

THE

214

# PRINCETON MAGAZINE.

EDITED BY

WILLIAM C. ALEXANDER.

---

VOL. I.

---

PRINTED BY JOHN T. ROBINSON.

1850.

THE  
PRINCETON MAGAZINE.

---

OF THE TERM AESTHETICS.

To keep out a new word is as hard as to keep out an imported weed from our cornfields; and we may as well sit down contented with some of the recent inventions, as we have done with the dandelion and the Canada thistle. It is not long since the word *Aesthetics* was as strange in Europe, as it still is to some in America. Like the modern *reliable*, stamped by Sir Robert Peel, it is made in an unscholarlike manner, against analogy; but we needed it, and it will pass into the currency. The Greek adjective *αισθητικος*, from the verb meaning *perceive, be sensible of*, is employed by ancient writers to denote whatever belongs to perception, sensible apprehension, especially by feeling; then, secondarily, for one quick of perception; and sometimes, by later authors, passively, for that which is perceptible. No classical instance can be produced, in which it is applied to the cognizance of the fine arts, as objects of taste. In the nomenclature of modern German philosophy, however, *ästhetisch* and *ästhetik* have become common and indispensable terms. Hence what was once called simply *taste*, with or without a qualifying epithet, is familiarly *ästhetisches Gefühl*, or aesthetic feeling.

The time can be nearly fixed, when it began to be used in

It may be noted that the Hungarian and Polish name is *Benjowsky* (pronounced *Benyowsky*.) The count's autobiography was in French; of this an English version was published in London by Nicholson, in 1790, in two octavos, with plates. In 1791 German versions appeared in Leipsic, by Forster, and in Hamburg, by Ebeling. The drama of Kotzebue, to which we have alluded, is his *Verschwörung in Kamtschatka*. The events were well suited to the peculiar genius of this popular, meretricious, and ill-fated author.

The eighteenth century, quiet even to deadness as it was in some respects, was nevertheless an age marked not only by revolutions in states, but by the romantic heroism of single adventurers. Of these not a few were connected with the fortunes of our own country, such as Kosciusco, Pulaski, and Jones. Others, like Trenck and Latude, expended in resistance against personal assault an energetic bravery, which might have led them to conquest and dominion. The study of such characters is fascinating to youth, but should be guarded by wise discrimination. Viewed with such cautions the life of Benyowski appears to us to merit a greater attention than it has generally received. The turbulent stream of time will continue to cast up on its surface men of this sort, whose inward fires cannot burn in a narrow enclosure, and who rush into the fiercest perils of any field that lies open to the soldier of fortune. It is moral tendencies alone which determine whether the genius thus impelled shall become a Wolff or a Bernadotte on one hand, or a Francia, a Santa Anna, a Lopez or a Benyowski on the other.

---

### SOME PEOPLE.

1. SOME PEOPLE seem to think that egotism means self-praise, and that they may talk forever of themselves without incurring this reproach, provided they avoid all boasting, and

confine themselves to simple narrative of their adventures, or to medical details of their constitutions and complaints, or perhaps to self-depreciation and confession of their faults. The same error is committed by those preachers, who imagine that they cannot preach themselves except by open self-glorification, and have no suspicion that they constantly commit this sin by speaking of their own "poor hearts" and of themselves as "worms of the dust." Egotistical speech consists in saying too much of one's self, whether good or evil.

2. **SOME PEOPLE** imagine that the only way in which they can be disagreeable is by ill nature or severity. They never dream that they may be too gracious, or that most men can bear any thing in manner with more patience than that bland assumption of superiority, which shows itself in patronizing condescension.

3. **SOME PEOPLE** cherish the delusion, that in order to enjoy the pleasures of taste, they must be inventors, or at least performers. They forget that the great majority must always be the passive recipients of such impressions. Under this delusion many waste their lives in making themselves mediocre draughtsmen or musicians, and still more deny themselves such pastimes altogether, when both classes might have derived untold pleasure from thankfully enjoying what is done by others, without ambitiously attempting it themselves. If the same mistake, which thus exists about the fine arts, were equally operative in literature, what would the result be? If no man dared to read a poem without writing one, the world would either have too many writers to be read, or too few readers to let writers live.

4. **SOME PEOPLE** think it is a conclusive argument against a given course of conduct, that if all men followed it society could not exist. In the shallow ethics of the world, no formula is more approved than "What if every body did so?" The same logic would demonstrate that because if all were doctors there would be no patients, men must all be patients and none doctors; or because if all preached there would be

no hearers, therefore none must preach and all must hear without a preacher. The most valuable functions are precisely those which would be worthless if they could be universal.

5. **SOME PEOPLE** are forever prating about knowledge of the world, and of the human heart, and pitying the poor souls who derive their ideas from books. As if the writings of the wise men of all ages could not give as deep an insight into human nature as the tattle of the drawing-room, the squabbles of the bar or bar-room, or even the discussions of the counter and the shop-board. Let the mere bookworm be despised as he deserves, but let not his despisers fondly dream that the greatest minds of many generations can know less of human nature than the smallest mind of one.

6. **SOME PEOPLE** honestly imagine that they are the first samples of the class or species, which they represent, ever exhibited to public view. This is the darling error of the school-boy and apprentice in his Sunday clothes. Many a youthful coxcomb, rich and poor, would be less lavish of his killing airs, his petulant and supercilious treatment of his seniors, if he bore in mind or even knew, that some at least of those whom he is seeking to impress, have had the happiness of seeing half a dozen or a dozen generations of the same breed, and have learned from each successive generation to expect less from the next.

7. **SOME PEOPLE**, if they condescend to read these paragraphs, may feel disposed to poach upon my manor and write others, whether in mere continuation or by way of parody and refutation. All such are hereby notified that they may spare themselves the labour and exposure which they meditate, as the feelings which prompt to such a course had better be kept secret than exposed to public view; and as to the continuation of these thoughts, it is commonly conceded, that the person who begins to say a thing is for the most part the best qualified to finish it.

S. P.