

there is a discordant jumbling — an Egyptian Sphinx for instance, placed over a Doric portico ; in all there prevails a vast amount of timid imitation. The one repeats the other, either in general outline or in the subordinate parts. But the case is otherwise among the ichthyolites of the Old Red Sandstone ; nor does it lessen the wonder, that their nicer ornaments should yield their beauty only to the microscope. There is unity of character in every scale, plate, and fin — unity such as all men of taste have learned to admire in those three Grecian orders from which the ingenuity of Rome was content to borrow, when it professed to invent — in the masculine Doric, the chaste and graceful Ionic, the exquisitely elegant Corinthian ; and yet the unassisted eye fails to discover the finer evidences of this unity : it would seem as if the adorable Architect had wrought it out in secret with reference to the Divine idea alone. The artist who sculptured the cherry-stone consigned it to a cabinet, and placed a microscope beside it ; the microscopic beauty of these ancient fish was consigned to the twilight depths of a primeval ocean. There is a feeling which at times grows upon the painter and the statuary, as if the perception and love of the beautiful had been sublimed into a kind of moral sense. Art comes to be pursued for its own sake ; the exquisite conception in the mind, or the elegant and elaborate model, becomes all in all to the worker, and the dread of criticism or the appetite of praise almost nothing. And thus, through the influence of a power somewhat akin to conscience, but whose province is not the just and the good, but the fair, the refined, the exquisite, have works prosecuted in solitude, and never intended for the world, been found fraught with loveliness. Sir Thomas Lawrence, when finishing, with the most consummate care, a picture intended for a semi-barbarous, foreign