

of my wardrobe, which lasted until the bell rang.

But in spite of the delicious anticipations that filled me, I was not wholly satisfied, and when mother had said good-night to us, I detained Carrie.

She came back a little reluctantly, and asked me what I wanted with her. She looked tired, almost worn out, and the blue veins were far too perceptible on the smooth, white forehead. I noticed for the first time a hollowness about the temples; the marked restlessness of an over-conscientious mind was wearing out the body; the delicacy of her look filled me with apprehension.

"Oh, Carrie!" I said, vehemently, "you are not well; this hot weather is trying you. Do listen to me, darling. I don't want to vex you, but you must promise me to come to Roseberry."

To my surprise she drew back with almost a frightened look on her face; well, not that exactly, but a sort of scared, bewildered expression.

"Don't, Esther. Why will none of you give me any peace? Is it not enough that mother and Miss Lucas have been talking to me, and now you must begin! Do you know what it costs me to stand firm against you all? You distress me, you wear me out with your talk."

"Why cannot we convince you?" I returned, with a sort of despair. "You are mother's daughter, not Mrs. Smedley's; you owe no right of obedience to that woman."

"How you all hate her!" she sighed. "I must look for no sympathy from any of you—your one thought is to thwart me in every way."

"Carrie!" I almost gasped, for she looked and spoke so unlike herself.

"I don't mean to be unkind," she replied, in a softening tone; "I suppose you all mean it for the best. Once for all, Esther, I cannot come to Roseberry. I have promised Mrs. Smedley to look after things in her absence, and nothing would induce me to forfeit my trust."

"You could write to her and say you were not well," I began; but she checked me almost angrily.

"I am well, I am quite well; if I long for rest, if the prospect of a little change would be delightful, I suppose I could resist even these temptations. I am not worse than many other girls; I have work to do and must do it. No fears of possible break-downs shall frighten me from my duty. Go and enjoy your holiday, and do not worry about me, Esther." And then she kissed me and took up her candle.

I was sadly crestfallen, but no arguments could avail, I thought; and so I let her go from me. And yet if I had known the cause of her sudden irritability, I should not so soon have given up all hope. I little knew how sorely she was tempted; how necessary some brief rest and change of scene was to her overwrought nerves. If I had only been patient and pleaded with her, I think I must have persuaded her; but, alas! I never knew how nearly she had yielded.

There was no sleep for Dot that night. I found him in a fever of excitement, thumping his hot pillows and flinging

himself about in vain efforts to get cool. It was no good scolding him, he had these sleepless fits sometimes, so I bathed his face and hands, and sat down beside him, and laid my head against the pillow, hoping that he would quiet down by-and-by. But nothing would prevent his talking.

"I wish I were out with the flowers in the garden," he said; "I think it is stupid being tucked up in bed in the summer. Allan is not in bed, is he? He says he is often called up, and has to cross the quadrangle to go to a great bare room where they bind up broken heads. Should you like to be a doctor, Essie?"

"If I were a man," I returned, confidently, "I should be either a clergyman or a doctor; they are the grandest and noblest of professions. One is a cure of bodies and the other is a cure of souls."

"Oh, but they hurt people," observed Dot, shrinking a little; "they have horrid instruments they carry about."

"They only hurt people for their own good, you silly little boy. Think of all the dark, sick rooms they visit, and the poor, helpless people they comfort. They spend their lives doing good, healing dreadful diseases, and relieving pain."

"I think Allan's life will be more useful than Fred's," observed Dot. Poor little boy! constant intercourse with grown-up people was making him precocious. He used to say such sharp, shrewd things sometimes.

I sighed a little when he spoke of Fred. I could imagine him loitering through life in his velveteen coat, doing little spurts of work, but never settling down into thorough hard work.

Allan's descriptions of his life were not very encouraging. His last letter to me spoke a little dubiously about Fred's prospects.

"He is just a drawing-master, and nothing else," wrote Allan. "Uncle Geoffrey's recommendations have obtained admittance for him into one or two good houses, and I hear he has hopes of Miss Hemming's school in Bayswater. Not a very enlivening prospect for our elegant Fred! Fancy that very superior young man sinking into a drawing-master! So much for the hanging committee, and the picture that is to represent the Cameron genius."

"I went down to Acacia-road on Thursday evening, and dimly perceived Fred across an opaque cloud of tobacco smoke. He and some kindred spirits were talking art jargon in this thick atmosphere."

"Fred looked a Bohemian of Bohemians in his gaudy dressing-gown and velvet smoking cap. His hair is longer than ever, and he has become æsthetic in his tastes. There was broken china enough to stock a small shop. I am afraid I am rather too much a Philistine for their notions. I got some good downright stares and shrugs over my tough John Bull tendencies."

"Tell mother Fred is all right and keeping out of debt, and so one must not mind a few harmless vagaries."

"Broken china, indeed!" muttered

Uncle Geoff, when I had finished reading this clause. "Broken fiddlesticks! Why, the lad must be weak in his head to spend his money on such rubbish!" Uncle Geoffrey was never very civil to Fred.

Dot did not say any more, and I began a long story to keep his tongue quiet. As it was purposely uninteresting, and told in a monotonous voice, it soon had the effect of making him drowsy. When I reached this point, I stole softly from the room. It was bright moonlight when I lay down in bed, and all night long I dreamt of a rippling sea and broad sands, over which Dot and I were walking, hand in hand.

(To be continued.)

COMMON ERRORS IN DAILY LIFE.

By JAMES MASON.

III.—ERRORS IN TASTE.



AKE haste," said Julia's mother to her the other day; "make haste and set the house in order, for Tom Such-a-one is come, and he is looking for a wife; so you had better show how handy you are, and what good taste you have."

Julia's handiness and good taste were displayed with such effect that Tom left the town an engaged man. Now, girls, without wholly approving this little trap laid for Tom, we may have much to say in favour of that with which the trap was baited. Handiness and good taste are fine lasting qualities, and it is the best of wishes to hope that you may all possess Julia's accomplishments.

About the first of these accomplishments, I have nothing to say at present; the object of this paper is to deal with the second of them, and to point out a few of the errors which bring discredit on our taste and prevent the attainment of that perfect culture which we are all, no doubt, striving after.

A difficulty now presents itself: what is the meaning to be attached to the word taste? "So contradictory," says one writer, "are the definitions of taste given by different authors, so obscure is their language, and so inconsistent are many of them with themselves, that it is difficult to ascertain their real views on the subject."

We are safe, however, in using it to cover a comparatively limited field, and in defining taste to be the perception of proportion, order, congruity, harmony—in short, of whatever constitutes beauty. When a girl says, "Now, that really is pretty!" or another exclaims, with rapture, "Absolutely perfect!" or "Simply too lovely!" she is giving expression to her *taste*—real or affected. Without taste we can never hope to enjoy beauty, either in nature or art.

To have bad taste is to be indifferent to the claims of beauty, or to take that for beauty which is not such. An error in taste is an offence against the beautiful.

As taste has beauty for its subject, it deals, of course, principally with the fine

arts, and with what is allied to these arts. But what, you ask, is beauty? Now, girls, don't let us try to define the undefinable. By way of answer, you might have an opinion for almost every day of the year. "When you come," says Bewick, the famous wood engraver, "to ask the countless numbers who cry out about the nature of the beautiful, you only get a clatter of tongues."

Taste is not another word for liking; it is important to observe that. William's *taste*, for example, may acknowledge that Emma is not the most beautiful girl he ever saw; his *liking*, however, affirms that she is every way the best. Taste and liking do not always, you see, point in the same direction, and that girl troubled herself quite unnecessarily who was afraid that everyone who saw her sweetheart would fall in love with him.

When people say, "There is no accounting for taste," they use the wrong word. Good taste has fixed principles and never varies, but, on the other hand, there is no accounting for liking. One man loves the dark, like an owl, another abhors it; one cares for society, another for solitude, and the same is seen in regard to studies, amusements, food, and everything else. It is quite different, however, when you come to speak of the appreciation of the beautiful.

There is a great deal of bad taste abroad, and one meets every other day with cases of inward blindness in regard to beauty combined with a happy ignorance of the fact. But if where ignorance is bliss it is sometimes folly to be wise, the proverb does not hold good here. The more we strive to see and appreciate what is beautiful—that is to say, the more we labour to improve our taste—the more useful, the more interesting, the more joyous life will be.

Fashion has a great influence on our judgment in matters of taste; indeed, with many people the fundamental error is to ask first, not what is beautiful, but what is fashionable. There is no absurdity so gross that they will not bring themselves to admire it if it be only patronised by good society. They think they see what other people say they see, just like the man in the story, who was persuaded by some girls he met that the sheep he carried was a dog.

It is a great deal better to see with our own eyes than with those of others, and in all subjects of taste to be faithful to our own convictions. Should our neighbours, for example, be unanimously in favour of sage-green walls, especially with blue plates climbing up like flies to the ceiling, and should that exhibition not recommend itself to our sober judgment, we would be wrong to follow their example. Our surroundings should express our own ideas, even though these should often be mingled with prejudices.

At the same time one cannot help remarking that fashion often does recommend what is tasteful. Naturally, too. Refined society has a quick perception of the artistic, and a corresponding horror of what is in bad taste. It may be fickle in its admiration of particular styles of beauty, but it is, more often than not, true to the leading principles of art.

We are induced by habit in many cases to tolerate things which are in bad taste. At first, perhaps, we disapprove, but we gradually come to be indifferent, and at last we even cherish a sneaking fondness for them. Ugliness is indeed difficult to dethrone when once it gets firmly established at anyone's fireside. It grows to be like an old friend with disagreeable qualities, whom we are often tempted to dismiss, but are still more often pleased to retain.

The power of habit is also at the root of the low estimate we often put upon works of art which come before us unconnected with well-known names. "Never be prejudiced against

unknown people," says Schumann in his *Hints to Young Musicians*; and what is true of music is true of all the arts. Taste should never be exclusive, and in judging of what is beautiful the name of the author or the artist is of very little consequence.

House furnishing is a fine field for the exercise of taste. It is with the æsthetic side of furnishing, however, that it has to do, not with the practical. Taste does not concern itself, say, with the price of the window curtains; it only passes an opinion on their colour and on the way in which they are hung to the rod and gathered together at the waist.

There are fewer errors committed now in furnishing than of old. We are fast learning that lavish expenditure and beauty do not invariably go together, and that much more depends on good taste than on large means. "Twenty or thirty years ago," says a writer in one of our contemporaries, "a lady's only doubt about her coal-scuttle was whether it should be adorned with a coloured copy of one of Landseer's big dogs, or with an equally brilliant study of a pretty girl with a pink parasol. Her dining-room was 'roses, roses all the way,' like the triumphant career of Mr. Browning's patriot, before he came to grief at the general election. Her drawing-room carpet was adorned with lilies of the valley on a green ground. The curtains were green, too, and hung from a very thick gilt beam, not unlike a large model of a Roman battering ram. Her chimney-pieces were of plain black or white marble, and on these she arranged vases of pink and white glass, the gifts of her excellent friends.

"In the middle of the drawing-room was a large round rosewood table, on which illustrated Christmas books were arranged in a circle. Most of the drawing-room chairs were tiny gilt ones, on which large men invariably sat down with ruinous results. The mirrors were large enough to have practised figure skating upon, if they could have been laid down on the floor. The walls were usually papered with a velvety kind of 'flock' paper, or with a light lavender tissue, on which roses and blue dahlias were repeated regardless of expense."

Between that time and this a great change for the better has taken place; indeed, the growth of love for the beautiful is one of the most remarkable and pleasing phenomena of the civilization of the present day. Good taste is abroad in company with the schoolmaster, and we meet with its influence even in remote corners where ugliness used to have everything its own way.

In decoration it is an error to make our rooms too fine for actual use. They are not show places, but to be lived in, so we want them first comfortable and then artistic. There is no reason, however, why the two qualities should not go together, and if anyone thinks it impossible to reconcile comfort and artistic propriety in an easy chair, or usefulness and elegance in an umbrella-stand, she is mistaken. The great point is not to overdo the artistic. But there is less danger of this now than there used to be; taste has pronounced in favour of simplicity, and it is almost an exploded error that the more flowers and gilding you have the finer the house will be.

Taste does not imply formality. The tendency is nowadays, indeed, in the opposite direction, and it has been well said that in decoration things at present can hardly be considered to be arranged; they "occur." It is truly an uncomfortable house in which everything is as regular as the multiplication table.

At the same time there should be perfect harmony pervading all decoration. When the effect is inharmonious there is certainly something wrong. This often arises from the indiscriminate mingling of the ideas of other

people whilst we neglect to follow our own notions. Harmony is much more likely to be present if we always keep in mind that the interior of a house should represent as far as possible the mental peculiarities of those who live in it.

To indicate particular errors in regard to this subject would lead us beyond all reasonable limits. You must go farther into it for yourselves. In decoration there is the greatest room for the exercise of taste, and it is a matter which should certainly be studied by all. Were refinement more general we would no longer be able to point to homes which are characterised by nothing but a shabby and snobbish compromise between *vulgar pretension* and tawdry cheapness, and in which everything, from the wall-paper to the fire-irons, transgresses the first principles of beauty. We are improving; true, but much yet remains to be done.

A great deal of attention is now being given to what is called art-needlework, but the results, alas! are often anything but artistic. The faults of taste may here be connected either with the design or the colour. In the design we may have any degree of error, from the weak and trifling to the absurd. Why, there is Clara engaged at the present time on an elaborate piece of embroidery in which mermaids, monkeys, satyrs, serpents, peacocks, pomegranates, snails, grapes, toads and cornucopias are all fantastically pressed into service for decorative purposes. It is nothing but an unmeaning jumble. Bad taste in colour is also very common. Few people are aware of their deficiencies in this respect; deficiencies which can only be overcome by the study of fine examples and intercourse with those whose feelings in matters of art are more refined than their own.

Let us speak next of pictures. In houses furnished with great pretence we often meet with extraordinary specimens, for if their walls are only covered some people seem to think they need not be very particular about the artistic qualities either of paintings or engravings. It is in the rooms of such folks that I have seen pictures of country life so bad in drawing that you would think the sheep had tails half a mile long. The frames may be gorgeous—they usually are—but what of that if the engravings are *ill-chosen* and the paintings as hard and crude in colour as could be?

It is a mistake in regard to pictures to have unpleasant subjects. You may say that no one would hang up such, but observation proves the contrary. As an example of an objectionable picture one writer mentions "The Execution of Mary, Queen of Scots," in which you see the grim headman in the act of bringing down his murderous blade, and can realise that the next instant it will pass through the "little neck," as the poor Queen called her slender throat, and bury itself quivering in the block. In the same category, too, comes the so-called "Judgment of Solomon," where a truculent-looking soldier holds a babe suspended head downwards with one hand, while with the other he poises a Broddingnagian falchion with which to slice the infant into halves.

But when all is said, the last few years have witnessed a vast improvement in the pictorial decoration of our homes. This has gone hand in hand with the advance made in the illustration of the books we read, and this, within living memory, has been something surprising. Contrast the illustrations in *THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER*, for example, with those of the works read by our fathers and mothers. An uncle the other day presented a little niece with an illustrated book which he had owned in boyhood, and been much delighted with. She took it, looked at two or three pictures, and then dropped it in the waste-basket. To her eye, educated by her

own tasteful volumes, the old book seemed good for nothing, and she had not reached that stage of life when sentimentality induces us sometimes to preserve the relics of barbarism.

When we turn to music, the earliest of all the accomplishments acquired by primitive man, we find as many errors of taste committed as in any of the other arts, whilst there is no other to which refinement and good taste are more necessary.

It is one of the most hopeful signs of the culture of our day that the claims of music as a means of refining human nature are pretty widely acknowledged. But zeal is pushed too far when those are set to cultivate art who have no natural liking for it. Every girl, nowadays, is expected to play on the piano—it is a stock accomplishment. But who are the gainers? Not, in many cases, the girls themselves, for practising only bores them; and certainly not society, which they bore in turn, and the conversation of which they interrupt by their tenth-rate performances. Such girls just pursue music mechanically, and mechanism in art never did anything—there must be enthusiasm, without which one never makes progress.

Even with those about whose musical faculties there can be no dispute, it is a common error to spend time in the performance of what is not far removed from trash. Let such keep in mind Schumann's aphorism: "You should never play bad compositions, and never listen to them unless circumstances compel you to do so." Another aphorism of Schumann's, on the same subject, is worth remembering: "Avoid what is merely fashionable; time is precious. If we would gain a knowledge only of the good things that exist, we ought to live a hundred human lives."

In choosing pieces the amateur often forgets to recognise the limits of the possible, and then we have a series of desperate struggles to render what only professional practice ought to attempt. It is an error to fancy that what is difficult must be good; indeed, it would be a fine thing if a great deal of difficult music were quite impossible. A simple melody may often have more value musically than the most intricate harmony; so, as has been sensibly observed, try to play easy pieces well. It is better to do that than to play difficult ones in second-rate style.

Another common mistake is to play without expression, and a girl who makes no effort after expression plays just as a child recites when it says, "How doth the little busy bee," without in the least understanding the words.

What music, you ask, is in the best taste—Handel or Beethoven, Mendelssohn or Wagner? It is not a matter of taste at all; it is a question of preference. One girl likes Handel, to another he seems old-fashioned; a third prefers Mendelssohn, a fourth sets a value only on Wagner, whilst others think with Dean Swift—

"Strange that such difference should be
'Twixt tweedledum and tweedledee!"

The productions of the best composers may be all in equally good taste, though we may not like them all equally. It is the same with our preference for musical instruments. One likes the violin, another the harp, another the harmonium, whilst a fourth would rather listen to the piano-organ than anything else. Some are even lovers of the bagpipes, and would find their highest enjoyment in hearing four-and-twenty pipers in a small room all blowing as if they would burst.

In literature also we often confound taste with liking. Our caring much or little for books, whether of poetry or of fiction, is no safe test of their conforming or not conforming to the rules of art. You will observe that taste

has only to do with works of creative genius, not with books in which the imparting of information is the leading idea.

Our selection of books will always be governed by our preferences, and so it should be. Who wants her bookshelves to represent any other person's ideas than her own? The important point, of course, is to avoid the mistake of admiring works the literary art of which is untrue to nature, to which source everything must be referred, if we would rightly estimate its value.

Dress has an aesthetic side, and in connection with it errors in taste are numerous, as everyone knows. But this is a subject which has been all along treated so fully and with such ability in *THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER* that little need be said upon it here.

The leading error in dress is to wear what—on account of stature, it may be, or complexion—does not become one, however well it may suit other people. This is often the result of our being led away by the fashion; and to follow it, some would even dress out of all likeness to humanity. But our first duty is to ourselves. If the "dowdy colours" which some think inseparable from high art suit you, stick to them; but if nothing become you but, say, flame-coloured satin, why, dress in that by all means. The latter, however, must be understood as an extreme case, for whilst advocating individuality in dress, don't suppose that I recommend its being carried to that point where individuality becomes eccentricity.

It is an error not to dress with as much care as possible, were it for nothing but this—that it is only the well dressed who are well attended to when they go abroad. But a better reason is that the tastefully-dressed give pleasure to their neighbours, and that pleasure reacts upon themselves. The subject, then, deserves the attention of all sensible people. Nothing can be done rightly without study, and it is only when dress is looked upon as an end, and not as a means, that the time spent upon it may be considered wasted.

To neglect the beauty of nature is a very common error, though to observe it is one of the cheapest and most enduring of pleasures. People do not see it, as a rule, because they have not been trained to see it. When they look at nature, they are generally thinking of something else, or they glance at it in a most superficial way. Flowers and birds, moorland and hillside have no particular charms for them, and I wonder what the most of them would say about the man who gave three thousand pounds more than it was worth for an estate, because it was haunted by nightingales and swarming with glowworms.

If anyone would find out how much training does in the direction of discerning and appreciating the loveliness of nature, let her take to walking in the country with an artist; it will not be long before she discovers that lying all about her are countless beauties of which she has never dreamed in her limited philosophy.

If you ask, How are we to improve taste? the best—indeed, the only right—answer is, you must go to the fountain-head. It is necessary to return to nature and acquire a relish for its beauties. Museums, no doubt, have done much, and art schools and picture galleries have done more, for æsthetic culture, but for the improvement of taste there is nothing like making people see the glory of the sweet world around them.

Now, how is this to be done? In an article by Mr. W. W. Fenn on this subject, he remarks that to lay down a hard-and-fast rule by which one may teach oneself to look with admiration at the beauties of a natural landscape or its component parts, and to extract from merely dwelling on them a

definite and substantial pleasure is not easy. The process "is not like making a pudding. We cannot give a recipe for it and put it into cookery-book phraseology; it is too subtle for that; for of it we might sing as Bassanio does of Fancy, and ask if 'tis bred 'in the heart or in the head,' and we should be quite right in adopting the answer in the song, and say, 'it is engendered in the eyes with gazing fed.'"

If a girl can but learn to look reverently and intelligently, with the belief that if she does so there is a great deal to reward her for a little concentration of thought, she may be sure she is on the right road for gaining an insight into all those graces which nature displays to those who love her. The next thing is, if possible, to frequent the company of those who have already cultivated the habit of observing. Such society will do much to open our eyes and enable us to see a thousand beauties of light, and form, and colour, where before none were visible.

Do not be too severe in regard to the taste of other people. A girl who is nothing if not critical, will soon find the habit neither favourable to comfort nor friendship. I wish we would all in this respect become imitators of Goethe, whose practice it was to dwell only on the good and the excellent, and pass over in silence the mistaken and the defective.

To have extremely good taste is occasionally a misfortune. Just as, to get successfully through the world, with its rough usage and hard words, some of us are the better of thick skins and deaf ears, so it would be as well perhaps sometimes to have blind eyes. Extremely good taste may be in danger of growing morbidly sensitive. A healthy mind, on the other hand, will find enjoyment almost everywhere, for the world is rich in loveliness, and the offences against beauty we sometimes encounter are hardly worth noticing compared with the glories of earth, and sea, and sky.

VARIETIES.

NOTES ON SMILES.—Of all actions the most peculiar and the most important is the smile. It is, as it were, the blossom to the face, chiefly deciding its value in the market. Who has not known that moment of suspense before a beauty smiles, lest the second state should not be as attractive as the first? The mind is sure to tell its secrets in the generous and open smile, or its concealments in the hard and false one, or its inanity in the *bête* one; or it may perhaps suspend your judgment in the mere polite one—though even this, from the force of habit, will say more than it intends.

STRICT JUSTICE.

Two Arabs sat down to dinner; one had five loaves, the other three. A stranger passing by desired permission to eat with them, which they agreed to.

The stranger dined, laid down eight pieces of money, and departed. The proprietor of the five loaves took up five pieces, and left three for the other, who objected and insisted on receiving half.

The cause came before Ali, who gave the following judgment:—"Let the owner of the five loaves have seven pieces of money, and the owner of the three loaves one; for, if we divide the eight loaves by three, they make twenty-four parts, of which he who laid down the five loaves had fifteen; whilst he who laid down three had only nine. As all fared alike, and eight shares was each man's proportion, the stranger ate seven parts of the first man's property, and only one belonging to the other; the money in justice must be divided accordingly."