after this for the reader to think of Ariel but in a human form; for slight as these hints are, if they do not indicate the moral affections, they at least imply something akin to them, which in a manner compels us to invest the gentle Spirit with a general likeness to our own physical exterior, though, perhaps, as indistinct as the emotion that called for it.

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We have thus considered the human being in his complex condition, of body and spirit, or physical and moral; showing the impossibility of even thinking of him in the one, to the exclusion of the other. We may, indeed, successively think first of the form, and then of the moral character, as we may think of any one part of either analytically; but we cannot think of the *human being* except as a *whole*. It follows, therefore, as a consequence, that no imitation of man can be true which is not addressed to us in this double condition. And here it may be observed, that in Art there is this additional requirement, that there be no discrepancy between the form and the character intended, —or rather, that the form *must* express the character, or it expresses nothing: a necessity which is far from being general in actual nature. But of this hereafter.

Let us now endeavour to form some general notion of Man in his various aspects, as presented by the myriads which people the earth. But whose imagination is equal to the task,—to the setting in array before it the countless multitudes, each individual in his proper form, his proper character? Were this possible, we should stand amazed at the interminable differences, the hideous variety; and that, too, no less in the moral, than in the physical; nay, so opposite and appalling in the former as hardly to be figured by a chain of animals, taking for the extremes the fierce and filthy hyena and the inoffensive lamb. This is man in the concrete,—to which, according to some, is to be applied the *abstract Ideal!*

Now let us attempt to conceive of a being that shall represent all the diversities of mind, affections, and dispositions, that fleck this heterogeneous mass of humanity, and then to conceive of a Form that shall be in such perfect affinity with it as to indicate them all. The bare statement of the proposition shows its absurdity. Yet this must be the office of a Standard Form; and this it must do, or it will be a falsehood. Nor should we find it easier with any given number, with twenty, fifty, nay, an hundred (so called) generic forms. We do not hesitate to affirm, that, were it possible, it would be quite as easy with one as with a thousand.

But to this it may be replied, that the Standard Form was never intended to represent the vicious or degraded, but man in his most perfect development of mind, affections, and body. This is certainly narrowing its office, and, unfortunately, to the representing of but *one* man; consequently, of no possible use beyond to the Painter or Sculptor of Humanity, since every repetition of this perfect form would be as the reflection of one multiplied by mirrors. But such repetitions, it may be further answered, were never contemplated, that Form being given only as an exemplar of the highest, to serve as a guide in our approach to excellence; as we could not else know to a certainty to what degree of elevation our conceptions might rise. Still, in that case its use would be limited to a single object, that is, to itself, its own perfectness; it would not aid the Artist in the intermediate ascent to it,—unless it contained within itself all the gradations of human character; which no one will pretend.

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But let us see how far it is possible to *realize* the Idea of a *perfect* Human Form.

We have already seen that the mere physical structure is not man, but only a part; the Idea of man including also an internal moral being. The external, then, in an *actually disjoined* state, cannot, strictly speaking, be the human form, but only a diagram of it. It is, in fact, but a partial condition, becoming human only when united with the internal moral; which, in proof of the union, it must of necessity indicate. If we would have a true Idea of it, therefore, it must be as a whole; consequently, the perfect physical exterior must have, as an essential part, the perfect moral. Now come two important questions. First, In what consists Moral Perfection? We use the word *moral* here (from a want in our language) in its most comprehensive sense, as including the spiritual and the intellectual. With respect to that part of our moral being which pertains to the affections, in all their high relations to God and man, we have, it is true, a sure and holy guide. In a Christian land, the humblest individual may answer as readily as the most profound scholar, and express its perfection in the single word, Holiness. But what will be the reply in regard to the Intellect? For what is a perfect Intellect? Is it the Dialectic, the Speculative, or the Imaginative? Or, rather, would it not include them all?

We proceed next to the Physical. What, then, constitutes its Perfection? Here, it might seem, there can be no difficulty, and the reply will probably be in naming all the excellent qualities in our animal nature, such as strength, agility, fleetness, with every other that can be thought of. The bare enumeration of these few qualities may serve to show the nature of the task; yet a physically perfect form requires them all; none must be omitted; it would else be imperfect; nay, they must not only be there, but all be developed in their highest degrees. We might here exclaim with Hamlet, though in a very different sense,

“A combination and a form indeed!”

And yet there is no other way to express physical perfection. But can it be so expressed? The reader must reply for himself. We will, however, suppose it possible; still the task is incomplete without the adjustment of these to the perfect Moral, in the highest known degrees of its several elements. To those who can imagine *such* a form as shall be the sure exponent of *such* a moral being,—and such it must be, or it will be nothing,—we leave the task of constructing this universal exemplar for multitudinous man. We may add, however, one remark; that, supposing it possible thus to concentrate, and with equal prominence, all the qualities of the species into one individual, it can only be done by supplanting Providence, in other words, by virtually overruling the great principle of subordination so visibly impressed on all created life. For although,



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as we have elsewhere observed, there can be no sound mind (and the like may be affirmed of the whole man), which is deficient in any one essential, it does not therefore follow, that each of these essentials may not be almost indefinitely differenced in the degrees of their developement without impairing the human integrity. And such is the fact in actual nature; nor does this in any wise affect the individual unity,—as will be noticed hereafter.

We will now briefly examine the pretensions of what are called the Generic Forms. And here we are met by another important characteristic of the human being, namely, his essential individuality.

It is true that the human family, so called, is divided into many distinct races, having each its peculiar conformation, color, and so forth, which together constitute essential differences; but it is to be remembered that these essentials are all physical; and *so far* they are properly generic, as implying a difference in kind. But, though a striking difference is also observable in their moral being, it is by no means of the same nature with that which marks their physical condition, the difference in the moral being only of degree; for, however fierce, brutal, stupid, or cunning, or gentle, generous, or heroic, the same characteristics may each be paralleled among ourselves; nay, we could hardly name a vice, a passion, or a virtue, in Asia, Africa, or America, that has not its echo in civilized Europe. And what is the inference? That climate and circumstance, if such are the causes of the physical variety, have no controlling power, except in degree, over the Moral. Does not this undeniable fact, then, bring us to the fair conclusion, that the moral being has no genera? To affirm otherwise would be virtually to deny its responsible condition; since the law of its genus must be paramount to all other laws,—to education, government, religion. Nor can the result be evaded, except by the absurd supposition of generic responsibilities! To us, therefore, it seems conclusive that a moral being, as a free agent, cannot be subject to a generic law; nor could he now be—what every man feels himself to be, in spite of his theory—the fearful architect of his own destiny. In one sense, indeed, we may admit a human genus,—such as every man must be in his individual entirety.

Man has been called a microcosm, or little world. And such, however mean and contemptible to others, is man to himself; nay, such he must ever be, whether he wills it or not. He may hate, he may despise, yet he cannot but cling to that without which he is not; he is the centre and the circle, be it of pleasure or of pain; nor can he be other. Touch him with misery, and he becomes paramount to the whole world,—to a thousand worlds; for the beauty and the glory of the universe are as nothing to him who is all darkness. Then it is that he will *feel*, should he have before doubted, that he is not a mere part, a fraction, of his kind, but indeed a world; and though little in one sense, yet a world of awful magnitude in its capacity of suffering. In one word, Man is a whole, *an Individual*.



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If the preceding argument be admitted, it will be found to have relieved the student of two delusive dogmas,—and the more delusive, as carrying with them a plausible show of science.

As to the flowery declamations about Beauty, they would not here be noticed, were they not occasionally met with in works of high merit, and not unfrequently mixed up with philosophic truth. If they have any definite meaning, it amounts to this,—that the Beautiful is the summit of every possible excellence! The extravagance, not to say absurdity, of such a proposition, confounding, as it does, all received distinctions, both in the moral and the natural world, needs no comment. It is hardly to be believed, however, that the writers in question could have deliberately intended this. It is more probable, that, in so expressing themselves, they were only giving vent to an enthusiastic feeling, which we all know is generally most vague when associated with admiration; it is not therefore strange that the ardent expression of it should partake of its vagueness. Among the few critical works of authority in which the word is so used, we may mention the (in many respects admirable) Discourses of Sir Joshua Reynolds, where we find the following sentence:—“The *beauty* of the Hercules is one, of the Gladiator another, of the Apollo another; which, of course, would present three different Ideas of Beauty.” If this had been said of various animals, differing in *kind*, the term so applied might, perhaps, have been appropriate. But the same term is here applied to objects of the same kind, differing not essentially even in age; we say *age*, inasmuch as in the three great divisions, or periods, of human life, namely, childhood, youth, and maturity, the characteristic conditions of each are so *essentially* distinct, as virtually to separate them into positive kinds.

But it is no less idle than invidious to employ our time in overturning the errors of others; if we establish Truth, they will fall of themselves. There cannot be two right sides to any question; and, if we are right, what is opposed to us must of necessity be wrong. Whether we are so or not must be determined by those who admit or reject what has already been advanced on the subject of Beauty, in the first Discourse. It will be remembered, that, in the course of our argument there, we were brought to the conclusion, that Beauty was the Idea of a certain physical *condition*, both general and ultimate; general, as presiding over objects of many kinds, and ultimate, as being the *perfection* of that peculiar condition in each, and therefore not applicable to, or representing, its degrees in any; which, as approximations only to the one supreme Idea, should truly be distinguished by other terms. Accordingly, we cannot, strictly speaking, say of two persons of the same age and sex, differing from each other, that they are equally beautiful. We hear this, indeed, almost daily; it is nevertheless

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not the true expression of the actual impression made on the speaker, though he may not take the trouble to examine and compare them. But let him do so, and we doubt not that he would find the one to rise (in however slight a degree) above the other; and, if he did not assign a different term to the lower, it would be only because he was not in the habit of marking, or did not think it worth his while to note, such nice distinctions.

If there is a *first* and a *last* to any thing, the intermediates can be neither one nor the other; and, if we so name them, we speak falsely. It is no less so with Beauty, which, being at the head, or first in a series, admits no transference of its title. We mean, if speaking strictly; which, however, we freely acknowledge, no one can; but that is owing to the insufficiency of language, which in no dialect could supply a hundredth part of the terms needed to mark every minute shade of difference. Perhaps no subject requiring a wider nomenclature has one so contracted; and the consequence is, that no subject is more obscured by vague expressions. But it is the business of the Artist, if he cannot form to himself the corresponding terms, to be prepared at least to perceive and to note these various shades. We do not say, that an actual acquaintance with all the nice distinctions is an essential requisite, but only that it will not be altogether useless to be aware of their existence; at any rate, it may serve to shield him from the annoyance of false criticism, when censured for wanting beauty where its presence would have been an impertinence.

Before we quit the subject, it may not be amiss to observe, that, in the preceding remarks, our object has been not so much to insist on correct speaking as correct thinking. The poverty of language, as already admitted, has made the former impossible; but, though constrained in this, as in many other cases where a subordinate is put for its principal, to apply the term Beautiful to its various degrees, yet a right apprehension of what Beauty *is* may certainly prevent its misapplication as to other objects having no relation to it. Nor is this a small matter where the avoiding of confusion is an object desirable; and there is clearly some difference between an approach to precision and utter vagueness.

We have now to consider how far the Correspondence between the outward form and the inward being, which is assumed by the Artist, is supported by fact.

In a fair statement, then, of facts, it cannot be denied that with the mass of men the outward intimation of character is certainly very faint, with many obscure, and with some ambiguous, while with others it has often seemed to express the very reverse of the truth. Perhaps a stronger instance of the latter could hardly occur than that cited in a former discourse in illustration of the physical relation of Beauty; where it was shown that the first and natural impression from a beautiful



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form was not only displaced, but completely reversed, by the revolting discovery of a moral discrepancy. But while we admit, on the threshold, that the Correspondence in question cannot be sustained as universally obvious, it is, nevertheless, not apprehended that this admission can affect our argument, which, though in part grounded on special cases of actual coincidence, is yet supported by other evidences, which lead us to regard all such discrepancies rather as exceptions, and as so many deviations from the original law of our nature, nay, which lead us also rationally to infer at least a future, potential correspondence in every individual. To the past, indeed, we cannot appeal; neither can the past be cited against us, since little is known of the early history of our race but a chronicle of their actions; of their outward appearance scarcely any thing, certainly not enough to warrant a decision one way or the other. Should we assume, then, the Correspondence as a primeval law, who shall gainsay it? It is not, however, so asserted. We may nevertheless hold it as a matter of *faith*; and simply as such it is here submitted. But faith of any kind must have some ground to rest on, either real or supposed, either that of authority or of inference. Our ground of faith, then, in the present instance, is in the universal desire amongst men to *realize* the Correspondence. Nothing is more common than, on hearing or reading of any remarkable character, to find this instinctive craving, if we may so term it, instantly awakened, and actively employed in picturing to the imagination some corresponding form; nor is any disappointment more general, than that which follows the detection of a discrepancy on actual acquaintance. Indeed, we can hardly deem it rash, should we rest the validity of this universal desire on the common experience of any individual, taken at random,—provided only that he has a particle of imagination. Nor is its action dependent on our caprice or will. Ask any person of ordinary cultivation, not to say refinement, how it is with him, when, his imagination has not been forestalled by some definite fact; whether he has never found himself *involuntarily* associating the good with the beautiful, the energetic with the strong, the dignified with the ample, or the majestic with the lofty; the refined with the delicate, the modest with the comely; the base with the ugly, the brutal with the misshapen, the fierce with the coarse and muscular, and so on; there being scarcely a shade of character to which the imagination does not affix some corresponding form.



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In a still more striking form may we find the evidence of the law supposed, if we turn to the young, and especially to those of a poetic temperament,—to the sanguine, the open, and confiding, the creatures of impulse, who reason best when trusting only to the spontaneous suggestions of feeling. What is more common than implicit faith in their youthful day-dreams,—a faith that lives, though dream after dream vanish into common air when the sorcerer Fact touches their eyes? And whence this pertinacious faith that *will* not die, but from a spring of life, that neither custom nor the dry understanding can destroy? Look at the same Youth at a more advanced age, when the refining intellect has mixed with his affections, adding thought and sentiment to every thing attractive, converting all things fair to things also of good report. Let us turn, at the same time, to one still more advanced,—even so far as to have entered into the conventional valley of dry bones,—one whom the world is preparing, by its daily practical lessons, to enlighten with unbelief. If we see them together, perhaps we shall hear the senior scoff at his younger companion as a poetic dreamer, as a hunter after phantoms that never were, nor could be, in nature: then may follow a homily on the virtues of experience, as the only security against disappointment. But there are some hearts that never suffer the mind to grow old. And such we may suppose that of the dreamer. If he is one, too, who is accustomed to look into himself,—not as a reasoner,—but with an abiding faith in his nature,—we shall, perhaps, hear him reply,—Experience, it is true, has often brought me disappointment; yet I cannot distrust those dreams, as you call them, bitterly as I have felt their passing off; for I feel the truth of the source whence they come. They could not have been so responded to by my living nature, were they but phantoms; they could not have taken such forms of truth, but from a possible ground.

By the word *poetic* here, we do not mean the visionary or fanciful,—for there may be much fancy where there is no poetic feeling,—but that sensibility to *harmony* which marks the temperament of the Artist, and which is often most active in his earlier years. And we refer to such natures, not only as being more peculiarly alive to all existing affinities, but as never satisfied with those merely which fall within their experience; ever striving, on the contrary, as if impelled by instinct, to supply the deficiency wherever it is felt. From such minds proceed what are called romantic imaginings, but what we would call—without intending a paradox—the romance of Truth. For it is impossible that the mind should ever have this perpetual craving for the False.



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But the desire in question is not confined to any particular age or temperament, though it is, doubtless, more ardent in some than in others. Perhaps it is only denied to the habitually vicious. For who, not hardened by vice, has ever looked upon a sleeping child in its first bloom of beauty, and seen its pure, fresh hues, its ever varying, yet according lines, moulding and suffusing, in their playful harmony, its delicate features, —who, not callous, has ever looked upon this exquisite creature, (so like what a poet might fancy of visible music, or embodied odors,) and has not felt himself carried, as it were, out of this present world, in quest of its moral counterpart? It seems to us perfect; we desire no change,—not a line or a hue but as it is; and yet we have a paradoxical feeling of a want,—for it is all *physical*; and we supply that want by endowing the child with some angelic attribute. Why do we this? To make it a *whole*,—not to the eye, but to the mind.

Nor is this general disposition to find a coincidence between a fair exterior and moral excellence altogether unsupported by facts of, at least, a partial realization. For, though a perfect correspondence cannot be looked for in a state where all else is imperfect, he is most unfortunate who has never met with many, and very near, approximations to the desired union. But we have a still stronger assurance of their predetermined affinity in the peculiar activity of this desire where there is no such approximation. For example, when we meet with an instance of the higher virtues in an unattractive form, how natural the wish that that form were beautiful! So, too, on beholding a beautiful person, how common the wish that the mind it clothed were also good! What are these wishes but unconscious retrospects to our primitive nature? And why have we them, if they be not the workings of that universal law, which gathers to itself all scattered affinities, bodying them forth in the never-ending forms of harmony,—in the flower, in the tree, in the bird, and the animal,—if they be not the evidence of its continuous, though fruitless, effort to evolve too in *man* its last consummate work, by the perfect confluence of the body and the spirit? In this universal yearning (for it seems to us no less) to connect the physical with its appropriate moral,—to say nothing of the mysterious intuition that points to the appropriate,—is there not something like a clew to what was originally natural? And, again, in the never-ceasing strivings of the two great elements of our being, each to supply the deficiencies of the other, have we not also an intimation of something that *once was*, that is now lost, and would be recovered? Surely there must be more in this than a mere concernment of Art;—if, indeed, there be not in Art more of the prophetic than we are now aware of. To us it seems that this irrepressible desire to find the good in the beautiful, and the beautiful in the good, implies an



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end, both beyond and above the trifling present; pointing to deep and dark questions,—to no less than where the mysteries which surround us will meet their solution. One great mystery we see in part resolving itself here. We see the deformities of the body sometimes giving place to its glorious tenant. Some of us may have witnessed this, and felt the spiritual presence gaining daily upon us, till the outward shape seemed lost in its brightness, leaving no trace in the memory.

Whether the position we have endeavoured to establish be disputed or not, the absolute correspondence between the Moral and the Physical is, at any rate, the essential ground of the Plastic arts; which could not else exist, since through *Form alone* they have to convey, not only thought and emotion, but distinct and permanent character. For our own part, we cannot but consider their success in this as having settled the question.

From the view here presented, what is the inference in relation to Art? That Man, as a compound being, cannot be represented without an indication as well of Mind as of body; that, by a natural law which we cannot resist, we do continually require that they be to us as mutual exponents, the one of the other; and, finally, that, as a responsible being, and therefore a free agent, he cannot be truly represented, either to the memory or to the imagination, but as an Individual.

It would seem, also, from the indefinite varieties in men, though occasioned only by the mere difference of degrees in their common faculties and powers, that the coincidence of an equal developement of all was never intended in nature; but that some one or more of them, becoming dominant, should distinguish the individual. It follows, therefore, if this be the case, that only through the phase of such predominance can the human being ever be contemplated. To the Artist, then, it becomes the only safe ground; the starting-point from whence to ascend to a true Ideal,—which is no other than a partial individual truth made whole in the mind: and thus, instead of one Ideal, and that baseless, he may have a thousand,—nay, as many as there are marked or apprehensible *individuals*.

But we must not be understood as confining Art to actual portraits. Within such limits there could not be Art,—certainly not Art in its highest sense; we should have in its place what would be little better than a doubtful empiricism; since the most elevated subject, in the ablest hands, would depend, of necessity, on the chance success of a search after models. And, supposing that we bring together only the rarest forms, still those forms, simply as circumscribed portraits, and therefore insulated parts, would instantly close every avenue to the imagination; for such is the law of the imagination, that it cannot admit, or, in other words, recognize as a whole, that which remains unmodified by some imaginative power, which alone can give unity to separate and distinct objects. Yet, as it regards man, all true Art does, and must, find its proper object in the

Individual: as without individuality there could not be character, nor without character, the human being.

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But here it may be asked, In what manner, if we resort not to actual portrait, is the Individual Man to be expressed? We answer, By carrying out the natural individual predominant *fragment* which is visible to us in actual Form, to its full, consistent developement. The Individual is thus idealized, when, in the complete accordance of all its parts, it is presented to the mind as a *whole*.

When we apply the term *fragment* to a human being, we do not mean in relation to his species, (in regard to which we have already shown him to be a distinct whole,) but in relation to the Idea, to which his predominant characteristic suggests itself but as a partial manifestation, and made partial because counteracted by some inadequate exponent, or else modified by other, though minor, characteristics.

How this is effected must be left to the Artist himself. It is impossible to prescribe a rule that would be to much purpose for any one who stands in need of such instruction; if his own mind does not suggest the mode, it would not even be intelligible. Perhaps our meaning, however, may be made more obvious, if we illustrate it by example. We would refer, then, to the restoration of a statue, (a thing often done with success,) where, from a single fragment, the unknown Form has been completely restored, and so remoulded, that the parts added are in perfect unity with the suggestive fragment. Now the parts wanting having never been seen, this cannot be called a mere act of the memory. Nevertheless, it is not from nothing that man can produce even the *semblance* of any thing. The materials of the Artist are the work of Him who created the Artist himself; but over these, which his senses and mind are given him to observe and collect, he has a *delegated power*, for the purpose of combining and modifying, as unlimited as mysterious. It is by the agency of this intuitive and assimilating Power, elsewhere spoken of, that he is able to separate the essential from the accidental, to proceed also from a part to the whole; thus educing, as it were, an Ideal nature from the germs of the Actual.

Nor does the necessity of referring to Nature preclude the Imaginative, or any other class of Art that rests its truth in the desires of the mind. In an especial manner must the personification of Sentiment, of the Abstract, which owe their interest to the common desire of rendering permanent, by embodying, that which has given us pleasure, take its starting-point from the Actual; from something which, by universal association or particular expression, shall recall the Sentiment, Thought, or Time, and serve as their exponents; there being scarcely an object in Nature which the spirit of man has not, as it were, impressed with sympathy, and linked with his being. Of this, perhaps, we could not have a more striking example than in the Aurora of Michael Angelo: which, if not universal, is not so only because the faculty addressed is by



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no means common. For, as the peculiar characteristic of the Imaginative is its suggestive power, the effect of this figure must of necessity differ in different minds. As in many other cases, there must needs be at least some degree of sympathy with the mind that imagined it, in order to any impression; and the degree in which that is made will always be in proportion to the congeniality between the agent and the recipient. Should it appear, then, to any one as a thing of no meaning, it is not therefore conclusive that the Artist has failed. For, if there be but one in a thousand to whose mind it recalls the deep stillness of Night, gradually broken by the awakening stir of Day, with its myriad forms of life emerging into motion, while their lengthened shadows, undistinguished from their objects, seem to people the earth with gigantic beings; then the dim, gray monotony of color transforming them to stone, yet leaving them in motion, till the whole scene becomes awful and mysterious as with moving statues;—if there be but one in ten thousand who shall have thus imagined, as he stands before this embodied Dawn, then is it, for every purpose of feeling through the excited imagination, as true and real as if instinct with life, and possessing the mind by its living will. Nor is the number so rare of those who have thus felt the suggestive sorcery of this sublime Statue. But the mind so influenced must be one to respond to sublime emotions, since such was the emotion which inspired the Artist. If susceptible only to the gay and beautiful, it will not answer. For this is not the Aurora of golden purple, of laughing flowers and jewelled dew-drops; but the dark Enchantress, enthroned on rocks, or craggy mountains, and whose proper empire is the shadowy confines of light and darkness.

How all this is done, we shall not attempt to explain. Perhaps the Artist himself could not answer; as to the *quo modo* in every particular, we doubt if it were possible to satisfy another. He may tell us, indeed, that having imagined certain appearances and effects peculiar to the Time, he endeavoured to imbue, as it were, some *human form* with the sentiment they awakened, so that the embodied sentiment should associate itself in the spectator's mind with similar images; and further endeavoured, that the *form* selected should, by its air, attitude, and gigantic proportions, also excite the ideas of vastness, solemnity, and repose; adding to this that indefinite expression, which, while it is felt to act, still leaves no trace of its indistinct action. So far, it is true, he may retrace the process; but of the *informing life* that quickened his fiction, thus presenting the presiding Spirit of that ominous Time, he knows nothing but that he felt it, and imparted it to the insensible marble.



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And now the question will naturally occur, Is all that has been done by the learned in Art, to establish certain canons of Proportion, utterly useless? By no means. If rightly applied, and properly considered,—as it seems to us they must have been by the great artists of Antiquity,—as *expedient fictions*, they undoubtedly deserve at least a careful examination. And, inasmuch as they are the result of a comparison of the finest actual forms through successive ages, and as they indicate the general limits which Nature has been observed to assign to her noblest works, they are so far to be valued. But it must not be forgotten, that, while a race, or class, may be generally marked by a certain average height and breadth, or curve and angle, still is every class and race composed of *Individuals*, who must needs, as such, differ from each other; and though the difference be slight, yet is it “the little more, or the little less,” which often separates the great from the mean, the wise from the foolish, in human character;—nay, the widest chasms are sometimes made by a few lines: so that, in every individual case, the limits in question are rather to be departed from, than strictly adhered to.

The canon of the Schools is easily mastered by every student who has only memory; yet of the hundreds who apply it, how few do so to any purpose! Some ten or twenty, perhaps, call up life from the quarry, and flesh and blood from the canvas; the rest conjure in vain with their canon; they call up nothing but the dead measures. Whence the difference? The answer is obvious,—In the different minds they each carry to their labors.

But let us trace, with the Artist, the beginning and progress of a successful work; a picture, for instance. His method of proceeding may enable us to ascertain how far he is assisted by the science, so called, of which we are speaking. He adjusts the height and breadth of his figures according to the canon, either by the division of heads or faces, as most convenient. By these means, he gets the general divisions in the easiest and most expeditious way. But could he not obtain them without such aid? He would answer, Yes, by the eye alone; but it would be a waste of time were he so to proceed, since he would have to do, and undo, perhaps twenty times, before he could erect this simple scaffolding; whereas, by applying these rules, whose general truth is already admitted, he accomplishes his object in a few minutes. Here we admit the use of the canon, and admire the facility with which it enables his hand, almost without the aid of a thought, thus to lay out his work. But here ends the science; and here begins what may seem to many the work of mutilation: a leg, an arm, a trunk, is increased, or diminished; line after line is erased, or retrenched, or extended, again and again, till not a trace remains of the original draught. If he is asked now by what he is guided in these innumerable changes, he can only answer, By the feeling within me. Nor can he better tell *how* he knows when he has *hit the mark*. The same feeling responds to its truth; and he repeats his attempts until that is satisfied.



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It would appear, then, that in the Mind alone is to be found the true or ultimate Rule,—if, indeed, that can be called a rule which changes its measure with every change of character. It is therefore all-important that every aid be sought which may in any way contribute to the due developement of the mental powers; and no one will doubt the efficiency here of a good general education. As to the course of study, that must be left in a great measure to be determined by the student; it will be best indicated by his own natural wants. We may observe, however, that no species of knowledge can ever be *oppressive* to real genius, whose peculiar privilege is that of subordinating all things to the paramount desire. But it is not likely that a mind so endowed will be long diverted by any studies that do not either strengthen its powers by exercise, or have a direct bearing on some particular need.

If the student be a painter, or a sculptor, he will not need to be told that a knowledge of the human being, in all his complicated springs of action, is not more essential to the poet than to him. Nor will a true Artist require to be reminded, that, though *himself* must be his ultimate dictator and judge, the allegiance of the world is not to be commanded either by a dreamer or a dogmatist. And nothing, perhaps, would be more likely to secure him from either character, than the habit of keeping his eyes open,—nay, his very heart; nor need he fear to open it to the whole world, since nothing not kindred will enter there to abide; for

“Evil into the mind ...
May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
No spot or blame behind.”

And he may also be sure that a pure heart will shed a refining light on his intellect, which it may not receive from any other source.

It cannot be supposed that an Artist, so disciplined, will overlook the works of his predecessors,—especially those exquisite remains of Antiquity which time has spared to us. But to his own discretion must be left the separating of the factitious from the true, —a task of some moment; for it cannot be denied that a mere antiquarian respect for whatever is ancient has preserved, with the good, much that is worthless. Indeed, it is to little purpose that the finest forms are set before us, if we *feel* not their truth. And here it may be well to remark, that an injudicious *word* has often given a wrong direction to the student, from which he has found it difficult to recover when his maturer mind has perceived the error. It is a common thing to hear such and such statues, or pictures, recommended as *models*. If the advice is followed,—as it too often is *literally*,—the consequence must be an offensive mannerism; for, if repeating himself makes an artist a mannerist, he is still more likely to become one if he repeat another. There is but one model that will not lead him astray,—which is Nature: we do not mean what is merely obvious



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to the senses, but whatever is so acknowledged by the mind. So far, then, as the ancient statues are found to represent her,—and the student's own feeling must be the judge of that,—they are undoubtedly both true and important objects of study, as presenting not only a wider, but a higher view of Nature, than might else be commanded, were they buried with their authors; since, with the finest forms of the fairest portion of the earth, we have also in them the realized Ideas of some of the greatest minds. In like manner may we extend our sphere of knowledge by the study of all those productions of later ages which have stood this test. There is no school from which something may not be learned. But chiefly to the Italian should the student be directed, who would enlarge his views on the present subject, and especially to the works of Raffaele and Michael Angelo; in whose highest efforts we have, so to speak, certain revelations of Nature which could only have been made by her privileged seers. And we refer to them more particularly, as to the two great sovereigns of the two distinct empires of Truth,—the Actual and the Imaginative; in which their claims are acknowledged by *that* within us, of which we know nothing but that it *must* respond to all things true. We refer to them, also, as important examples in their mode of study; in which it is evident that, whatever the source of instruction, it was never considered as a law of servitude, but rather as the means of giving visible shape to their own conceptions.

From the celebrated antique fragment, called the Torso, Michael Angelo is said to have constructed his forms. If this be true,—and we have no reason to doubt it,—it could nevertheless have been to him little more than a hint. But that is enough to a man of genius, who stands in need, no less than others, of a point to start from. There was something in this fragment which he seems to have felt, as if of a kindred nature to the unembodied creatures in his own mind; and he pondered over it until he mastered the spell of its author. He then turned to his own, to the germs of life that still awaited birth, to knit their joints, to attach the tendons, to mould the muscles,—finally, to sway the limbs by a mighty will. Then emerged into being that gigantic race of the Sistina,—giants in mind no less than in body, that appear to have descended as from another planet. His Prophets and Sibyls seem to carry in their persons the commanding evidence of their mission. They neither look nor move like beings to be affected by the ordinary concerns of life; but as if they could only be moved by the vast of human events, the fall of empires, the extinction of nations; as if the awful secrets of the future had overwhelmed in them all present sympathies. As we have stood before these lofty apparitions of the painter's mind, it has seemed to us impossible that the most vulgar spectator could have remained there irreverent.



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With many critics it seems to have been doubted whether much that we now admire in Raffaello would ever have been but for his great contemporary. Be this as it may, it is a fact of history, that, after seeing the works of Michael Angelo, both his form and his style assumed a breadth and grandeur which they possessed not before. And yet these great artists had little, if any thing, in common; a sufficient proof that an original mind may owe, and even freely acknowledge, its impetus to another without any self-sacrifice.

As Michael Angelo adopted from others only what accorded with his own peculiar genius, so did Raffaello; and, wherever collected, the materials of both could not but enter their respective minds as their natural aliment.

The genius of Michael Angelo was essentially *Imaginative*. It seems rarely to have been excited by the objects with which we are daily familiar; and when he did treat them, it was rather as things past, as they appear to us through the atmosphere of the hallowing memory. We have a striking instance of this in his statue of Lorenzo de' Medici; where, retaining of the original only enough to mark the individual, and investing the rest with an air of grandeur that should accord with his actions, he has left to his country, not a mere effigy of the person, but an embodiment of the mind; a portrait for posterity, in which the unborn might recognize Lorenzo the Magnificent.

But the mind of Raffaello was an ever-flowing fountain of human sympathies; and in all that concerns man, in his vast varieties and complicated relations, from the highest forms of majesty to the humblest condition of humanity, even to the maimed and misshapen, he may well be called a master. His Apostles, his philosophers, and most ordinary subordinates, are all to us as living beings; nor do we feel any doubt that they all had mothers, and brothers, and kindred. In the assemblage of the Apostles (already referred to) at the Death of Ananias, we look upon men whom the effusion of the Spirit has equally sublimated above every unholy thought; a common power seems to have invested them all with a preternatural majesty. Yet not an iota of the *individual* is lost in any one; the gentle bearing and amenity of John still follow him in his office of almoner; nor in Peter does the deep repose of the erect attitude of the Apostle, as he deals the death-stroke to the offender by a simple bend of his finger, subdue the energetic, sanguine temperament of the Disciple.

If any man may be said to have reigned over the hearts of his fellows, it was Raffaello Sanzio. Not that he knew better what was in the hearts and minds of men than many others, but that he better understood their relations to the external. In this the greatest names in Art fall before him; in this he has no rival; and, however derived, or in whatever degree improved by study, in him it seems to have risen to intuition. We know not how he touches and entralls us; as if he had wrought with the simplicity of Nature, we see no effort; and we yield as to a living influence, sure, yet inscrutable.

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It is not to be supposed that these two celebrated Artists were at all times successful. Like other men, they had their moments of weakness, when they fell into manner, and gave us diagrams, instead of life. Perhaps no one, however, had fewer lapses of this nature than Raffaele; and yet they are to be found in some of his best works. We shall notice now only one instance,—the figure of St. Catherine in the admirable picture of the Madonna di Sisto; in which we see an evident rescript from the Antique, with all the received lines of beauty, as laid down by the analyst,—apparently faultless, yet without a single inflection which the mind can recognize as allied to our sympathies; and we turn from it coldly, as from the work of an artificer, not of an Artist. But not so can we turn from the intense life, that seems almost to breathe upon us from the celestial group of the Virgin and her Child, and from the Angels below: in these we have the evidence of the divine afflatus,—of inspired Art.

In the works of Michael Angelo it were easy to point out numerous examples of a similar failure, though from a different cause; not from mechanically following the Antique, but rather from erecting into a model the exaggerated *shadow* of his own practice; from repeating lines and masses that might have impressed us with grandeur but for the utter absence of the informing soul. And that such is the character—or rather want of character—of many of the figures in his Last Judgment cannot be gainsaid by his warmest admirers,—among whom there is no one more sincere than the present writer. But the failures of great men are our most profitable lessons,—provided only, that we have hearts and heads to respond to their success.

In conclusion. We have now arrived at what appears to us the turning-point, that, by a natural reflux, must carry us back to our original Position; in other words, it seems to us clear, that the result of the argument is that which was anticipated in our main Proposition; namely, that no given number of Standard Forms can with certainty apply to the Human Being; that all Rules therefore, thence derived, can only be considered as *Expedient Fictions*, and consequently subject to be *overruled* by the Artist,—in whose mind alone is the ultimate Rule; and, finally, that without an intimate acquaintance with Nature, in all its varieties of the moral, intellectual, and physical, the highest powers are wanting in their necessary condition of action, and are therefore incapable of supplying the Rule.

Composition.

The term Composition, in its general sense, signifies the union of things that were originally separate: in the art of Painting it implies, in addition to this, such an arrangement and reciprocal relation of these materials, as shall constitute them so many essential parts of a whole.

In a true Composition of Art will be found the following characteristics:—First, Unity of Purpose, as expressing the general sentiment or intention of the Artist. Secondly, Variety of Parts, as expressed in the diversity of shape, quantity, and line. Thirdly,

Continuity, as expressed by the connection of parts with each other, and their relation to the whole. Fourthly, Harmony of Parts.



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As these characteristics, like every thing which the mind can recognize as true, all have their origin in its natural desires, they may also be termed Principles; and as such we shall consider them. In order, however, to satisfy ourselves that they are truly such, and not arbitrary assumptions, or the traditional dogmas of Practice, it may be well to inquire whence is their authority; for, though the ultimate cause of pleasure and pain may ever remain to us a mystery, yet it is not so with their intermediate causes, or the steps that lead to them.

With respect to Unity of Purpose, it is sufficient to observe, that, where the attention is at the same time claimed by two objects, having each a different end, they must of necessity break in upon that free state required of the mind in order to receive a full impression from either. It is needless to add, that such conflicting claims cannot, under any circumstances, be rendered agreeable. And yet this most obvious requirement of the mind has sometimes been violated by great Artists,—though not of authority in this particular, as we shall endeavour to show in another place.

We proceed, meanwhile, to the second principle, namely, Variety; by which is to be understood *difference*, yet with *relation to a common end*.

Of a ruling Principle, or Law, we can only get a notion by observing the effects of certain things in relation to the mind; the uniformity of which leads us to infer something which is unchangeable and permanent. It is in this way that, either directly or indirectly, we learn the existence of certain laws that invariably control us. Thus, indirectly, from our disgust at monotony, we infer the necessity of variety. But variety, when carried to excess, results in weariness. Some limitation, therefore, seems no less needed. It is, however, obvious, that all attempts to fix the limit to Variety, that shall apply as a universal rule, must be nugatory, inasmuch as the *degree* must depend on the *kind*, and the kind on the subject treated. For instance, if the subject be of a gay and light character, and the emotions intended to be excited of a similar nature, the variety may be carried to a far greater extent than in one of a graver character. In the celebrated *Marriage at Cana*, by Paul Veronese, we see it carried, perhaps, to its utmost limits; and to such an extent, that an hour's travel will hardly conduct us through all its parts; yet we feel no weariness throughout this journey, nay, we are quite unconscious of the time it has taken. It is no disparagement of this remarkable picture, if we consider the subject, not according to the title it bears, but as what the Artist has actually made it,—that is, as a Venetian entertainment; and also the effect intended, which was to delight by the exhibition of a gorgeous *pageant*. And in this he has succeeded to a degree unexampled; for literally the eye may be said to *dance* through the picture, scarcely

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lighting on one part before it is drawn to another, and another, and another, as by a kind of witchery; while the subtle interlocking of each successive novelty leaves it no choice, but, seducing it onward, still keeps it in motion, till the giddy sense seems to call on the imagination to join in the revel; and every poetic temperament answers to the call, bringing visions of its own, that mingle with the painted crowd, exchanging forms, and giving them voice, like the creatures of a dream.

To those who have never seen this picture, our account of its effect may perhaps appear incredible when they are told, that it not only has no story, but not a single expression to which you can attach a sentiment. It is nevertheless for this very reason that we here cite it, as a triumphant verification of those immutable laws of the mind to which the principles of Composition are supposed to appeal; where the simple technic exhibition, or illustration of *Principles*, without story, or thought, or a single definite expression, has still the power to possess and to fill us with a thousand delightful emotions.

And here we cannot refrain from a passing remark on certain criticisms, which have obtained, as we think, an undeserved currency. To assert that such a work is solely addressed to the senses (meaning thereby that its only end is in mere pleasurable sensation) is to give the lie to our convictions; inasmuch as we find it appealing to one of the mightiest ministers of the Imagination,—the great Law of Harmony,—which cannot be *touched* without awakening by its vibrations, so to speak, the untold myriads of sleeping forms that lie within its circle, that start up in tribes, and each in accordance with the congenial instrument that summons them to action. He who can thus, as it were, embody an abstraction is no mere pander to the senses. And who that has a modicum of the imaginative would assert of one of Haydn's Sonatas, that its effect on him was no other than sensuous? Or who would ask for the *story* in one of our gorgeous autumnal sunsets?

In subjects of a grave or elevated kind, the Variety will be found to diminish in the same degree in which they approach the Sublime. In the raising of Lazarus, by Lievens, we have an example of the smallest possible number of parts which the nature of such a subject would admit. And, though a different conception might authorize a much greater number, yet we do not feel in this any deficiency; indeed, it may be doubted if the addition of even one more part would not be felt as obtrusive.



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By the term *parts* we are not to be understood as including the minutiae of dress or ornament, or even the several members of a group, which come more properly under the head of detail; we apply the term only to those prominent divisions which constitute the essential features of a composition. Of these the Sublime admits the fewest. Nor is the limitation arbitrary. By whatever causes the stronger passions or higher faculties of the mind become pleasurablely excited, if they be pushed as it were beyond their supposed limits, till a sense of the indefinite seems almost to partake of the infinite, to these causes we affix the epithet *Sublime*. It is needless to inquire if such an effect can be produced by any thing short of the vast and overpowering, much less by the gradual approach or successive accumulation of any number of separate forces. Every one can answer from his own experience. We may also add, that the pleasure which belongs to the deeper emotions always trenches on pain; and the sense of pain leads to reaction; so that, singly roused, they will rise but to fall, like men at a breach,—leaving a conquest, not over the living, but the dead. The effect of the Sublime must therefore be sudden, and to be sudden, simple, scarce seen till felt; coming like a blast, bending and levelling every thing before it, till it passes into space. So comes this marvellous emotion; and so vanishes,—to where no straining of our mortal faculties will ever carry them.

To prevent misapprehension, we may here observe, that, though the parts be few, it does not necessarily follow that they should always consist of simple or single objects. This narrow inference has often led to the error of mistaking mere space for grandeur, especially with those who have wrought rather from theory than from the true possession of their subjects. Hence, by the mechanical arrangement of certain large and sweeping masses of light and shadow, we are sometimes surprised into a momentary expectation of a sublime impression, when a nearer approach gives us only the notion of a vast blank. And the error lies in the misconception of a mass. For a mass is not a *thing*, but the condition of *things*; into which, should the subject require it, a legion, a host, may be compressed, an army with banners,—yet so that they break not the unity of their Part, that technic form to which they are subordinate.

The difference between a Part and a Mass is, that a Mass may include, *per se*, many Parts, yet, in relation to a Whole, is no more than a single component. Perhaps the same distinction may be more simply expressed, if we define it as only a larger division, including several *parts*, which may be said to be analogous to what is termed the detail of a *Part*. Look at the ocean in a storm,—at that single wave. How it grows before us, building up its waters as with conscious life, till its huge head overlooks the mast! A million of lines intersect



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its surface, a myriad of bubbles fleck it with light; yet its terrible unity remains unbroken. Not a bubble or a line gives a thought of minuteness; they flash and flit, ere the eye can count them, leaving only their aggregate, in the indefinite sense of multitudinous motion: take them away, and you take from the *mass* the very sign of its power, that fearful impetus which makes it what it is,—a moving mountain of water.

We have thus endeavoured, in the opposite characters of the Sublime and the Gay or Magnificent, to exhibit the two extremes of Variety; of the intermediate degrees it is unnecessary to speak, since in these two is included all that is applicable to the rest.

Though it is of vital importance to every composition that there be variety of Lines, little can be said on the subject in addition to what has been advanced in relation to parts, that is, to shape and quantity; both having a common origin. By a line in Composition is meant something very different from the geometrical definition. Originally, it was no doubt used as a metaphor; but the needs of Art have long since converted this, and many other words of like application, (as *tone*, &c.) into technical terms. *Line* thus signifies the course or medium through which the eye is led from one part of the picture to another. The indication of this course is various and multiform, appertaining equally to shape, to color, and to light and dark; in a word, to whatever attracts and keeps the eye in motion. For the regulation of these lines there is no rule absolute, except that they vary and unite; nor is the last strictly necessary, it being sufficient if they so terminate that the transition from one to another is made naturally, and without effort, by the imagination. Nor can any laws be laid down as to their peculiar character: this must depend on the nature of the subject.

In the wild and stormy scenes of Salvator Rosa, they break upon us as with the angular flash of lightning; the eye is dashed up one precipice only to be dashed down another; then, suddenly hurried to the sky, it shoots up, almost in a direct line, to some sharp-edged rock; whence pitched, as it were, into a sea of clouds, bellying with circles, it partakes their motion, and seems to reel, to roll, and to plunge with them into the depths of air.

If we pass from Salvator to Claude, we shall find a system of lines totally different. Our first impression from Claude is that of perfect *unity*, and this we have even before we are conscious of a single image; as if, circumscribing his scenes by a magic circle, he had imposed his own mood on all who entered it. The *spell* then opens ere it seems to have begun, acting upon us with a vague sense of limitless expanse, yet so continuous, so gentle, so imperceptible in its remotest gradations, as scarcely to be felt, till, combining with unity, we find the feeling embodied in the complete image of intellectual



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repose,—fulness and rest. The mind thus disposed, the charmed eye glides into the scene: a soft, undulating light leads it on, from bank to bank, from shrub to shrub; now leaping and sparkling over pebbly brooks and sunny sands; now fainter and fainter, dying away down shady slopes, then seemingly quenched in some secluded dell; yet only for a moment,—for a dimmer ray again carries it onward, gently winding among the boles of trees and rambling vines, that, skirting the ascent, seem to hem in the twilight; then emerging into day, it flashes in sheets over towers and towns, and woods and streams, when it finally dips into an ocean, so far off, so twin-like with the sky, that the doubtful horizon, unmarked by a line, leaves no point of rest: and now, as in a flickering arch, the fascinated eye seems to sail upward like a bird, wheeling its flight through a mottled labyrinth of clouds, on to the zenith; whence, gently inflected by some shadowy mass, it slants again downward to a mass still deeper, and still to another, and another, until it falls into the darkness of some massive tree,—focused like midnight in the brightest noon: there stops the eye, instinctively closing, and giving place to the Soul, there to repose and to dream her dreams of romance and love.

From these two examples of their general effect, some notion may be gathered of the different systems of the two Artists; and though no mention has been made of the particular lines employed, their distinctive character may readily be inferred from the kind of motion given to the eye in the descriptions we have attempted. In the rapid, abrupt, contrasted, whirling movement in the one, we have an exposition of an irregular combination of curves and angles; while the simple combination of the parabola and the serpentine will account for all the imperceptible transitions in the other.

It would be easy to accumulate examples from other Artists who differ in the economy of line not only from these but from each other; as Raffaele, Michael Angelo, Correggio, Titian, Poussin,—in a word, every painter deserving the name of master: for lines here may be called the tracks of thought, in which we follow the author's mind through his imaginary creations. They hold, indeed, the same relation to Painting that versification does to Poetry, an element of style; for what is meant by a line in Painting is analogous to that which in the sister art distinguishes the abrupt gait of Crabbe from the sauntering walk of Cowley, and the "long, majestic march" of Dryden from the surging sweep of Milton.

Of Continuity little needs be said, since its uses are implied in the explanation of Line; indeed, all that can be added will be expressed in its essential relation to a *whole*, in which alone it differs from a mere line. For, though a line (as just explained) supposes a continuous course, yet a line, *per se*, does not necessarily imply any relation to other lines. It will still be a line, though standing alone; but the principle of continuity may be called the unifying spirit of every line. It is therefore that we have distinguished it as a separate principle.



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In fact, if we judge from feeling, the only true test, it is no paradox to say that the excess of variety must inevitably end in monotony; for, as soon as the sense of fatigue begins, every new variety but adds to the pain, till the succeeding impressions are at last resolved into continuous pain. But, supposing a limit to variety, where the mind may be pleasurably excited, the very sense of pleasure, when it reaches the extreme point, will create the desire of renewing it, and naturally carry it back to the point of starting; thus superinducing, with the renewed enjoyment, the fulness of pleasure, in the sense of a whole.

It is by this summing up, as it were, of the memory, through recurrence, not that we perceive,—which is instantaneous,—but that we enjoy any thing as a whole. If we have not observed it in others, some of us, perhaps, may remember it in ourselves, when we have stood before some fine picture, though with a sense of pleasure, yet for many minutes in a manner abstracted,—silently passing through all its harmonious transitions without the movement of a muscle, and hardly conscious of action, till we have suddenly found ourselves returning on our steps. Then it was,—as if we had no eyes till then,—that the magic Whole poured in upon us, and vouched for its truth in an outbreak of rapture.

The fourth and last division of our subject is the Harmony of Parts; or the essential agreement of one part with another, and of each with the whole. In addition to our first general definition, we may further observe, that by a Whole in Painting is signified the complete expression, by means of form, color, light, and shadow, of one thought, or series of thoughts, having for their end some particular truth, or sentiment, or action, or mood of mind. We say *thought*, because no images, however put together, can ever be separated by the mind from other and extraneous images, so as to comprise a positive whole, unless they be limited by some intellectual boundary. A picture wanting this may have fine parts, but is not a Composition, which implies parts united to each other, and also suited to some specific purpose, otherwise they cannot be known as united. Since Harmony, therefore, cannot be conceived of without reference to a whole, so neither can a whole be imagined without fitness of parts. To give this fitness, then, is the ultimate task and test of genius: it is, in fact, calling form and life out of what before was but a chaos of materials, and making them the subject and exponents of the will. As the master-principle, also, it is the disposer, regulator, and modifier of shape, line, and quantity, adding, diminishing, changing, shaping, till it becomes clear and intelligible, and it finally manifests itself in pleasurable identity with the harmony within us.

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To reduce the operation of this principle to precise rules is, perhaps, without the province of human power: we might else expect to see poets and painters made by recipe. As in many other operations of the mind, we must here be content to note a few of the more tangible facts, if we may be allowed the phrase, which have occasionally been gathered by observation during the process. The first fact presented is, that equal quantities, when coming together, produce monotony, and, if at all admissible, are only so when absolutely needed, at a proper distance, to echo back or recall the theme, which would otherwise be lost in the excess of variety. We speak of quantity here as of a mass, not of the minutiae; for *the essential components* of a part may often be *equal quantities*, (as in a piece of architecture, of armour, &c.,) which are analogous to poetic feet, for instance, a spondee. The same effect we find from parallel lines and repetition of shapes. Hence we obtain the law of a limited variety. The next is, that the quantities must be so disposed as to balance each other; otherwise, if all or too many of the larger be on one side, they will endanger the imaginary circle, or other figure, by which every composition is supposed to be bounded, making it appear “lop-sided,” or to be falling either in upon the smaller quantities, or out of the picture: from which we infer the necessity of balance. If, without others to counteract and restrain them, the parts converge, the eye, being forced to the centre, becomes stationary; in like manner, if all diverge, it is forced to fly off in tangents: as if the great laws of Attraction and Repulsion were here also essential, and illustrated in miniature. If we add to these Breadth, I believe we shall have enumerated all the leading phenomena of Harmony, which experience has enabled us to establish as rules. By *breadth* is meant such a massing of the quantities, whether by color, light, or shadow, as shall enable the eye to pass without obstruction, and by easy transitions, from one to another, so that it shall appear to take in the whole at a glance. This may be likened to both the exordium and peroration of a discourse, including as well the last as the first general idea. It is, in other words, a simple, connected, and concise exposition and summary of what the artist intends.

We have thus endeavoured to arrange and to give a logical permanency to the several principles of Composition. It is not to be supposed, however, that in these we have every principle that might be named; but they are all, as we conceive, that are of universal application. Of other minor, or rather personal ones, since they pertain to the individual, the number can only be limited by the variety of the human intellect, to which these may be considered as so many simple elementary guides; not to create genius, but to enable it to understand itself, and by a distinct knowledge of its own operations to correct its mistakes,—in



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a word, to establish the landmarks between the flats of commonplace and the barrens of extravagance. And, though the personal or individual principles referred to may not with propriety be cited as examples in a general treatise like the present, they are not only not to be overlooked, but are to be regarded by the student as legitimate objects of study. To the truism, that we can only judge of other minds by a knowledge of our own, we may add its converse as especially true. In that mysterious tract of the intellect, which we call the Imagination, there would seem to lie hid thousands of unknown forms, of which we are often for years unconscious, until they start up awakened by the footsteps of a stranger. Hence it is that the greatest geniuses, as presenting a wider field for excitement, are generally found to be the widest likers; not so much from affinity, or because they possess the precise kinds of excellence which they admire, but often from the *differences* which these very excellences in others, as the exciting cause, awaken in themselves. Such men may be said to be endowed with a double vision, an inward and an outward; the inward seeing not unfrequently the reverse of what is seen by the outward. It was this which caused Annibal Caracci to remark, on seeing for the first time a picture by Caravaggio, that he thought a style totally opposite might be made very captivating; and the hint, it is said, sunk deep into and was not lost on Guido, who soon after realized what his master had thus imagined. Perhaps no one ever caught more from others than Raffaello. I do not allude to his “borrowing,” so ingeniously, not soundly, defended by Sir Joshua, but rather to his excitability, (if I may here apply a modern term,)—that inflammable temperament, which took fire, as it were, from the very friction of the atmosphere. For there was scarce an excellence, within his knowledge, of his predecessors or contemporaries, which did not in a greater or less degree contribute to the developement of his powers; not as presenting models of imitation, but as shedding new light on his own mind, and opening to view its hidden treasures. Such to him were the forms of the Antique, of Leonardo da Vinci, and of Michael Angelo, and the breadth and color of Fra Bartolomeo,—lights that first made him acquainted with himself, not lights that he followed; for he was a follower of none. To how many others he was indebted for his impulses cannot now be known; but the new impetus he was known to have received from every new excellence has led many to believe, that, had he lived to see the works of Titian, he would have added to his grace, character, and form, and with equal originality, the splendor of color. “The design of Michael Angelo and the color of Titian,” was the inscription of Tintoretto over the door of his painting-room. Whether he intended to designate these two artists as his future models matters not; but that he did not follow them is evidenced in his works. Nor,



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indeed, could he: the temptation to *follow*, which his youthful admiration had excited, was met by an interdiction not easily withstood,—the decree of his own genius. And yet the decree had probably never been heard but for these very masters. Their presence stirred him; and, when he thought of serving, his teeming mind poured out its abundance, making *him* a master to future generations. To the forms of Michael Angelo he was certainly indebted for the elevation of his own; there, however, the inspiration ended. With Titian he was nearly allied in genius; yet he thought rather with than after him,—at times even beyond him. Titian, indeed, may be said to have first opened his eyes to the mysteries of nature; but they were no sooner opened, than he rushed into them with a rapidity and daring unwont to the more cautious spirit of his master; and, though irregular, eccentric, and often inferior, yet sometimes he made his way to poetical regions, of whose celestial hues even Titian himself had never dreamt.

We might go on thus with every great name in Art. But these examples are enough to show how much even the most original minds, not only may, but *must*, owe to others; for the social law of our nature applies no less to the intellect than to the affections. When applied to genius, it may be called the social inspiration, the simple statement of which seems to us of itself a solution of the oft-repeated question, “Why is it that genius always appears in clusters?” To Nature, indeed, we must all at last recur, as to the only true and permanent foundation of real excellence. But Nature is open to all men alike, in her beauty, her majesty, her grandeur, and her sublimity. Yet who will assert that all men see, or, if they see, are impressed by these her attributes alike? Nay, so great is the difference, that one might almost suppose them inhabitants of different worlds. Of Claude, for instance, it is hardly a metaphor to say that he lived in two worlds during his natural life; for Claude the pastry-cook could never have seen the same world that was made visible to Claude the painter. It was human sympathy, acting through human works, that gave birth to his intellect at the age of forty. There is something, perhaps, ludicrous in the thought of an infant of forty. Yet the fact is a solemn one, that thousands die whose minds have never been born.

We could not, perhaps, instance a stronger confutation of the vulgar error which opposes learning to genius, than the simple history of this remarkable man. In all that respects the mind, he was literally a child, till accident or necessity carried him to Rome; for, when the office of color-grinder, added to that of cook, by awakening his curiosity, first excited a love for the Art, his progress through its rudiments seems to have been scarcely less slow and painful than that of a child through the horrors of the alphabet. It was the struggle of one who was learning to think; but, the rudiments being mastered, he found himself suddenly possessed, not as yet of thought, but of new forms of language; then came thoughts, pouring from his mind, and filling them as moulds, without which they had never, perhaps, had either shape or consciousness.

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Now what was this new language but the product of other minds,—of successive minds, amending, enlarging, elaborating, through successive ages, till, fitted to all its wants, it became true to the Ideal, and the vernacular tongue of genius through all time? The first inventor of verse was but the prophetic herald of Homer, Shakspeare, and Milton. And what was Rome then but the great University of Art, where all this accumulated learning was treasured?

Much has been said of self-taught geniuses, as opposed to those who have been instructed by others: but the distinction, it appears to us, is without a difference; for it matters not whether we learn in a school or by ourselves,—we cannot learn any thing without in some way recurring to other minds. Let us imagine a poet who had never read, never heard, never conversed with another. Now if he will not be taught in any thing by another, he must strictly preserve this independent negation. Truly the verses of such a poet would be a miracle. Of similar self-taught painters we have abundant examples in our aborigines,—but nowhere else.

But, while we maintain, as a positive law of our nature, the necessity of mental intercourse with our fellow-creatures, in order to the full developement of the *individual*, we are far from implying that any thing which is actually taken from others can by any process become our own, that is, original. We may reverse, transpose, diminish, or add to it, and so skilfully that no scam or mutilation shall be detected; and yet we shall not make it appear original,—in other words, *true*, the offspring of *one* mind. A borrowed thought will always be borrowed; as it will be felt as such in its *effect*, even while we are ourselves unconscious of the fact: for it will want that *effect of life*, which only the first mind can give it[3].

Of the multifarious retailers of the second-hand in style, the class is so numerous as to make a selection difficult: they meet us at every step in the history of the Art. One instance, however, may suffice, and we select Vernet, as uniting in himself a singular and striking example of the *false* and the *true*; and also as the least invidious instance, inasmuch as we may prove our position by opposing him to himself.

In the landscapes of Vernet, (when not mere views,) we see the imitator of Salvator, or rather copyist of his lines; and these we have in all their angular nakedness, where rocks, trees, and mountains are so jagged, contorted, and tumbled about, that nothing but an explosion could account for their assemblage. They have not the relation which we sometimes find even in a random collocation, as in the accidental pictures of a discolored wall; for the careful hand of the contriver is traced through all this disorder; nay, the very execution, the conventional dash of pencil, betrays what a lawyer would call the *malice prepense* of the Artist in their strange disfigurement. To many this may appear like hypercriticism; but we sincerely believe that no one, even among his admirers, has ever been deceived into a real sympathy with such technical flourishes: they are felt as factitious; as mere diagrams of composition deduced from pictures.



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Now let us look at one of his Storms at Sea, when he wrought from his own mind. A dark leaden atmosphere prepares us for something fearful: suddenly a scene of tumult, fierce, wild, disastrous, bursts upon us; and we feel the shock drive, as it were, every other thought from the mind: the terrible vision now seizes the imagination, filling it with sound and motion: we see the clouds fly, the furious waves one upon another dashing in conflict, and rolling, as if in wrath, towards the devoted ship: the wind blows from the canvas; we hear it roar through her shrouds; her masts bend like twigs, and her last forlorn hope, the close-reefed foresail, streams like a tattered flag: a terrible fascination still constrains us to look, and a dim, rocky shore looms on her lee: then comes the dreadful cry of "Breakers ahead!" the crew stand appalled, and the master's trumpet is soundless at his lips. This is the uproar of nature, and we *feel* it to be *true*; for here every line, every touch, has a meaning. The ragged clouds, the huddled waves, the prostrate ship, though forced by contrast into the sharpest angles, all agree, opposed as they seem,—evolving harmony out of apparent discord. And this is Genius, which no criticism can ever disprove.

But all great names, it is said, must have their shadows. In our Art they have many shadows, or rather I should say, reflections; which are more or less distinct according to their proximity to the living originals, and, like the images in opposite mirrors, becoming themselves reflected and re-reflected with a kind of battledoor alternation, grow dimmer and dimmer till they vanish from mere distance.

Thus have the great schools of Italy, Flanders, and Holland lived and walked after death, till even their ghosts have become familiar to us.

We would not, however, be understood as asserting that we receive pleasure only from original works: this would be contradicting the general experience. We admit, on the contrary, that there are hundreds, nay, thousands, of pictures having no pretensions to originality of any kind, which still afford pleasure; as, indeed, do many things out of the Art, which we know to be second-hand, or imperfect, and even trifling. Thus grace of manner, for instance, though wholly unaided by a single definite quality, will often delight us, and a ready elocution, with scarce a particle of sense, make commonplace agreeable; and it seems to be, that the pain of mental inertness renders action so desirable, that the mind instinctively surrounds itself with myriads of objects, having little to recommend them but the property of keeping it from stagnating. And we are far from denying a certain value to any of these, provided they be innocent: there are times when even the wisest man will find commonplace wholesome. All we have attempted to show is, that the effect of an original work, as opposed to an imitation, is marked by a difference, not of degree merely, but of kind; and that this difference cannot fail to be felt, not, indeed, by every one, but by any competent judge, that is, any one in whom is developed, by natural exercise, that internal sense by which the spirit of life is discerned.



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Every original work becomes such from the infusion, so to speak, of the mind of the Author; and of this the fresh materials of nature alone seem susceptible. The imitated works of man cannot be endued with a second life, that is, with a second mind: they are to the imitator as air already breathed.

* * * * *

What has been said in relation to Form—that the works of our predecessors, so far as they are recognized as true, are to be considered as an extension of Nature, and therefore proper objects of study—is equally applicable to Composition. But it is not to be understood that this extended Nature (if we may so term it) is in any instance to be imitated as a *whole*, which would be bringing our minds into bondage to another; since, as already shown in the second Discourse, every original work is of necessity impressed with the mind of its author. If it be asked, then, what is the advantage of such study, we shall endeavour to show, that it is not merely, as some have supposed, in enriching the mind with materials, but rather in widening our view of excellence, and, by consequent excitement, expanding our own powers of observation, reflection, and performance. By increasing the power of performance, we mean enlarging our knowledge of the technical process, or the medium through which thought is expressed; a most important species of knowledge, which, if to be otherwise attained, is at least most readily learned from those who have left us the result of their experience. This technical process, which has been well called the language of the Art, includes, of course, all that pertains to Composition, which, as the general medium, also contains most of the elements of this peculiar tongue.

From the gradual progress of the various arts of civilization, it would seem that only under the action of some great *social* law can man arrive at the full developement of his powers. In our Art especially is this true; for the experience of one man must necessarily be limited, particularly if compared with the endless varieties of form and effect which diversify the face of Nature; and the finest of these, too, in their very nature transient, or of rare occurrence, and only known to occur to those who are prepared to seize them in their rapid transit; so that in one short life, and with but one set of senses, the greatest genius can learn but little. The Artist, therefore, must needs owe much to the living, and more to the dead, who are virtually his companions, inasmuch as through their works they still live to our sympathies. Besides, in our great predecessors we may be said to possess a multiplied life, if life be measured by the number of acts,—which, in this case, we may all appropriate to ourselves, as it were by a glance. For the dead in Art may well be likened to the hardy pioneers of our own country, who have successively cleared before us the swamps and forests that would have obstructed our progress, and opened to us lands which the efforts of no individual, however persevering, would enable him to reach.



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Aphorisms.

Sentences Written by Mr. Allston on the Walls of His Studio.

1. "No genuine work of Art ever was, or ever can be, produced but for its own sake; if the painter does not conceive to please himself, he will not finish to please the world."—FUSELI.

2. If an Artist love his Art for its own sake, he will delight in excellence wherever he meets it, as well in the work of another as in his own. This is the test of a true love.

3. Nor is this genuine love compatible with a craving for distinction; where the latter predominates, it is sure to betray itself before contemporary excellence, either by silence, or (as a bribe to the conscience) by a modicum of praise.

The enthusiasm of a mind so influenced is confined to itself.

4. Distinction is the consequence, never the object, of a great mind.

5. The love of gain never made a Painter; but it has marred many.

6. The most common disguise of Envy is in the praise of what is subordinate.

7. Selfishness in Art, as in other things, is sensibility kept at home.

8. The Devil's heartiest laugh is at a detracting witticism. Hence the phrase "devilish good" has sometimes a literal meaning.

9. The most intangible, and therefore the worst, kind of lie is a half truth. This is the peculiar device of a *conscientious* detractor.

10. Reverence is an ennobling sentiment; it is felt to be degrading only by the vulgar mind, which would escape the sense of its own littleness by elevating itself into an antagonist of what is above it. He that has no pleasure in looking up is not fit so much as to look down. Of such minds are mannerists in Art; in the world, tyrants of all sorts.

11. No right judgment can ever be formed on any subject having a moral or intellectual bearing without benevolence; for so strong is man's natural self-bias, that, without this restraining principle, he insensibly becomes a competitor in all such cases presented to his mind; and, when the comparison is thus made personal, unless the odds be immeasurably against him, his decision will rarely be impartial. In other words, no one can see any thing as it really is through the misty spectacles of self-love. We must wish well to another in order to do him justice. Now the virtue in this good-will is not to blind us to his faults, but to our own rival and interposing merits.



12. In the same degree that we overrate ourselves, we shall underrate others; for injustice allowed at home is not likely to be corrected abroad. Never, therefore, expect justice from a vain man; if he has the negative magnanimity not to disparage you, it is the most you can expect.

13. The Phrenologists are right in placing the organ of self-love in the back of the head, it being there where a vain man carries his intellectual light; the consequence of which is, that every man he approaches is obscured by his own shadow.



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14. Nothing is rarer than a solitary lie; for lies breed like Surinam toads; you cannot tell one but out it comes with a hundred young ones on its back.

15. If the whole world should agree to speak nothing but truth, what an abridgment it would make of speech! And what an unravelling there would be of the invisible webs which men, like so many spiders, now weave about each other! But the contest between Truth and Falsehood is now pretty well balanced. Were it not so, and had the latter the mastery, even language would soon become extinct, from its very uselessness. The present superfluity of words is the result of the warfare.

16. A witch's skiff cannot more easily sail in the teeth of the wind, than the human eye lie against fact; but the truth will oftener quiver through lips with a lie upon them.

17. An open brow with a clenched hand shows any thing but an open purpose.

18. It is a hard matter for a man to lie *all over*. Nature having provided king's evidence in almost every member. The hand will sometimes act as a vane to show which way the wind blows, when every feature is set the other way; the knees smite together, and sound the alarm of fear, under a fierce countenance; and the legs shake with anger, when all above is calm.

19. Nature observes a variety even in her correspondences; insomuch that in parts which seem but repetitions there will be found a difference. For instance, in the human countenance, the two sides of which are never identical. Whenever she deviates into monotony, the deviation is always marked as an exception by some striking deficiency; as in idiots, who are the only persons that laugh equally on both sides of the mouth.

The insipidity of many of the antique Statues may be traced to the false assumption of identity in the corresponding parts. No work wrought by *feeling* (which, after all, is the ultimate rule of Genius) was ever marked by this monotony.

20. He is but half an orator who turns his hearers into spectators. The best gestures (*quoad* the speaker) are those which he cannot help. An unconscious thump of the fist or jerk of the elbow is more to the purpose, (whatever that may be,) than the most graceful *cut-and-dried* action. It matters not whether the orator personates a trip-hammer or a wind-mill; if his mill but move with the grist, or his hammer knead the iron beneath it, he will not fail of his effect. An impertinent gesture is more likely to knock down the orator than his opponent.

21. The only true independence is in humility; for the humble man expects nothing, and cannot be mortified,—expects nothing, and cannot be disappointed. Humility is also a healing virtue; it will cicatrize a thousand wounds, which pride would keep for ever open. But humility is not the virtue of a fool; since it is not consequent upon any

comparison between ourselves and others, but between what we are and what we ought to be,—which no man ever was.



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22. The greatest of all fools is the proud fool,—who is at the mercy of every fool he meets.
23. There is an essential meanness in the wish to *get the better* of any one. The only competition worthy, of a wise man is with himself.
24. He that argues for victory is but a gambler in words, seeking to enrich himself by another's loss.
25. Some men make their ignorance the measure of excellence; these are, of course, very fastidious critics; for, knowing little, they can find but little to like.
26. The Painter who seeks popularity in Art closes the door upon his own genius.
27. Popular excellence in one age is but the *mechanism* of what was good in the preceding; in Art, the *technic*.
28. Make no man your idol, for the best man must have faults; and his faults will insensibly become yours, in addition to your own. This is as true in Art as in morals.
29. A man of genius should not aim at praise, except in the form of *sympathy*; this assures him of his success, since it meets the feeling which possessed himself.
30. Originality in Art is the individualizing the Universal; in other words, the impregnating some general truth with the individual mind.
31. The painter who is content with the praise of the world in respect to what does not satisfy himself, is not an artist, but an artisan; for though his reward be only praise, his pay is that of a mechanic,—for his time, and not for his art.
32. *Reputation* is but a synonyme of *popularity*; dependent on suffrage, to be increased or diminished at the will of the voters. It is the creature, so to speak, of its particular age, or rather of a particular state of society; consequently, dying with that which sustained it. Hence we can scarcely go over a page of history, that we do not, as in a church-yard, tread upon some buried reputation. But fame cannot be voted down, having its immediate foundation in the essential. It is the eternal shadow of excellence, from which it can never be separated; nor is it ever made visible but in the light of an intellect kindred with that of its author. It is that light which projects the shadow which is seen of the multitude, to be wondered at and revered, even while so little comprehended as to be often confounded with the substance,—the substance being admitted from the shadow, as a matter of faith. It is the economy of Providence to provide such lights: like rising and setting stars, they follow each other through successive ages: and thus the monumental form of Genius stands for ever relieved against its own imperishable shadow.



33. All excellence of every kind is but variety of truth. If we wish, then, for something beyond the true, we wish for that which is false. According to this test, how little truth is there in Art! Little indeed! but how much is that little to him who feels it!



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34. Fame does not depend on the *will* of any man, but Reputation may be given or taken away. Fame is the sympathy of kindred intellects, and sympathy is not a subject of *willing*; while Reputation, having its source in the popular voice, is a sentence which may either be uttered or suppressed at pleasure. Reputation, being essentially contemporaneous, is always at the mercy of the envious and the ignorant; but Fame, whose very birth is *posthumous*, and which is only known *to exist by the echo of its footsteps through congenial minds*, can neither be increased nor diminished by any degree of will.

35. What *light* is in the natural world, such is *fame* in the intellectual; both requiring an *atmosphere* in order to become perceptible. Hence the fame of Michael Angelo is, to some minds, a nonentity; even as the sun itself would be invisible *in vacuo*.

36. Fame has no necessary conjunction with Praise: it may exist without the breath of a word; it is a *recognition of excellence*, which *must be felt*, but need not be *spoken*. Even the envious must feel it,—feel it, and hate it, in silence.

37. I cannot believe that any man who deserved fame ever labored for it; that is, *directly*. For, as fame is but the contingent of excellence, it would be like an attempt to project a shadow, before its substance was obtained. Many, however, have so fancied. “I write, I paint, for fame,” has often been repeated: it should have been, “I write, I paint, for reputation.” All anxiety, therefore, about Fame should be placed to the account of Reputation.

38. A man may be pretty sure that he has not attained *excellence*, when it is not all in all to him. Nay, I may add, that, if he looks beyond it, he has not reached it. This is not the less true for being good *Irish*.

39. An original mind is rarely understood, until it has been *reflected* from some half-dozen congenial with it, so averse are men to admitting the *true* in an unusual form; whilst any novelty, however fantastic, however false, is greedily swallowed. Nor is this to be wondered at; for all truth demands a response, and few people care to *think*, yet they must have something to supply the place of thought. Every mind would appear original, if every man had the power of *projecting* his own into the mind of others.

40. All effort at originality must end either in the quaint or the monstrous. For no man knows himself as an original; he can only believe it on the report of others to whom *he is made known*, as he is by the projecting power before spoken of.



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41. There is one thing which no man, however generously disposed, can *give*, but which every one, however poor, is bound to *pay*. This is Praise. He cannot give it, because it is not his own,—since what is dependent for its very existence on something in another can never become to him a *possession*; nor can he justly withhold it, when the presence of merit claims it as a *consequence*. As praise, then, cannot be made a *gift*, so, neither, when not his due, can any man receive it: he may think he does, but he receives only *words*; for *desert* being the essential condition of praise, there can be no reality in the one without the other. This is no fanciful statement; for, though praise may be withheld by the ignorant or envious, it cannot be but that, in the course of time, an existing merit will, on *some one*, produce its effects; inasmuch as the existence of any cause without its effect is an impossibility. A fearful truth lies at the bottom of this, an *irreversible justice* for the weal or woe of him who confirms or violates it.

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[From the back of a pencil sketch.]

Let no man trust to the gentleness, the generosity, or seeming goodness of his heart, in the hope that they alone can safely bear him through the temptations of this world. This is a state of probation, and a perilous passage to the true beginning of life, where even the best natures need continually to be reminded of their weakness, and to find their only security in steadily referring all their thoughts, acts, affections, to the ultimate end of their being: yet where, imperfect as we are, there is no obstacle too mighty, no temptation too strong, to the truly humble in heart, who, distrusting themselves, seek to be sustained only by that holy Being who is life and power, and who, in his love and mercy, has promised to give to those that ask.—Such were my reflections, to which I was giving way on reading this melancholy story.

If he is satisfied with them, he may rest assured that he is neither fitted for this world nor the next. Even in this, there are wrongs and sorrows which no human remedy can reach;—no, tears cannot restore what is lost.

* * * * *

[Written in a book of sketches, with a pencil.]

A real debt of gratitude—that is, founded on a disinterested act of kindness—cannot be cancelled by any subsequent unkindness on the part of our benefactor. If the favor be of a pecuniary nature, we may, indeed, by returning an equal or greater sum, balance the moneyed part; but we cannot *liquidate* the *kind motive* by the setting off against it any number of unkind ones. For an after injury can no more *undo* a previous kindness, than we can *prevent* in the future what has happened in the past. So neither can a good act undo an ill one: a fearful truth! For good and evil



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have a moral *life*, which nothing in time can extinguish; the instant they *exist*, they start for Eternity. How, then, can a man who has *once* sinned, and who has not of *himself* cleansed his soul, be fit for heaven where no sin can enter? I seek not to enter into the mystery of the *atonement*, “which even the angels sought to comprehend and could not”; but I feel its truth in an unutterable conviction, and that, without it, all flesh must perish. Equally deep, too, and unalienable, is my conviction that “the fruit of sin is misery.” A second birth to the soul is therefore a necessity which sin *forces* upon us. Ay,—but not against the desperate *will* that rejects it.

This conclusion was not anticipated when I wrote the first sentence of the preceding paragraph. But it does not surprise me. For it is but a recurrence of what I have repeatedly experienced; namely, that I never lighted on *any truth* which I *inwardly felt* as such, however apparently remote from our religious being, (as, for instance, in the philosophy of my art,) that, by following it out, did not find its illustration and confirmation in some great doctrine of the Bible,—the only true philosophy, the sole fountain of light, where the dark questions of the understanding which have so long stood, like chaotic spectres, between the fallen soul and its reason, at once lose their darkness and their terror.

The Hypochondriac.[4]

He would not taste, but swallowed life at once;
And scarce had reached his prime ere he had bolted,
With all its garnish, mixed of sweet and sour,
Full fourscore years. For he, in truth, did wot not
What most he craved, and so devoured all;
Then, with his gases, followed Indigestion,
Making it food for night-mares and their foals.

Bridgen.[5]

It was the opinion of an ancient philosopher, that we can have no want for which Nature does not provide an appropriate gratification. As it regards our physical wants, this appears to be true. But there are moral cravings which extend beyond the world we live in; and, were we in a heathen age, would serve us with an unanswerable argument for the immortality of the soul. That these cravings are felt by all, there can be no doubt; yet that all feel them in the same degree would be as absurd to suppose, as that every man possesses equal sensibility or understanding. Boswell's desires, from his own account, seem to have been limited to reading Shakspeare in the other world,—whether with or without his commentators, he has left us to guess; and Newton probably pined for the sight of those distant stars whose light has not yet reached us. What originally was the particular craving of my own mind I cannot now recall; but that I had, even in



my boyish days, an insatiable desire after something which always eluded me, I well remember. As I grew into manhood, my desires became less definite; and by the time I had passed through college, they seemed to have resolved themselves into a general passion for *doing*.



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It is needless to enumerate the different subjects which one after another engaged me. Mathematics, metaphysics, natural and moral philosophy, were each begun, and each in turn given up in a passion of love and disgust.

It is the fate of all inordinate passions to meet their extremes; so was it with mine. Could I have pursued any of these studies with moderation, I might have been to this day, perhaps, both learned and happy. But I could be moderate in nothing. Not content with being employed, I must always be *busy*; and business, as every one knows, if long continued, must end in fatigue, and fatigue in disgust, and disgust in change, if that be practicable,—which unfortunately was my case.

The restlessness occasioned by these half-finished studies brought on a severe fit of self-examination. Why is it, I asked myself, that these learned works, which have each furnished their authors with sufficient excitement to effect their completion, should thus weary me before I get midway into them? It is plain enough. As a reader I am merely a recipient, but the composer is an active agent; a vast difference! And now I can account for the singular pleasure, which a certain bad poet of my acquaintance always took in inflicting his verses on every one who would listen to him; each perusal being but a sort of mental echo of the original bliss of composition. I will set about writing immediately.

Having, time out of mind, heard the epithet *great* coupled with Historians, it was that, I believe, inclined me to write a history. I chose my subject, and began collating, and transcribing, night and day, as if I had not another hour to live; and on I went with the industry of a steam-engine; when it one day occurred to me, that, though I had been laboring for months, I had not yet had occasion for one original thought. Pshaw! said I, 't is only making new clothes out of old ones. I will have nothing more to do with history.

As it is natural for a mind suddenly disgusted with mechanic toil to seek relief from its opposite, it can easily be imagined that my next resource was Poetry. Every one rhymes now-a-days, and so can I. Shall I write an Epic, or a Tragedy, or a Metrical Romance? Epics are out of fashion; even Homer and Virgil would hardly be read in our time, but that people are unwilling to admit their schooling to have been thrown away. As to Tragedy, I am a modern, and it is a settled thing that no modern *can* write a tragedy; so I must not attempt that. Then for Metrical Romances,—why, they are now manufactured; and, as the Edinburgh Review says, may be “imported” by us “in bales.” I will bind myself to no particular class, but give free play to my imagination. With this resolution I went to bed, as one going to be inspired. The morning came; I ate my breakfast, threw up the window, and placed myself in my elbow-chair before it. An hour passed, and nothing occurred to me. But this I ascribed to a fit of laughter



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that seized me, at seeing a duck made drunk by eating rum-cherries. I turned my back on the window. Another hour followed, then another, and another: I was still as far from poetry as ever; every object about me seemed bent against my abstraction; the card-racks fascinating me like serpents, and compelling me to read, as if I would get them by heart, "Dr. Joblin," "Mr. Cumberback," "Mr. Milton Bull," &c. &c. I took up my pen, drew a sheet of paper from my writing-desk, and fixed my eyes upon that;—'t was all in vain; I saw nothing on it but the watermark, *D. Ames*. I laid down the pen, closed my eyes, and threw my head back in the chair. "Are you waiting to be shaved, Sir?" said a familiar voice. I started up, and overturned my servant. "No, blockhead!"—"I am waiting to be inspired";—but this I added mentally. What is the cause of my difficulty? said I. Something within me seemed to reply, in the words of Lear, "Nothing comes of nothing." Then I must seek a subject. I ran over a dozen in a few minutes, chose one after another, and, though twenty thoughts very readily occurred on each, I was fain to reject them all; some for wanting pith, some for belonging to prose, and others for having been worn out in the service of other poets. In a word, my eyes began to open on the truth, and I felt convinced that *that* only was poetry which a man writes because he cannot help writing; the irrepressible effluence of his secret being on every thing in sympathy with it,—a kind of *flowering* of the soul amid the warmth and the light of nature. I am no poet, I exclaimed, and I will not disfigure Mr. Ames with commonplace verses.

I know not how I should have borne this second disappointment, had not the title of a new Novel, which then came into my head, suggested a trial in that branch of letters. I will write a Novel. Having come to this determination, the next thing was to collect materials. They must be sought after, said I, for my late experiment has satisfied me that I might wait for ever in my elbow-chair, and they would never come to me; they must be toiled for,—not in books, if I would not deal in second-hand,—but in the world, that inexhaustible storehouse of all kinds of originals. I then turned over in my mind the various characters I had met with in life; amongst these a few only seemed fitted for any story, and those rather as accessories; such as a politician who hated popularity, a sentimental grave-digger, and a metaphysical rope-dancer; but for a hero, the grand nucleus of my fable, I was sorely at a loss. This, however, did not discourage me. I knew he might be found in the world, if I would only take the trouble to look for him. For this purpose I jumped into the first stage-coach that passed my door; it was immaterial whither bound, my object being men, not places. My first day's journey offered nothing better than a sailor who rebuked a member of Congress for swearing. But at the third



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stage, on the second day, as we were changing horses, I had the good fortune to light on a face which gave promise of all I wanted. It was so remarkable that I could not take my eyes from it; the forehead might have been called handsome but for a pair of enormous eyebrows, that seemed to project from it like the quarter-galleries of a ship, and beneath these were a couple of small, restless, gray eyes, which, glancing in every direction from under their shaggy brows, sparkled like the intermittent light of fire-flies; in the nose there was nothing remarkable, except that it was crested by a huge wart with a small grove of black hairs; but the mouth made ample amends, being altogether indescribable, for it was so variable in its expression, that I could not tell whether it had most of the sardonic, the benevolent, or the sanguinary, appearing to exhibit them all in succession with equal vividness. My attention, however, was mainly fixed by the sanguinary; it came across me like an east wind, and I felt a cold sweat damping my linen; and when this was suddenly succeeded by the benevolent, I was sure I had got at the secret of his character,—no less than that of a murderer haunted by remorse. Delighted with this discovery, I made up my mind to follow the owner of the face wherever he went, till I should learn his history. I accordingly made an end of my journey for the present, upon learning that the stranger was to pass some time in the place where we stopped. For three days I made minute inquiries; but all I could gather was, that he had been a great traveller, though of what country no one could tell me. On the fourth day, finding him on the move, I took passage in the same coach. Now, said I, is my time of harvest. But I was mistaken; for, in spite of all the lures which I threw out to draw him into a communicative humor, I could get nothing from him but monosyllables. So far from abating my ardor, this reserve only the more whetted my curiosity. At last we stopped at a pleasant village in New Jersey. Here he seemed a little better known; the innkeeper inquiring after his health, and the hostler asking if the balls he had supplied him with fitted the barrels of his pistols. The latter inquiry I thought was accompanied by a significant glance, that indicated a knowledge on the hostler's part of more than met the ear; I determined therefore to sound him. After a few general remarks, that had nothing to do with any thing, by way of introduction, I began by hinting some random surmises as to the use to which the stranger might have put the pistols he spoke of; inquired whether he was in the habit of loading them at night; whether he slept with them under his pillow; if he was in the practice of burning a light while he slept; and if he did not sometimes awake the family by groans, or by walking with agitated steps in his chamber. But it was all in vain, the man protesting that he never knew any thing ill of him. Perhaps, thought I, the hostler having overheard his midnight



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wanderings, and detected his crime, is paid for keeping the secret. I pumped the landlord, and the landlady, and the barmaid, and the chambermaid, and the waiters, and the cook, and every thing that could speak in the house; still to no purpose, each ending his reply with, "Lord, Sir, he's as honest a gentleman, for aught I know, as any in the world"; then would come a question,—“But perhaps *you* know something of him yourself?” Whether my answer, though given in the negative, was uttered in such a tone as to imply an affirmative, thereby exciting suspicion, I cannot tell; but it is certain that I soon after perceived a visible change towards him in the deportment of the whole household. When he spoke to the waiters, their jaws fell, their fingers spread, their eyes rolled, with every symptom of involuntary action; and once, when he asked the landlady to take a glass of wine with him, I saw her, under pretence of looking out of the window, throw it into the street; in short, the very scullion fled at his approach, and a chambermaid dared not enter his room unless under guard of a large mastiff. That these circumstances were not unobserved by him will appear by what follows.

Though I had come no nearer to facts, this general suspicion, added to the remarkable circumstance that no one had ever heard his name (being known only as *the gentleman*) gave every day new life to my hopes. He is the very man, said I; and I began to revel in all the luxury of detection, when, as I was one night undressing for bed, my attention was caught by the following letter on my table.

“SIR,

“If you are the gentleman you would be thought, you will not refuse satisfaction for the diabolical calumnies you have so unprovokedly circulated against an innocent man.

“Your obedient servant,

“TIMOLEON BUB.

“P.S. I shall expect you at five o'clock to-morrow morning, at the three elms, by the river-side.”

This invitation, as may be well imagined, discomposed me not a little. Who Mr. Bub was, or in what way I had injured him, puzzled me exceedingly. Perhaps, thought I, he has mistaken me for another person; if so, my appearing on the ground will soon set matters right. With this persuasion I went to bed, somewhat calmer than I should otherwise have been; nay, I was even composed enough to divert myself with the folly of one bearing so vulgar an appellation taking it into his head to play the *man of honor*, and could not help a waggish feeling of curiosity to see if his name and person were in keeping.



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I woke myself in the morning with a loud laugh, for I had dreamt of meeting, in the redoubtable Mr. Bub, a little pot-bellied man, with a round face, a red snub-nose, and a pair of gooseberry wall-eyes. My fit of pleasantry was far from passed off when I came in sight of the fatal elms. I saw my antagonist pacing the ground with considerable violence. Ah! said I, he is trying to escape from his unheroic name! and I laughed again at the conceit; but, as I drew a little nearer, there appeared a majestic altitude in his figure very unlike what I had seen in my dream, and my laugh began to stiffen into a kind of rigid grin. There now came upon me something very like a misgiving that the affair might turn out to be no joke. I felt an unaccountable wish that this Mr. Bub had never been born; still I advanced: but if an aerolite had fallen at my feet, I could not have been more startled, than when I found in the person of my challenger—the mysterious stranger. The consequences of my curiosity immediately rushed upon me, and I was no longer at a loss in what way I had injured him. All my merriment seemed to curdle within me; and I felt like a dog that had got his head into a jug, and suddenly finds he cannot extricate it. “Well met, Sir,” said the stranger; “now take your ground, and abide the consequences of your infernal insinuations.” “Upon my word,” replied I, —“upon my honor, Sir,”—and there I stuck, for in truth I knew not what it was I was going to say; when the stranger’s second, advancing, exclaimed, in a voice which I immediately recognized, “Why, zounds! Rainbow, are *you* the man?” “Is it you, Harman?” “What!” continued he, “my old classmate Rainbow turned slanderer? Impossible! Indeed, Mr. Bub, there must be some mistake here.” “None, Sir,” said the stranger; “I have it on the authority of my respectable landlord, that, ever since this gentleman’s arrival, he has been incessant in his attempts to blacken my character with every person at the inn.” “Nay, my friend”—But I put an end to Harman’s further defence of me, by taking him aside, and frankly confessing the whole truth. It was with some difficulty I could get through the explanation, being frequently interrupted with bursts of laughter from my auditor; which, indeed, I now began to think very natural. In a word, to cut the story short, my friend having repeated the conference verbatim to Mr. Bub, he was good-natured enough to join in the mirth, saying, with one of his best sardonics, he “had always had a misgiving that his unlucky ugly face would one day or other be the death of somebody.” Well, we passed the day together, and having cracked a social bottle after dinner, parted, I believe, as heartily friends as we should have been (which is saying a great deal) had he indeed proved the favorite villain in my Novel. But, alas! with the loss of my villain, away went the Novel.



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Here again I was at a stand; and in vain did I torture my brains for another pursuit. But why should I seek one? In fortune I have a competence,—why not be as independent in mind? There are thousands in the world whose sole object in life is to attain the means of living without toil; and what is any literary pursuit but a series of mental labor, ay, and oftentimes more wearying to the spirits than that of the body. Upon the whole, I came to the conclusion, that it was a very foolish thing to do any thing. So I seriously set about trying to do nothing.

Well, what with whistling, hammering down all the nails in the house that had started, paring my nails, pulling my fire to pieces and rebuilding it, changing my clothes to full dress though I dined alone, trying to make out the figure of a Cupid on my discolored ceiling, and thinking of a lady I had not thought of for ten years before, I got along the first week tolerably well. But by the middle of the second week,—’t was horrible! the hours seemed to roll over me like mill-stones. When I awoke in the morning I felt like an Indian devotee, the day coming upon me like the great temple of Juggernaut; cracking of my bones beginning after breakfast; and if I had any respite, it was seldom for more than half an hour, when a newspaper seemed to stop the wheels;—then away they went, crack, crack, noon and afternoon, till I found myself by night reduced to a perfect jelly,—good for nothing but to be ladled into bed, with a greater horror than ever at the thought of sunrise.

This will never do, said I; a toad in the heart of a tree lives a more comfortable life than a nothing-doing man; and I began to perceive a very deep meaning in the truism of “something being better than nothing.” But is a precise object always necessary to the mind? No: if it be but occupied, no matter with what. That may easily be done. I have already tried the sciences, and made abortive attempts in literature, but I have never yet tried what is called general reading;—that, thank Heaven, is a resource inexhaustible. I will henceforth read only for amusement. My first experiment in this way was on Voyages and Travels, with occasional dippings into Shipwrecks, Murders, and Ghost-stories. It succeeded beyond my hopes; month after month passing away like days, and as for days,—I almost fancied that I could see the sun move. How comfortable, thought I, thus to travel over the world in my closet! how delightful to double Cape Horn and cross the African Desert in my rocking-chair,—to traverse Caffraria and the Mogul’s dominions in the same pleasant vehicle! This is living to some purpose; one day dining on barbecued pigs in Otaheite; the next in danger of perishing amidst the snows of Terra del Fuego; then to have a lion cross my path in the heart of Africa; to run for my life from a wounded rhinoceros, and sit, by mistake, on a sleeping boa-constrictor;—this, this, said I, is life! Even the dangers of the



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sea were but healthful stimulants. If I met with a tornado, it was only an agreeable variety; water-spouts and ice-islands gave me no manner of alarm; and I have seldom been more composed than when catching a whale. In short, the ease with which I thus circumnavigated the globe, and conversed with all its varieties of inhabitants, expanded my benevolence; I found every place, and everybody in it, even to the Hottentots, vastly agreeable. But, alas! I was doomed to discover that this could not last for ever. Though I was still curious, there were no longer curiosities; for the world is limited, and new countries, and new people, like every thing else, wax stale on acquaintance; even ghosts and hurricanes become at last familiar; and books grow old, like those who read them.

I was now at what sailors call a dead lift; being too old to build castles for the future, and too dissatisfied with the life I had led to look back on the past. In this state of mind, I bought me a snuffbox; for, as I could not honestly recommend my disjointed self to any decent woman, it seemed a kind of duty in me to contract such habits as would effectually prevent my taking in the lady I had once thought of. I set to, snuffing away till I made my nose sore, and lost my appetite. I then threw my snuffbox into the fire, and took to cigars. This change appeared to revive me. For a short time I thought myself in Elysium, and wondered I had never tried them before. Thou fragrant weed! O, that I were a Dutch poet, I exclaimed, that I might render due honor to thy unspeakable virtues! Ineffable tobacco! Every puff seemed like oil poured upon troubled waters, and I felt an inexpressible calmness stealing over my frame; in truth, it seemed like a benevolent spirit reconciling my soul to my body. But moderation, as I have before said, was never one of my virtues. I walked my room, pouring out volumes like a moving glass-house. My apartment was soon filled with smoke; I looked in the glass and hardly knew myself, my eyes peering at me, through the curling atmosphere, like those of a poodle. I then retired to the opposite end, and surveyed the furniture; nothing retained its original form or position;—the tables and chairs seemed to loom from the floor, and my grandfather's picture to thrust forward its nose like a French-horn, while that of my grandmother, who was reckoned a beauty in her day, looked, in her hoop, like her husband's wig-block stuck on a tub. Whether this was a signal for the fiends within me to begin their operations, I know not; but from that day I began to be what is called nervous. The uninterrupted health I had hitherto enjoyed now seemed the greatest curse that could have befallen me. I had never had the usual itinerant distempers; it was very unlikely that I should always escape them; and the dread of their coming upon me in my advanced age made me perfectly miserable. I scarcely dared to stir abroad; had sandbags put to my doors to keep



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out the measles; forbade my neighbours' children playing in my yard to avoid the whooping-cough; and, to prevent infection from the small-pox, I ordered all my male servants' heads to be shaved, made the coachman and footman wear tow wigs, and had them both regularly smoked whenever they returned from the neighbouring town, before they were allowed to enter my presence. Nor were these all my miseries; in fact, they were but a sort of running base to a thousand other strange and frightful fancies; the mere skeleton to a whole body-corporate of horrors. I became dreamy, was haunted by what I had read, frequently finding a Hottentot, or a boa-constrictor, in my bed. Sometimes I fancied myself buried in one of the pyramids of Egypt, breaking my shins against the bones of a sacred cow. Then I thought myself a kangaroo, unable to move because somebody had cut off my tail.

In this miserable state I one evening rushed out of my house. I know not how far, or how long, I had been from home, when, hearing a well-known voice, I suddenly stopped. It seemed to belong to a face that I knew; yet how I should know it somewhat puzzled me, being then fully persuaded that I was a Chinese Josh. My friend (as I afterwards learned he was) invited me to go to his club. This, thought I, is one of my worshippers, and they have a right to carry me wherever they please; accordingly I suffered myself to be led.

I soon found myself in an American tavern, and in the midst of a dozen grave gentlemen who were emptying a large bowl of punch. They each saluted me, some calling me by name, others saying they were happy to make my acquaintance; but what appeared quite unaccountable was my not only understanding their language, but knowing it to be English. A kind of reaction now began to take place in my brain. Perhaps, said I, I am not a Josh. I was urged to pledge my friend in a glass of punch; I did so; my friend's friend, and his friend, and all the rest, in succession, begged to have the same honor; I complied, again and again, till at last, the punch having fairly turned my head topsyturvy, righted my understanding; and I found myself *myself*.

This happy change gave a pleasant fillip to my spirits. I returned home, found no monster in my bed, and slept quietly till near noon the next day. I arose with a slight headache and a great admiration of punch; resolving, if I did not catch the measles from my late adventure, to make a second visit to the club. No symptoms appearing, I went again; and my reception was such as led to a third, and a fourth, and a fifth visit, when I became a regular member. I believe my inducement to this was a certain unintelligible something in three or four of my new associates, which at once gratified and kept alive my curiosity, in their letting out just enough of themselves while I was with them to excite me when alone to speculate on what was kept back. I wondered I had never met with such characters in books; and the kind of



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interest they awakened began gradually to widen to others. Henceforth I will live in the world, said I; 't is my only remedy. A man's own affairs are soon conned; he gets them by heart till they haunt him when he would be rid of them; but those of another can be known only in part, while that which remains unrevealed is a never-ending stimulus to curiosity. The only natural mode, therefore, of preventing the mind preying on itself,—the only rational, because the only interminable employment,—is to be busy about other people's business.

The variety of objects which this new course of life each day presented, brought me at length to a state of sanity; at least, I was no longer disposed to conjure up remote dangers to my door, or chew the cud on my indigested past reading; though sometimes, I confess, when I have been tempted to meddle with a very bad character, I have invariably been threatened with a relapse; which leads me to think the existence of some secret affinity between rogues and boa-constrictors is not unlikely. In a short time, however, I had every reason to believe myself completely cured; for the days began to appear of their natural length, and I no longer saw every thing through a pair of blue spectacles, but found nature diversified by a thousand beautiful colors, and the people about me a thousand times more interesting than hyenas or Hottentots. The world is now my only study, and I trust I shall stick to it for the sake of my health.

Footnotes

[1] The Frightful is not the Terrible, though often confounded with it.

[2] See Introductory Discourse.

[3] There is one species of imitation, however, which, as having been practised by some of the most original minds, and also sanctioned by the ablest writers, demands at least a little consideration; namely, the adoption of an attitude, provided it be employed to convey a different thought. So far, indeed, as the imitation has been confined to a suggestion, and the attitude adopted has been modified by the new subject, to which it was transferred, by a distinct change of character and expression, though with but little variation in the disposition of limbs, we may not dissent; such imitations being virtually little more than hints, since they end in thoughts either totally different from, or more complete than, the first. This we do not condemn, for every Poet, as well as Artist, knows that a thought so modified is of right his own. It is the transplanting of a tree, not the borrowing of a seed, against which we contend. But when writers justify the appropriation, of entire figures, without any such change, we do not agree with them; and cannot but think that the examples they have quoted, as in the Sacrifice at Lystra, by Raffaele, and the Baptism, by Poussin, will fully support our position. The antique *basso rilievo* which Raffaele has introduced in the former, being certainly imitated

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both as to lines and grouping, is so distinct, both in character and form, from the surrounding figures, as to render them a distinct people, and their very air reminds us of another age. We cannot but believe we should have had a very different group, and far superior in expression, had he given us a conception of his own. It would at least have been in accordance with the rest, animated with the superstitious enthusiasm of the surrounding crowd; and especially as sacrificing Priests would they have been amazed and awe-stricken in the living presence of a god, instead of personating, as in the present group, the cold officials of the Temple, going through a stated task at the shrine of their idol. In the figure by Poussin, which he borrowed from Michael Angelo, the discrepancy is still greater. The original figure, which was in the Cartoon at Pisa, (now known only by a print,) is that of a warrior who has been suddenly roused from the act of bathing by the sound of a trumpet; he has just leaped upon the bank, and, in his haste to obey its summons, thrusts his foot through his garment. Nothing could be more appropriate than the violence of this action; it is in unison with the hurry and bustle of the occasion. And this is the figure which Poussin (without the slightest change, if we recollect aright) has transferred to the still and solemn scene in which John baptizes the Saviour. No one can look at this figure without suspecting the plagiarism. Similar instances may be found in his other works; as in the Plague of the Philistines, where the Alcibiades of Raffaele is coolly sauntering among the dead and dying, and with as little relation to the infected multitude as if he were still with Socrates in the School of Athens. In the same picture may be found also one of the Apostles from the Cartoon of the Draught of Fishes: and we may naturally ask what business he has there. And yet such appropriations have been made to appear no thefts, simply because no attempt seems to have been made at concealment! But theft, we must be allowed to think, is still theft, whether committed in the dark, or in the face of day. And the example is a dangerous one, inasmuch as it comes from men who were not constrained to resort to such shifts by any poverty of invention.

Akin to this is another and larger kind of borrowing, which, though it cannot strictly be called copying; yet so evidently betrays a foreign origin, as to produce the same effect. We allude to the adoption of the peculiar lines, handling, and disposition of masses, &c., of any particular master.

[4] First printed in 1821, in "The Idle Man," No. II p. 38.

[5] A feigned name.—*Editor*.