tite which itself is gross and sensual. A similar association must be formed in the breast of the African who has any taste ; and as he never knew feminine softness, or any of the endearing qualities of the sex, but as united with thick lips, a flat nose, a black skin, and woolly hair, a sable beauty of that description must excite in his breast the same emo­tions that are excited in the breast of an European by the fair woman with Grecian features.

But is there not an ideal or perfect beauty of the human form ? There certainly is, as of every other natural ob­ject ; but it cannot be the same in Europe as in Africa, un­less to a being who is acquainted with all the peculiarities of form, national and individual, that are to be found among the inhabitants of the whole earth. It has been supposed, and we think completely proved, by Mr Alison, one of our best writers on the philosophy of taste, that the sublimity or beauty of forms arises altogether from the associations which we connect with them, or the qualities of which they are expressive to us. The qualities expressed by the male and female forms are very different ; and we would by no means think the woman beautiful who should have the form of the Farnese Hercules, or admire the shapes of the hero who should be formed like the Venus de’ Medici ; because the proportions of such a woman would indicate strength and intrepidity, where we wish to find only gentleness and deli­cacy ; and the delicate form of the hero would indicate softness and effeminacy, where the opposite qualities only can be esteemed. As we associate with the female form many desirable qualities, every woman is esteemed more or less beautiful as her figure and features indicate a greater or smaller number of these qualities ; and the same is the case with respect to the qualities which adorn the male character, and the form and features by which they are ex­pressed. Upon comparing a number of human beings with one another, we find, that with respect to every feature and limb, there is one central form to which nature always tends, though she be continually deviating from it on the right hand and on the left. This form therefore is considered as the most perfect form of the species, and most expressive of the qualities for which that species is valued ; but in Africa, the central form, with respect to the proportions of the human body and the features of the human face, is very different from what it is in Europe ; and therefore the ideal or perfect beauty of the human form and features cannot be the same in both countries. No doubt, if a man could examine the limbs and features of every individual of the human race, he would discover one central form belonging to the whole, and be led to esteem it the standard of beau­ty ; but as this is obviously impossible, the common idea or central form belonging to each great class of mankind must be esteemed the standard of beauty in that class, as indi­cating most completely the qualities for which individuals are esteemed. Thus there is a common form in childhood, and a common form in age ; each of which is the more per­fect as it is the more remote from peculiarities : but though age and childhood have something in common, we should not deem the child beautiful who was formed exactly like the most handsome man, nor the man handsome who was formed exactly like the most beautiful child. This doc­trine is well illustrated by Sir Joshua Reynolds, who has applied it to every object esteemed beautiful in nature ; and proved, that the superiority of Claude Lorrain over the landscape-painters of the Dutch and Flemish schools, arises chiefly from his having generalized his conceptions, and formed his pictures by compounding together the various draughts which he had previously made from various beau­tiful scenes and prospects. “ On the whole,” says he, “it seems to me that there is but one presiding principle which regulates and gives stability to every art. The works, whether of poets, painters, moralists, or historians, which are built upon general nature, live for ever ; while those which depend for their existence on particular customs and habits, a particular view of nature, or the fluctuation of fashion, can only be coeval with that which first raised them from obscurity. All the individual objects which are exhibited to our view by nature, upon close examination will be found to have their blemishes and defects. The most beautiful forms have something about them like weak­ness, minuteness, or imperfection. But it is not every eye that perceives these blemishes. It must be an eye long used to the contemplation and comparison of these forms ; which alone can discern what any set of objects of the same kind has in common, and what each wants in particular.”

From these reasonings the same great artist concludes, that the man who is ambitious of the character of possessing a correct taste, ought to acquire a “ habit of comparing and digesting his notions. He ought not to be wholly unac­quainted with that part of philosophy which gives him an insight into human nature, and relates to the manners, cha­racters, passions, and affections. He ought to know *some­thing* concerning *mind,* as well as a great deal concerning the *body,* and the various external works of nature and of art ; for it is only the power of distinguishing right from wrong that is properly denominated *taste.*

“ Genius and taste, in the common acceptation, appear to be very nearly related ; the difference lies only in this, that genius has superadded to it a habit or power of execu­tion. Or we may say that taste, when this power is added, changes its name, and is called *genius.* They both, in the popular opinion, pretend to an entire exemption from the restraint of rules. It is supposed that their powers are in­tuitive ; that under the name of *genius* great works are pro­duced, and under the name of *taste* an exact judgment is given, without our knowing why, and without being under the least obligation to reason, precept, or experience.

“ One can scarce state these opinions without exposing their absurdity ; yet they are constantly in the mouths of men, and particularly of illiterate and affected connoisseurs. The natural appetite or taste of the human mind is for *truth;* whether that truth results from the real agreement or equality of original ideas among themselves, from the agreement of the representation of any object with the thing represented, or from the correspondence of the seve­ral parts of any arrangement with each other. It is the very same taste which relishes a demonstration in geome­try, that is pleased with the resemblance of a picture to an original, and touched with the harmony of music.

“ But besides *real,* there is also *apparent* truth, or opinion, or prejudice. With regard to real truth, when it is known, the taste which conforms to it is and must be uniform. With regard to the second sort of truth, which may be called *truth upon sufferance,* or *truth by courtesy,* it is not fixed, but variable. However, whilst these opinions and preju­dices on which it is founded continue, they operate as truth ; and the art whose office it is to please the mind as well as instruct it, must direct itself according to *opinion,* or it will not attain its end. In proportion as these prejudices are known to be generally diffused or long received, the taste which conforms to them approaches nearer to certainty, and to a sort of resemblance to real science, even where opinions are found to be no better than prejudices. And since they deserve, on account of their duration and ex­tent, to be considered as really true, they become capable of no small degree of stability and determination by their permanent and uniform nature.

“ Of the judgment which we make on the works of art, and the preference that we give to one class of art over another, if a reason be demanded, the question is perhaps evaded by answering, I judge from my taste ; but it does not follow that a better answer cannot be given, though for common gazers this may be sufficient. Every man is not obliged to investigate the causes of his approbation or