

clothing, and food, and sleep; all of which, though even necessary to our existence, may be abused by a luxurious indulgence in them. But at present I am no further concerned with the moral part of the question, than to infer that, if an attention to external ornament be not only allowable, but right, we may antecedently expect that materials for its exercise would be provided by nature: and that is indeed the fact<sup>a</sup>.

It would be difficult however to determine which of the three kingdoms, the animal, vegetable, or mineral, is the most prolific source of those beautiful forms and colours which are principally valued as objects of external ornament. We do not indeed observe in any flower that iridescent play of colours which characterises some varieties of the opal and felspar, among minerals; and the plumage of certain birds, and the scales of certain fish, among animals: but in elegance and variety of form, and in splendour and simplicity of colour, the vegetable world will be found to yield neither to the animal nor mineral. Mineral substances, however, from their rarity as well as beauty, are more prized; and from the durability of their substance are more permanently applicable to ornamental purposes than those either of animal or vegetable

<sup>a</sup> "Wherefore did nature pour her bounties forth?" &c.

COMUS, line 726, &c.