

assist the disabled ships; and I am informed that, in the course of the night, he fell in with a Dutch ship of the line off the Texel, and had engaged her: but I have not heard the particulars. I am, Sir,

“Your most obedient humble servant,  
To Evan Neftan, Esq. “ADAM DUNCAN.”

To this account of a victory the most brilliant that has adorned our naval annals since the defeat of the Spanish Armada, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, we subjoin the encomium passed upon it by the Poet Laureat. In his Naval Dominion, an excellent poem, recently published, and whose merits were noticed in our Review for May, the Poet delineates with spirit our various victories at sea. On Lord Duncan he pours forth the following expressive lines:—

What trophies shall the Muse to Duncan raise,  
Whose worth transcends the boldest flight of praise?—  
Will all the powers man's genius can display  
Give added lustre to the beams of day?  
His virtues shine in native worth array'd,  
Nor want, nor ask, precarious flattery's aid.

\* Monarch, Powerful, Lancafter, Beaulieu.

Him

dent for the protection of our commerce in particular, we were all sensible. Every token of congratulation was presented to the gallant Admiral and his brave fleet. Every demonstration of joy was given which is usually shown on those occasions. The king himself meditated two measures expressive of the satisfaction he experienced, one of which was frustrated by the tempestuousness of the elements, the other was fully accomplished. His Majesty intended to visit the Nore, whither the fleet returned along with the prizes after the action. He embarked at Greenwich, made some way down the river, but contrary winds obliged him to desist from his intention. One object of the expedition however was effected; the pardon of *one hundred and eighty men*, who had been engaged in the unhappy business at the Nore under Parker, was granted at the intercession of Lord Duncan. This was nobly done, and worthy of his exalted character. True courage is ever allied to humanity. The other token of his Majesty's satisfaction, was his procession to St. Paul's, on December the 19th, where thanks were returned for the victory. The cavalcade from St. James's was conducted with dignity, and the colours taken from the enemy were triumphantly borne along and deposited in the cathedral. J. W. De

J. W. De Winter, the Dutch Admiral, was, on account of the valour with which he fought, treated by us with respect. This was characteristic of a great nation. He was a man of easy and pleasant manners. It is reported, that immediately upon his coming on board the *Venerable*, he, after the first change of compliments, said—“It was a matter of surprise to him how such *gigantic* objects as Lord Duncan and himself (he also being remarkably tall) had escaped the carnage of the day.”

To the honour of the BRITISH NATION be it spoken, large sums were raised for the widows and children of these unfortunate men who fell on that memorable day. An attention to these objects constitutes true glory! On such exertions we may safely pride ourselves. Indeed Greenwich and Chelsea are standing monuments of public generosity. There, provision is made for the relief of those brave fellows whose youthful vigour has been exhausted in behalf of their native land. After long and laborious services, here they repose from the toils they have endured, and from the dangers to which they have been exposed. In this haven of comfort which they have at last safely entered, they partake of the blessings which their grateful countrymen have provided for them. They can look back to that tempestuous sea, on whose agitated surface they have been often borne, with satisfaction. They can behold with no small complacency others rising in their stead, who are equally ready to hazard their lives in the defence of their country!

We have just learnt that the gallant ADMIRAL DUNCAN has taken leave of his Majesty, and has resumed the command of his Squadron destined for the North Seas. This information must impart pleasure to every lover of his country. May DUNCAN, in whose character courage and humanity are united, long defend the shores of Britain, now threatened by an inveterate foe! May success attend his patriotic measures, and may England be blessed with such commanders, till the world be hushed into universal peace.

THE REFLECTOR.

[No. XVII.]

ON TASTE.

— This, nor gems, nor stores of gold,  
Nor purple state, nor culture can bestow;  
But God alone, when first his active hand  
Imprints the sacred bias of the soul.

AKENSIDE.

UPON Genius, Taste, and other subjects comprehended under the *Belles Lettres*, much hath been written by men of distinguished celebrity. It is not my purpose to start any new opinion on these topics, or even to concentrate into one point all that has been advanced by others. The *Reflector* is only a repository for cursory remarks on subjects, connected with the instruction and entertainment of those who honour it with a perusal.

Between GENIUS and TASTE there subsists an intimate connection which renders it necessary that they should be considered in subserviency to each other. Thus will they reflect a mutual light, capable of aiding us in the illustration of them. Apart, they cannot be so thoroughly investigated, and therefore we are justified in rendering them subjects of discussion in two successive Numbers. In this point of view would we have them contemplated. We are not without some hope that such a joint consideration of them will carry along with it several substantial advantages.

The term TASTE, applied to composition, must be understood in a figurative sense. Its original signification refers directly to the palate, by which we are enabled to ascertain the quality of the food presented to us for our nourishment and support. In a similar manner the mind is endowed with a power of discrimination respecting the subjects which engage its attention. Nothing

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thing is more generally understood than the faculty of Taste. It is in the mouth of all, though few, perhaps, have philosophically investigated it. Nor is it indeed necessary. Providence hath wisely appointed that we should use both our faculties and our senses without being profoundly acquainted with the nature or extent of them. This measure is wisely ordered, since men were designed more for action in this present life than for contemplation. It is, nevertheless, highly useful for those who have ability and leisure, to enquire into such things. The investigation exalts our opinion of the Deity in the formation of man, and proves a powerful incitement to the proper exercise of those powers with which we are furnished.

Taste hath been thus justly defined by a writer who possesses no inconsiderable portion of it. "It is," says Dr. Blair, "the power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and art." Now that such a power is possessed by individuals in various degrees, is obvious to every one who has the least acquaintance with mankind. Not only in the different stages of life, but in the different classes of men, variety of tastes to a very great extent prevails. What dissonance subsists between the crude perceptions of a child, and the mature judgment of a veteran in the republic of letters? How much at variance are the tastes of the rude rustic who has seen nature in her most unfinished forms, and of the polished scholar whose mind, to use the words of Akenfide,

"Is feelingly alive to each fine impulse?"

Tastes are, in reality, as various as the human countenance; under every aspect a difference obtains. Hence both in kind and degree it affords ample matter for discussion. On this account the subject distributes itself into two branches, which have been duly noticed by philologists. Let us consider them with some minuteness.

*Delicacy and correctness* are the two qualities ascribed

to Taste in its most perfect state. Delicacy respects the sensibility with which our nature is endowed for the perception of beauty. Some minds are so torpid, that nothing can arouse them, whilst another class shall be affected by every breath of wind, however gently it plays upon them. These are evidently extremes which must be avoided. Now delicacy consists in a refinement of sensation easier to be conceived than expressed. As the senses of some men are far more exquisite than those of others, so their taste is equally distinguished by the various degrees of fineness which it assumes. A man of delicate taste is always understood to discern beauties which escape the vulgar. Some latent excellencies are discovered which charm the eye and conciliate the heart. Correctness, the other quality of a perfect taste, respects the improvement which it has received by means of the understanding operating to the formation of a just judgment. It implies the individual's possession of certain rules by which every object is to be estimated. His opinion is not formed at random. His principles of judging are not subject to a childish caprice, or to an humour-some fluctuation. He understands what, and knows why he approves. This is a valuable acquisition, and, united to delicacy of taste, constitutes the man of eminent genius. But it is to be remarked, that correctness and delicacy are by no means constant companions. Apart are they frequently found, and numerous instances of this truth might be adduced. Hence Blair justly observes, that "Among the ancient writers, Longinus possessed most delicacy, Aristotle most correctness.—Among the moderns, Addison is a high example of delicate taste; Dean Swift, had he written on the subject of criticism, would perhaps have afforded the example of a correct one." These instances are well chosen, and happily illustrate the topic which is now under investigation.

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enquire into the standard of Taste. This subject has occasioned no small altercation between the critics. "Among the endless diversities of taste, how is it possible (exclaims the young student) to ascertain a criterion for true taste?" Looking abroad among mankind, we perceive this power of the mind to be as various as the human countenance. Even delicacy and correctness, the characteristic properties of a true taste, exist in different degrees in our best writers. Each author is praised for his taste, while they agree in no one thing except the diversity of those faculties with which nature hath furnished them."

To this natural exclamation, it may be replied, that the diversity cannot be questioned. But it does not follow that on this account no standard of Taste can be obtained by which beauties can be estimated. A general, and therefore a sufficient standard for Taste may be found by adverting to those qualities which universally please mankind, particularly what pleases persons who have been placed in circumstances most favourable to the cultivation of their taste. For there are beauties which, displayed in a just point of view, must impart, even to the rudest mind, a degree of pleasure. In the very nature of some objects, a foundation is laid for agreeable contemplation. There are certain latent seeds of beauty, certain hidden excellencies, scattered by the hand of the Almighty throughout the whole extent of his dominions! Nor is this observation to be confined to the works of nature, it must be extended also to the productions of art. Most arts are successful imitations of nature. Little, therefore, need be here said to prove that the remark just made is of equal application. Every performance describes either the sentiments or actions of mankind, and hence the more perfect the description, the more entire is the resemblance to nature, which has ever charms to fascinate the heart. Homer's *Iliad*, Virgil's *Eneid*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, are admirable instances of what a just taste is able to effect in this particular

particular way. Quintilian, that masterly critic, expressly says, "Homer extended the limits of human genius to their utmost stretch, and possessed such complete ideas of all the different kinds of writing, that HE *alone* is a perfect model of all the different beauties that can enter into any composition."

Nor must I close without reminding the reader of the pleasures of Taste, usually stiled the pleasures of imagination. On these sources of enjoyment I could descend with rapture. The exquisite genius of Addison first attempted to reduce them into a regular system under these three heads—beauty, grandeur, and novelty. His speculations on the subject display an admirable ingenuity, and may be found in the sixth volume of the *Spectator*. He has opened a track of investigation, which may be successfully followed. Dr. Akenfide's poem, entitled, *Pleasures of Imagination*, contains many excellent passages illustrative of this topic, and may be read both for profit and amusement. Addressing himself to the Divine Being, in a strain worthy of the theme, he exclaims:—

..... Not content  
 With every food of life to nourish man;  
 By kind illusions of the wond'ring sense  
 Thou makest all nature beauty to his eye,  
 Or music to his ear.

The pleasures of Taste are indeed more commonly distributed into those of the beautiful and the sublime. What constitutes the one and the other has been the subject of assiduous enquiry. The principles on which they are founded have been investigated with a commendable industry. It is agreed that *the beautiful* results from colour, figure, motion, design, and from the combination of these qualities in objects either of nature or of art. On the other hand, *the sublime* arises from a certain grandeur contemplated with a reverential awe, or a profound admiration. Mr. Burke places it in a  
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kind of terror, though sublime objects might be mentioned into whose composition nothing terrible enters. It is, however, confessed, that sublimity, either in natural or moral objects, always elevates the mind, dilating it with the grandest sensations!

It is of peculiar importance to YOUTH, that their minds should be laid open betimes to these exquisite sources of enjoyment. With their intrinsic value the sensualist must be utterly unacquainted. Bacchanalian revels impart no such joys. The boasted satisfaction of vulgar minds is not to be put in competition with them. The pleasures of Taste grow upon the happy individual who cultivates them. The faculty of enjoyment is rendered more capacious by frequent exercise. Every object in nature, and every subject in art, affords materials for pleasing contemplation. The seasons of the year are replete with entertainment. To the man of taste, the bleakness of winter, the novelties of spring, the fulness of summer, and the luxuriance of autumn, are every way acceptable. In most literary compositions, likewise, something will be found capable of administering delight. The sobriety of plain prose, and the gaiety of sprightly verse, have charms for him. Every production, from the gravity of history down to the artless simplicity of a fable, catches his attention and engages his heart. From the enchanting softness of beauty in all her variegated forms, up to the tremendous terrors of the sublime, what a range of enjoyment! That man is an object of envy. He lives as in a superior region. He converses with an higher circle of objects. To this favoured votary of taste, especially if he be a virtuous character, the following lines may with propriety be addressed:—

To please *thine* ear, soft notes the linnæ pours,  
And with grand peal the deep-ton'd thunder rolls;  
The streamlet murmurs and the torrent roars;  
The zephyr whispers and the tempest howls.

From

From each, or lofty, or mellifluous sound,  
Each fair or awful form that strikes the sight,  
In art's wide sphere, or nature's ample round,  
'Tis *thine* to draw retain'd and rich delight.

FAWCETT.

ON CRITICISM—in the next *Reflector*.

GOSSIPIANA.

[No. XIX.]

DETACHED THOUGHTS, BY LORD ORFORD.

HISTORY is a romance that is believed: a romance, a history that is not believed.

MONTAIGNE pleased because he wrote what he thought; other authors think what they shall write.

WHOEVER expects pity by complaining to his physician, is as foolish as they who, having lost their money at cards, complain of their ill luck to their companions, the winners. If none were ill, or unfortunate, how would physicians or gamblers get money?

BEAUTY, after five and thirty, is like a forfeited peerage, the title of which is given by the courtesy of the well-bred to those who have no legal claim to it.

ALBANO's boy-angels and cupids are all so alike, that they seem to have been the children of the Flemish Countess, who was said to be delivered of three hundred and sixty-five at a birth.

AN author without originality, is like a courtier who is always dressed in the fashion: nobody minds the colour or make of his coat: if it is ill made it is criticised; if not, what can be said on it? Hundreds are dressed as well. Booksellers and salesmen lay up the book or the

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coat