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CRITICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS

ESSAYS

OF

PROFESSOR WILSON

OF EDINBURGH.

In Three Volumes, 12mo.

BEAUTIFULLY PRINTED ON FINE PAPER.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF PROFESSOR WILSON.

[FROM THE BOOK OF GEMS.]

John Wilson was born at Paisley, in 1789. After going through a preparatory course of study at the University of Glasgow, he was entered a fellow-commoner at Magdalen College, Oxford; and very soon obtained some portion of that fame of which he was destined to participate so largely. Much of his paternal property was lost by the failure of a mercantile concern in which it had been embarked; but enough remained to purchase the elegancies of life: he bought the beautiful estate of Elleray, on the lake of Winandermere—fit dwelling for a poet—and continues to inhabit it, when his professional duties permit his absence from Edinburgh. In 1812 he published the Isle of Palms; and the City of the Plague, in 1816. In 1820, he became, under circumstances highly honourable to him, a successful candidate for the Chair of Moral Philosophy, in the University of the Scottish metropolis. He has since published but little poetry: his prose tales—"The Trials of Margaret Lindsay," "The Foresters," and "Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life"—have, however, amply compensated the world for his desertion of the Muses; and his contributions to "Blackwood's Magazine," which are too strongly marked to

leave any doubt of their authorship, have established for him a high and enduring reputation. The conduct of this periodical is so universally understood to be in the hands of the Professor, that we may consider ourselves justified in describing him as its editor. He has long upheld its supremacy: the best supported magazines of England have failed in competing with it; because there is no living writer whose talents are so versatile, and consequently so fitted to deal with the varied topics upon which his judgment or his fancy must be employed. His learning is both profound and excursive; his criticism searching and sound; his descriptions of scenery exquisitely true; his paintings of human character and passion admirable; his wit and humour delightful, when it does not degenerate into "fun;" and no writer of modern times has written so many deliciously eloquent passages which produce, if we may so express ourselves, gushes of admiration. The mind of Wilson is a remarkable blending of the kindly and the bitter:—his praise is always full and hearty; his censure almost unendurable: he appears to have no control over his likings or dislikings:—at times, pursues with almost superhuman wrath, and then, again, becomes so generous and eloquent, that he absolutely makes an author's character, and establishes his position by a few sentences of approval. From all his criticisms there may be gathered some evidence of a sound heart; of a nature like the Highland breezes—keen, but healthy; often most invigorating when most severe—but which may be safely encountered only by those whose stamina is unquestionable. The personal appearance of Professor Wilson is very remarkable: his frame is, like his mind, powerful and robust. His complexion is florid, and his features are finely marked; the mouth is exquisitely chiselled, the expression of his countenance is gentle to a degree; but there is "a lurking devil" in his keen gray eye, that gives a very intelligible hint to the observer. His forehead is broad and high. To us, among all the great men we have ever beheld—and they have not been few—there is not one who so thoroughly extorts a mingled sensation of love and fear.

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ESSAYS.

BY CHRISTOPHER NORTH,

(PROFESSOR WILSON.)

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VOL. I.

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The writings of Professor Wilson are characterized by a rich and genial flow of sentiment and language. His poetical criticisms are almost always justified by the soundest principles. And his descriptions of natural scenery and woodland pleasures, breathe the refreshment of fields and streams.

The present collection is offered to the public with the hope of diffusing still more widely the enjoyment with which the readers of Blackwood have long been familiar. It is intended to be followed by the republication, in a similar form, from the same magazine, of the elaborate critiques, by the same hand, upon those great poets, ancient and modern, of whom little is generally known beyond their names.

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WILSON'S MISCELLANIES.

CHRISTMAS DREAMS.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1828.)

How beautiful are all the subdivisions of time diversifying the dream of human life, as it glides away between earth and heaven! And why should moralists mourn over that mutability that gives the chief charm to all that passes so transitorily before our eyes, leaving image upon image fairer and dearer far than even the realities, still visible, and it may be for ever, in the waters of memory sleeping within the heart? Memory never awakes but along with imagination, and therefore it is

> "That she can give us back the dead,
> Even in the loveliest looks they wore!"

The years, the months, the weeks, the days, the nights, the hours, the minutes, the moments, each is in itself a different living, and peopled, and haunted world. One life is a thousand lives, and each individual, as he fully renews the past, reappears in a thousand characters, yet all of them bearing a mysterious identity not to be misunderstood, and all of them, while every passion has been shifting and dying away, and reascending into power, still under the dominion of the same unchanging conscience, that feels and knows that it is from God.

Oh! who can complain of the shortness of human life, that can retravel all the windings and wanderings, and mazes that his feet have trodden since the farthest back

hour at which memory pauses, baffled and blindfolded, as she vainly tries to penetrate and illumine the palpable, the impervious darkness that shrouds the few first for ever-forgotten years of our wonderful being? Long, long, long ago seems it to be indeed, when we remember it, the time we first pulled the primroses on the sunny braes, wondering, in our first blissful emotions of beauty, at the leaves with a softness all their own, a yellowness nowhere else so vivid, "the bright consummate flower," so starlike to our awakened imagination among the lowly grass—lovely, indeed, to our admiring eyes, as any one of all the stars that, in their turn, did seem themselves like flowers in the blue fields of heaven!—long, long, long ago, the time when we danced along, hand in hand with our golden-haired sister, whom all that looked on loved!—long, long, long ago, the day on which she died—the hour, so far more dismal than any hour that can now darken us on this earth, when she—her coffin—and that velvet pall descended—and descended—slowly, slowly into the horrid clay, and we were borne deathlike, and wishing to die, out of the churchyard, that, from that moment, we thought we could enter never more! And oh! what a multitudinous being must ours have been, when, before our boyhood was gone, we could have forgotten her buried face! Or at the dream of it, dashed off a tear, and away, with a bounding heart, in the midst of a cloud of playmates, breaking into fragments on the hill-side, and hurrying round the shores of those wild moorland lochs, in vain hope to surprise the heron, that slowly uplifted his blue bulk, and floated away, regardless of our shouts, to the old castle woods! It is all like a reminiscence of some other state of existence! Then, after all the joys and sorrows of those few years, which we now call transitory, but which our boyhood felt as if they would be endless—as if they would endure for ever—arose upon us the glorious dawning of another new life—Youth! with its insupportable sunshine, and its magnificent storms! transitory, too, we now know, and well deserving the name of dream! But while it lasted, long, various, and agonizing, while, unable to sustain "the beauty still more beauteous" of the eyes that first revealed to us the light of love, we hurried away from the parting hour, and, looking up to the moon and

stars, hugged the very heavens to our heart. Yet life had not yet nearly reached its meridian, journeying up the sunbright firmament. How long hung it there exulting, when "it flamed on the forehead of the noontide sky!" Let not the time be computed by the lights and shadows of the years, but by the innumerable array of visionary thoughts, that kept deploying, as if from one eternity into another—now in dark sullen masses, now in long array, brightened as if with spear-points, and standards, and moving along through chasm, abyss, and forest, and over the summits of the highest mountains, to the sound of ethereal music, now warlike and tempestuous—now, as "from flutes and soft recorders," accompanying, not pæans of victory, but hymns of peace. That life, too, seems, now that it is gone, to have been of a thousand years. Is it gone? Its skirts are yet hovering on the horizon—and is there yet another life destined for us? That life which we fear to face,—age, old age! Four dreams within a dream, and then we may awake in heaven!

At dead of night—and it is now the dead of night—how the heart often quakes on a sudden at the silent resurrection of buried thoughts!

> "Thoughts that like phantoms trackless come and go!"

Perhaps the sunshine of some one single Sabbath of more exceeding holiness comes first glimmering, and then brightening upon us, with the very same religious sanctity that filled all the air at the tolling of the kirk-bell, when all the parish was hushed, and the voice of streams heard more distinctly among the banks and braes,—and then, all at once, a thunder-storm that many years before, or many years after, drove us, when walking alone over the mountains, into a shieling, will seem to succeed, and we behold the same threatening aspect of the heavens that then quailed our beating hearts, and frowned down our eyelids before the lightning began to flash, and the black rain to deluge all the glens. No need now for any effort of thought. The images rise of themselves—independently of our volition—as if another being, studying the working of our minds, conjured up the phantasmagoria

before us, who are beholding it with love, with wonder, or with fear. Darkness and silence have a power of sorcery over the past; and the soul has then, too, often restored to it feelings and thoughts that it had lost—and is made to know that nothing which it once experiences ever perishes, but that all things spiritual possess a principle of immortal life.

Why linger on the shadowy wall some of those phantasmagoria—returning after they have disappeared—and reluctant to pass away into their former oblivion? Why shoot others athwart the gloom, quick as spectral figures seen hurrying among mountains during a great storm? Why do some glare and threaten—why others fade away with a melancholy smile—why that one—look! look! a figure all in white, and with white roses in its hair, comes forward through the haze, beautifying into distincter form and face, till its pale, beseeching hands almost touch my bosom—and then, in a moment it is as nothing!

But now the room is disenchanted—and feebly my lamp is glimmering, about to leave me to the light of the moon and stars. There is it trimmed again—and the sudden increase of lustre cheers the heart within me like a festal strain—and to-morrow—to-morrow is Merry Christmas, and when its night descends, there will be mirth and music, and the light sound of the merry-twinkling feet within these now so melancholy walls, and sleep now reigning over all the house—save this one room—will be banished far over the sea—and Morning will be reluctant to allow her light to break up the innocent orgies.

Were every Christmas of which we have been present at the celebration, painted according to nature—what a gallery of pictures! True, that a sameness would pervade them all—but only that kind of sameness that pervades the nocturnal heavens,—one clear night being always, to common eyes, so like another,—for what hath any night to be proud of but one moon and some thousand stars—a vault "darkly, deeply, beautifully blue," here a few braided, and there a few castellated clouds? Yet no two nights ever bore more than a family resemblance to each other before the studious and instructed eye of him

who has long communed with Nature, and is familiar with every smile and frown on her changeful, but not capricious countenance. Even so with the annual festivals of the heart. Then our thoughts are the stars that illumine those skies—on ourselves it depends whether they shall be black as Erebus or brighter than any Aurora.

My father's house! How it is ringing, like a grove in spring, with the din of creatures happier, a thousand times happier, than all the birds in the world! It is the Christmas holidays—Christmas day itself—Christmas night—and joy intensifies love in every bosom. Never before were we brothers and sisters so dear to one another—never before had our hearts so yearned towards the authors of our being—our blissful being! There they sit—silent in all that outcry—composed in all that disarray,—still in all that tumult—yet, as one or other flying imp sweeps round the chair, a father's hand will playfully try to catch a prisoner,—a mother's gentler touch on some sylph's disordered cymar be felt almost as a reproof, and, for a moment, slacken the fairy-flight. One old game treads on the heels of another—twenty within the hour,—and many a new game never heard of before nor since, struck out by the collision of kindred spirits in their glee, the transitory fancies of genius inventive through very delight. Then, all at once, there is a hush, profound as ever falls on some little plat within a forest, when the moon drops behind the mountain, and the small green-robed people of peace at once cease their pastime and evanish. For she—the silver tongued—is about to sing an old ballad, words and air both hundreds of years old,—and sing she doth, while tears begin to fall, with a voice too mournfully beautiful long to breathe below,—and, ere another Christmas shall come with the falling snows, doomed to be mute on earth—but to be hymning in heaven.

Of that house—to our eyes the fairest of earthly dwellings—with its old ivied turrets, and orchard-garden, bright alike with fruit and flowers, not one stone remains! The very brook that washed its foundations has vanished along with them,—and a crowd of other buildings, wholly without character, has long stood, where here

2*

a single tree, and there a grove, did once render so lovely that small demesne! Which, how could we, who thought it the very heart of paradise, even for one moment have believed was soon to be blotted out from being, and we ourselves, then so linked in love that the band which bound us all together was, in its gentle pressure, felt not nor understood, to be scattered far and abroad, like so many leaves, that after one wild parting rustle are separated by roaring wind-eddies, and brought together no more! The old abbey,—it still survives,—and there, in that corner of the burial-ground, below that part of the wall which was least in ruins, and which we often climbed to reach the starlings' and martins' nests—there, in hopes of a joyful resurrection, lie the loved and venerated,—for whom, even now that so many long, long, grief-deadening years have fled, I feel, in this hushed and holy hour, as if it were impiety so utterly to have ceased to weep—so seldom to remember!—and then, with a powerlessness of sympathy to keep pace with youth's frantic grief—the floods we all wept together—at no long interval—on those pale and smiling faces, as they lay in their coffins, most beautiful and most dreadful to behold!

"Childish! childish!" methinks I hear some world-wise thinker cry. But has not one of the wisest of spirits said "The child is father of the man!" And if so, ought the man ever to lose sight of any single one of those dear, dim, delightful remembrances, far off and remote, of objects whether alive or dead,—whether instinct with love and intelligence, or but of the insensate sod, that once were to him all his being,—so blended was that being then, with all it saw and heard on this musical and lustrous earth, that, as it bounded along in bliss, it was but as the same creation with the grass, the flowers, the streams, the trees, the clouds, the sky, and its days and nights, —all of them bound together by one invisible chain,—a green, bright, murmuring, shadowy, floating, sunny and starry world,—of which the enraptured creature that enjoyed it was felt to be the very centre,—and the very soul!

Then came a new series of Christmasses, celebrated, one year in this family, another year in that,—none

present but those whom the delightful Elia, alias Charles Lamb, calleth the "old familiar faces;" something in all features, and all tones of voice, and all manners, betokening origin from one root,—relations all, happy, and with no reason either to be ashamed or proud of their neither high nor humble birth—their lot being cast within that pleasant realm, "the golden mean," where the dwellings are connecting links between the hut and hall, fair edifices resembling manse or mansion-house, according as the atmosphere expands or contracts their dimensions, in which competence is next-door neighbour to wealth, and both of them within the daily walk of contentment.

Merry Christmasses they were indeed—one lady always presiding, with a figure that once had been the stateliest among the stately, but then somewhat bent, without being bowed bown, beneath an easy weight of most venerable years. Sweet was her tremulous voice to all her grandchildren's ears! Nor did those solemn eyes, bedimmed into a pathetic beauty, in any degree restrain the glee that sparkled in orbs that had as yet shed not many tears, but tears of pity or of joy. Dearly she loved all those mortal creatures whom she was soon about to leave; but she sat in sunshine even within the shadow of death; and the "voice that called her home" had so long been whispering in her ear, that its accents had become dear to her, and consolatory every word that was heard in the silence, as from another world.

Whether we were indeed all so witty as we thought ourselves—uncles, aunts, nephews, cousins, and "the rest," it might be presumptuous in us, who were considered by ourselves and some few others the most amusing of the whole set, at this distance of time to decide—especially in the affirmative; but how the roof did ring with sally, pun, retort, and repartee! Ay, with pun—a species of impertinence for which we have therefore a kindness even to this day. Had incomparable Thomas Hood had the good fortune to have been born a cousin of ours, how with that fine fancy of his would he have shone at those Christmas festivals, eclipsing us all! Our family, through all its different branches, has ever been famous for bad voices, but good ears; and we think we hear ourselves—

all those uncles and aunts, nephews, and nieces, and cousins—singing now! Easy is it to "warble melody" as to breathe air. But, oh! we hope harmony is the most difficult of all things to people in general, for to us it was impossible; and what attempts ours used to be at seconds! Yet the most woful failures were rapturously encored; and ere the night was done, we spoke with most extraordinary voices indeed, every one hoarser than another, till at last, walking home with a fair cousin, there was nothing left for it but a tender glance of the eye—a tender pressure of the hand—for cousins are not altogether sisters, and although partaking of that dearest character, possessing, it may be, some peculiar and appropriate charms of their own; as didst thou, Emily the "Wild-cap!"—That *soubriquet* all forgotten now—for now thou art a matron, gentle as a dove, and smiling on an only daughter, almost woman-grown—fair and frolicsome in her innocence as thou thyself wert of yore, when the gravest and wisest withstood not the witchery of thy dancings, thy singings, and thy showering smiles!

On rolled suns and seasons—the old died—the elderly became old—and the young, one after another, were wafted joyously away on the wings of hope, like birds, almost as soon as they can fly, ungratefully forsaking their nests, and the groves in whose safe shadow they first essayed their pinions; or like pinnaces, that, after having for a few days trimmed their snow-white sails in the land-locked bay, close to whose shores of silvery sand had grown the trees that furnished timber both for hull and mast, slip their tiny cables on some summer day, and gathering every breeze that blows, go dancing over the waves in sunshine, and melt far off into the main! Or, haply, some were like fair young trees, transplanted during no favourable season, and never to take root in another soil, but soon leaf and branch to wither beneath the tropic sun, and die almost unheeded by those who knew not how beautiful they were beneath the dews and mists of their own native clime. Vain images! and therefore chosen by fancy not too painfully to touch the heart! For some hearts grow cold and forbidding in selfish cares—some, warm as ever in their own generous glow, were touched by

the chill of Fortune's frowns, that are ever worst to bear when suddenly succeeding her smiles—some, to rid themselves of painful regrets, took refuge in forgetfulness, and closed their eyes to the past—duty banished some abroad, and duty imprisoned others at home—estrangements there were, at first unconscious and unintended, yet ere long, though causeless, complete—changes were wrought insensibly, invisibly, even in the innermost nature of those, who being friends knew no guile, yet came thereby at last to be friends no more—unrequited love broke some bonds—requited love relaxed others—the death of one altered the conditions of many—and so—year after year—the Christmas meeting was interrupted—deferred—till finally it ceased, with one accord, unrenewed and unrenewable. For when some things cease—for a time—that time turns out to be for ever. Survivors of those happy circles! wherever ye be—should these imperfect remembrances of days of old chance, in some thoughtful pause of life's busy turmoil, for a moment to meet your eyes, let there be towards the inditer a few throbs of revived affection in your hearts—for his, though "absent long and distant far," has never been utterly forgetful of the loves and friendships that charmed his youth. To be parted in body is not to be estranged in soul—and many a dream—and many a vision, sacred to memory's best affections, may pass before the mind of one whose lips are silent. "Out of sight out of mind," is rather the expression of a doubt—of a fear—than of a belief or conviction. The soul surely has eyes that can see the object it loves, through all intervening darkness—and of those more especially dear it keeps within itself almost undimmed images, on which, when they know it not, think it not, believe it not, it often loves to gaze, as on a relic imperishable as it is hallowed.

Hail! rising beautiful, and magnificent, through the mists of morning—hail! hail! ye woods, groves, towers, and temples, overshadowing that famous stream beloved by all the Muses! Through this midnight hush—methinks I hear faint and far off a sacred music,—

> "Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault,
> The pealing anthem swells the note of praise!"

How steeped in the beauty of moonlight are all those pale, pillared churches, courts and cloisters, shrines and altars, with here and there a statue standing in the shade, or monument sacred to the memory of the pious—the immortal dead! Some great clock is striking from one of many domes—from the majestic tower of St. Mary Magdalen—and in the deepened hush that follows the solemn sound, hark how the mingling waters of the Cherwell and the Isis soften the severe silence of the holy night!

Remote from kindred, and from all the friendships that were the native growth of the fair fields where our boyhood and our youth had roamed, and meditated, and dreamed, those were yet years of high and lofty mood, which held us in converse with the shades of great poets and sages of old in Rhedicyna's hallowed groves, still, serene, and solemn, as that Grecian Academe where divine Plato, with all Hybla on his lips, discoursed such excellent music, that this life seemed to the imagination spiritualised—a dim reminiscence of some former state of being. How sank then the Christmas service of that beautiful liturgy into our hearts! Not faithless we to the simple worship that our forefathers had loved; but conscience told us there was no apostacy in the feelings that rose within us when that deep organ 'gan to blow, that choir of youthful voices so sweetly to join the diapason,—our eyes fixed all the while on that divine picture over the altar, of our Saviour

"Bearing his cross up rueful Calvary."

But "a change comes o'er the spirit of my dream." How beautiful in the setting sunlight are these mountains of soft crimson snow! The sun hath set, and even more beautiful are the bright-starred nights of winter, than summer in all its glories beneath the broad moons of June! Through the woods of Windermere, from cottage to cottage, by coppice-pathways winding up to dwellings among the hill-rocks, where the birch-trees cease to grow,—

"Nodding their heads, before us go,
The merry minstrelsy."

They sing a salutation at every door, familiarly naming old and young by their Christian names; and the eyes that

look upward from the vales to the hanging huts among the plats and cliffs, see the shadows of the dancers ever and anon crossing the light of the starlike window; and the merry music is heard like an echo dwelling in the sky! across those humble thresholds often did we on Christmas nights of yore—wandering through our solitary sylvan haunts, under the branches of trees within whose hollow trunk the squirrel slept—venture in, unasked, perhaps, but not unwelcome; and in the kindly spirit of the season, did our best to merrify the festival by tale or song. And now that we behold them not, are all these woods, and cliffs, and rivers, and tarns, and lakes, as beautiful as when they softened and brightened beneath our living eyes half-creating, as they gazed, the very paradise that they worshipped! And are all those hearths as bright as of yore, without the shadow of our figure? And the roofs, do they ring as mirthfully, though our voice be forgotten?

But little cause have we to lament that that paradise is now to us but as remembered poetry—poetry got by heart—deeply engraven there—and to be read at any thoughtful hour we choose—charged deeper and deeper still with old memories and new inspirations. The soul's best happiness is independent of time and place. Such accidents touch it not—they "offer not even any show of violence, it being a thing so majestical." And lo! another new series of Christmas festivals has to us been born! For there are our own living flowers in our family garland! And as long as he, who gave them their bloom and their balm, averts not from them or us the sunshine of his countenance, content—oh! far beyond content—would we be with this, the most sacred of all religious festivals, were it even to be holden by us far apart from them in some dungeon's depth!

Ay—well may we say—in gratitude, not in pride—though, at such a sight, pride might be thought but a venial sin within a father's heart,—"There is our Christmas rose"—while a blush brightens the beauty of a face that we will call "fair, not pale," and brighter and softer than the leaves of any rose, the ringlets dance over her forehead to the breeze of joy, and bliss and innocence give themselves vent in one of our own Scotia's pleasant but pathetic songs!

But the heart hugs such treasures as these in secret,—and if revealed at all to other eyes, it must be by but a fleeting and a partial light. Few words are needed to awaken, before parental eyes, the visions now stealing before mine—and, broken and all imperfect though these effusions may be, yet may they touch with pensive pleasure some simple hearts, that recognise the expression of some of their own emotions,—similar, or the same,—although life and its circumstances may have been different,—for in every single sentence, if it be but sincere, a word or two may be found, that shall awaken some complete reminiscence of joy, as the striking but of two notes at once fills ear and heart with a well known-tune, and gives it the full power of all the melody.

The lamp glimmers as it would expire,—the few embers are red and low,—and those are the shadows of moonlight on the walls. How deep a hush! Let me go and hear them breathing in their sleep,—and whisper—for it will not disturb them—a prayer by the bedside of my children. To-morrow is Christmas day—and thankful am I indeed to Providence!

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1828.)

A BANK of flowers is certainly one of the most gorgeous sights beneath the sun; but what is it to that board of books? Our old eyes are dazzled with the splendour, and are forced to seek relief and repose on the mild moreen of those window-curtains, whose drapery descends as simply as the garb of a modest quakeress. Even then, all the colours of the rainbow continue dancing on their orbs, and will permit them to see nothing in its true light. But now, the optical spectra evanish—our sight becomes reconciled to the various glitter—the too powerful blaze seems tamed down—the lustre of the hues subside, and we can bear, without winking, or placing our fingers before our face, to keep a steady gaze on the bright confusion. Why, bookbinding has become a beautiful art! Chance it was that flung together all those duodecimos, post-octavos, quartos, and folios, of kid, calf, silk, satin, velvet, russia, morocco,—white, gray, green, blue, yellow, violet, red, scarlet, crimson—yet what painter, with the most glorious eye for colour, ever with laborious study, cheered by fits of sudden inspiration, pictured a board of fruits, although worthy of the trees of Paradise, of more multifarious splendour?

Lovers are we, and have been all our life long, of charming, of divine Simplicity. But Simplicity is a lady, not only of fine taste, but—would you believe it?—of rich imagination. Often have we seen her gazing with rapt spirit and tearful eyes on the setting sun, on the sea, on cataracts, on regiments of cavalry, on an

English county of groves, woods, gardens, orchards, rivers, plains, noblemen's and gentlemen's old family-mansions, steeple-towers, churches, abbeys, cathedrals. We have seen Simplicity, like a nun at worship, reading Isaiah, and Homer, and Dante, and Ariosto, and Tasso, and Shakspeare, and Milton, and MAGA. Simplicity loves all the riches and splendour of the east and of the west, the north and the south. Her hair she loves not to adorn with many diamonds—one single solitary jewel on her forehead, like a star. But pale pearls are here and there interspersed among her locks, at once softening and deepening their darkness; they lie like dewdrops or buds of white roses, along the lilies of her breast; with pearls of great price is her virgin zone bespangled—and, as she lifts her snow-white hand, there is a twinkle of radiance from a stone that "would ransom great kings from captivity!"

You understand, then, that there is no reason in the world, or in the nature of things, why Simplicity should not stand with her arm in ours, leaning lovingly on our shoulder—pressing fondly on our side—and admire with us the mild, meek, soft, gentle, tender, dim, dazzling, bold, fierce, fiery, corruscating, cometary, planetary, lunar, solar, aurora borealis and lightning-like radiance of that sea-green board, mad with the magnificence of that myriad-minded multitude of—

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS.

But let Simplicity by and by turn her eyes towards that opening door—for footsteps are on the stair—and like hours are they coming—all dressed in white raiment, as befits and bespeaks their innocence—a chosen band of maidens, to receive from the hands of good old Father Christopher—each an appropriate volume or volumes to add to her little library, growing by degrees, year after year, like a garden that the skilful florist extends with its sloping banks towards the sunny south,—each spring visiting a rarer, richer show of her own fairest and most favourite flowers.

We are not a married man, like the writer of Christ-

mas Dreams—yet dearly do we love the young—yea the young of all animals—the young swallows twittering from their straw-built shed—the young lambs bleating on the lea, the young bees, God bless them, on their first flight away off to the heather—the young butterflies, who, born in the morning, will die of old age ere night—the young salmon-fry glorying in the gravel at the first feeling of their fins—the young adders basking, ere they can bite, in the sun, as yet unconscious, like sucking satirists, of their stings—young pigs, pretty dears, all a-squeak with their curled tails after prolific grumphy—young lions and tigers, charming cubs, like very Christian children, nuzzling in their nurse's breast—young devils—if you will—ere Satan hath sent them forth to Sin, who keeps a fashionable boarding-school in Hades, and sends up into the world above-ground only her finished scholars.

But lo! North's fair family—all children of his old age! Yes, the offspring they are of his dearest—his chosen—his faithful—his bosom-friends! There, daughters of delight—there is a shower of kisses to bedew the beloved heads of you all—and now be seated in a circle—look all as grave as you possibly can for those struggling smiles—no quizzing of our new Christmas wig—and first, and before we begin to distribute,

"Pure healthy children of the God of heaven,"

in your hearts as in ours, let there be a short silent prayer.

Now for business.

Emily Callander—oldest of the young—and tallest too—for, in truth, thou art as a cedar—for thee have we selected Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life, The Trials of Margaret Lyndsay, and The Foresters. The first is bound—as thy sweet eyes see—in variegated silk—too ornamental as some might haply think—but not so thou—for thou knowest that the barest field in all Scotland is not without its little flowers—daisies, and gowans, and clover, and primroses in their short vernal day—and that her richest fields are all a glow as at evening the western heavens. Margaret Lyndsay, you see, my love, is bound

in satin—but not of the richest sort—the colour is something quakerish—but we know you like that—and the narrow ornaments round the sides you will find to be either flowers or stars—for, in truth, flowers and stars are not dissimilar—for they both have rays—but dew brightens the one while the other it bedims into beauty. The Foresters are bound in green linen—and these yellow trees, emblazoned upon such a ground, as if autumn had tinted them, have a good effect—have they not?—So, sweetest and best—a kiss of thy forehead—sure a more graceful curtsy was never seen—and it will make the author, who is my very dear friend—whom I love more than I can venture to express, and whom I have, on that account, placed foremost now—and not for his mere merits—proud and happy, too, to be told with what a smile Emily Callander received his volumes—works we were going to say, but that is too prodigious a word for such effusions—and one smile from her will to him be worth all the chaff and chatter of all the critics in Cockaigne.

Margaret Wilson!—thou rising star—let thine arms drop from around the necks of these two sweet supporters, and come glidlng forth within touch of the old man, that he may lay his withered hand upon the lovely lustre of thy soft-braided hair. There—hold them fast to your bosom—and let not one of all the five slip from your embracing arms. Wordsworth's Works! You remember—and never will forget—the mountains at the head of Windermere—behind whose peaked summits the sun sets—and Elleray—but why that haze within those eyes?—"A few natural tears thou sheddest, but wipest them soon"—at the sudden sound of that spell-like home—so let that key remain untouched—ay, there is thy bosom all filled with poetry! with poetry often—"not of this noisy world, but silent and divine," with happy hymns for sunshine, and mournful elegies for moonlight—with lyrics that might be set to such music as the lark sings high in heaven—with odes that might be fitly chanted to the softened voice of the waterfall—with ballads such as Bessy Bell or Mary Gray might have sung "in their bower on yonder green,"—or Helen Irvine, as she "sat

upon the banks of Kirtle,"—or thou thyself, sweeter singer than them all, when willing—as I have seen thee —to charm with change thy father's ear, after the Bride's Maid's Chorus. But thou hast wept for Ruth—and for Emmeline—and for that lovely creature,

> " Her mute companion, as it lay,
> In love and pity at her feet——"

And I have seen thee shiver with delight, in the beauty of the sudden apparition, when

> "Came gliding in with lovely gleam,
> Came gliding in serene and slow,
> Soft and silent as a dream,
> That solitary doe!"

Yes—thou mayest, unblamed, place such poetry on the very same shelf, Margaret, with thy Bible; for the word of God itself is better understood by hearts softened and sublimed by strains inspired into the souls of great poets by devoutest contemplation of his works. Therefore, child,

> "with gentle hand
> Touch, for there is a spirit in the leaves!"

Fanny Allardyce—do not make me fall in love with envious eyes, by looking so on Margaret's bosom—full of beautiful books—bound as they are in crimson—for that is the light of setting suns; and although William Wordsworth be often but as a lowly pastoral poet piping in the shade, yet as often is he like the blind John Milton, who sung in his glorious darkness of Paradise—and the Courts of Heaven. For here, for thee, my pensive Frances, are the Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser, in five volumes, presented to me by my friend Mr. Pickering of London—and he will not be displeased with me for transferring them to the love of one who is in good truth "like the heavenly Una with her milk-white lamb." You will find much—and many things in the Fairy Queen, that even your almost fully expanded intellect and imagination will not yet

understand—yet little, and few things that your heart nevertheless will not feel—and not the less touchingly, because love will be mixed with wonder, and pity given to what is at once sorrowful and strange. You have already read the Comus of Milton—and love and admire—and would wish to kneel down at her feet—the lady whose spotless innocence preserves her from the fiends of that haunted wood. She and the Una of the Fairy Queen might be sisters; nor, were such creatures as they ever to walk over our earth, could they turn away their gracious and benignant smiles from such a maiden as thou art—for thou too art without spot or blemish—nor could force nor fraud prevail against thee; for, true it is as words of holy writ, that "a thousand liveried angels lacquey thee," and that vice and wickedness could not live in an atmosphere purified by the breath of innocence from such lips as thine!

Harriet Brisbane—thou hast a heroic spirit—yet a heart formed for peace. And thou lookest, with that fine, high, bold brow of thine,—yet perfectly feminine,—and with those large hazel eyes, so mild, yet magnanimous,—and that mass of nearly black hair, that, but for the Christmas roses round it, would seem almost sullen—at least most melancholy,—thou lookest, we say, like what thou indeed art, a true descendant of now beatified spirits, who, in the old days of persecution, sang hymns of rejoicing when tied to the stake, and their bodies shrivelling in the fire. Dear virgin martyr! take and keep for our sake, the exquisite Roman tale of Valerius. There you will read how one, whom I could fancy like thy very self, in face, figure, and character, a virgin named Athanasia, touched at the soul by the religion of Jesus, did disencumber herself of all the beautiful and imaginative vanities of the old mythological faith, and, fearless of the pitchy fire, and of the ravening lion, did fold the cross unto her bosom, and became transfigured from innocence into piety. The tale will not make these calm eyes of thine shed many, if any tears; but ever and anon as they follow the fortunes of her who hath forsaken the service of idols and false deities, to become a priestess of the only one, living, and true God, they will be uplifted "in thoughts that lie too deep for tears"—slowly and solemnly, and most beautifully—to the heaven of

heavens! Thou, too, take—thou high-souled daughter of a high-souled sire—this other book, bound in brightest scarlet—for you have heard, that a blind man once said, that he conceived scarlet to be like the sound of a trumpet, —and all emblazoned with the arms of adverse nations, Specimens of Spanish Ballads, celebrating the exploits of the Campeador, and other heroes, against the Saracens; and all the high and wild warfare that, for centuries, made the rivers run red with mingled Castilian and Moorish blood. The old Spanish ballads are like fragments of fine bold martial music, in their own tongue; but Mr. Lockhart is a poet "of strength and state;" and in his noble verses, your eyes dazzle at the brightness of the Spanish sword, tempered in the Ebro, and can scarce endure the flashing of the Moorish scymitar. You read his ballads in the same mood of mind with which you hear the music-band of a regiment of cavalry—say the Scots Grays—hundreds of heroes following on—on—on—with their glittering casques, and each with a sabre, erst red perchance at Waterloo, in his strong right hand.

Aha, Jane! my pretty little rosy-cheeked, dark-eyed, curly-pated Jane—can you control no longer the impatience, which, for this last half hour, you have not attempted to conceal? And are you there unbeckoned upon my knee, and, with uplifted frock, ready to receive into your lap your destined prize? There, thou imp—thou elf—thou fairy—there is a Christmas-Box for thee, on which thou wilt stare out thine eyes—having first filled them many times and oft—now with sighing, and now with laughing tears. You remember that I gave you last year the nicest of all little books, about the strangest and most curious pranky little beings that ever were born—"Fairy Legends of the South of Ireland;" and do you know that the Christmas-Box is from the same gentleman—you know his name—T. Crofton Croker; and that it is published by that Mr. Ainsworth, now a bookseller in London, who carried you in his arms into the boat, you remember, and kept you there all the time we were sailing about on the lake? but he is a faithless man, and cannot be your husband, as he said he would, for he has married a beautiful wife of his own; and—only think of his impudence!—sent you this

Christmas-Box to purchase your forgiveness. I assure you it is the nicest book for a child like you that ever was; for, do you know, that you are in your teens now, and, for a young child, are getting quite an old woman. Only look at that picture (the book you will find is full of delightful pictures) of the Enchanted Ass! Saw you ever any thing so funny? Read the story about it, and you will die of laughing. But, fond as thou art of laughter, and fun and noise—yet art thou, too, my most merry madcap, at times, like all the happiest, not disinclined to gentle weeping—therefore, read the story of "Little Willie Bell," —and then lay it down and think upon it—and weep and wonder if the "pale boy with the long curled hair," was indeed a ghost! Whether, child, there be any ghosts or no, it is not for me—old man as I am—to say; but if there be, they visit us not unpermitted, and you, my innocent, need not be afraid, were something you thought a ghost to draw the curtains of your little bed at night, and look in upon you, with a pale pale face, and all dressed in white, even like the clothes in which people are buried. For it is only to the bad that dreadful ghosts appear, sometimes, it is said, driving them mad by glaring on them with their eyes, and pointing to wounds, all streaming with blood, in their side or breast; but the ghosts that glide before the eyes of the good, whether they are shut in sleep, or open in what we call a waking dream, are the gentlest beings that ever walked beneath the light of the moon and stars —and it would make your heart to sing within you, were your eyes to fall on their faces—pale though they might be—as upon the faces of angels, who were once Christians on earth, sent, to bless the slumbers of little pious children, from heaven. After "Little Willie Bell," thou must read "The Fairy and the Peach Tree," written by Mr. Ainsworth himself—and you will know from it—what you were too young and too much in love with him that long-ago summer to know—that he is a truly good man, and, I will add, Jane, a writer of fine fancy and true feeling.—What, off and away to the window without a single kiss —to hold up the pretty pictures, one after another in the sunshine!

Caroline Graham! Nay—Caroline, no far-off flirtation

behind backs with such an old quiz as Christopher North. There you are—bounding stately up from your affectedly-humble bending down, like a tall harebell, that, depressed more than seemed natural with a weight of dew, among whose sweets the bees are murmuring, all of a sudden lifts itself up from the greensward, and, to the passing zephyr, shakes its blue blossoms in the sunshine. What! a basket —shall I call it—or rather a net of dense hair—of your own elegant handy-work no doubt—lined with what would seem to be either delicate light-blue satin or woven dew—to receive—what think ye? Why, all the souvenirs—there they go, one after another—like so many birds of soft or bright plumage, not unwillingly dancing into the cage. There goes the "Forget Me Not,"—one of the fairest flutterers of them all, a bird of beautiful plumage and sweet song. Why so intent your eyes, my Caroline, on the very first page of your first Christmas present? Ha! Stephanoff's picture of the Bridal Morning! There she sits, surveying in her mirror, which cannot well flatter, what is so finely framed—that figure, with bashful pride, which one about to rescue her to himself from an adoring world will gaze upon, and scarcely dare to embrace, with the trembling ecstasy of devoted passion. But hush, hush! Thy cheek, alternately rosy-red and lily-pale, each flower alike "love's proper hue," warns me to respect—to venerate the unconcealable secret of innocent nature—so—so! Not a word—not a look more, bright Caroline! of the "Forget Me Not"—or of the "Bridal Morning," except that—now you have recovered from the confusion which some youth or other might understand perfectly, but of which the old man knows nothing—except that Mr. Frederic Shoberl, the editor, is a pleasant gentleman, and Mr. Ackermann, the publisher, a producer of many amiable elegancies—many trifles that touch the heart, and not a few more serious, though haply not more salutary works, —for strong nourishment can be distilled from flowers; and there is a spirit with which many of his literary friends are imbued, reminding one of these lines of Wordsworth—

The device
To each and all might well belong;

It is the spirit of Paradise
That prompts such works; a spirit strong,
That gives to all the self-same bent,
When life is wise and innocent.

A large paper copy of the "Literary Souvenir," a perfect gem, Caroline, and set, after my own fancy, in silver and gold. Look at the "Duke and Duchess reading Don Quixote"—an imagination of that fine genius, the American Leslie! Let but a few ripening suns roll on, and thou thyself, the Grahame, wilt be as rich, as rare, as royal, as queenlike a beauty, as she who, unconsciously obeying the judgments, the feelings, and the fancies, of her lofty and heroic lord, is there seen dreaming with a smile of the doughty deeds of that inimitable crazed whom Cervantes created. I, for one, know not whether to raise up or run down the Spirit of Romance and Chivalry.

Mr. Alaric Watts it was who first called upon the other Fine Arts to aid Poetry in beautifying all the souvenirs—the happy name of his own "bright consummate" Annual Flower—being, to our ear, the best expression of the aim and meaning of them all. Himself an elegant writer—elegance is the peculiar characteristic of his souvenirs; but an elegance congenial with the truth, and simplicity, and the force of nature. Here, my Caroline—into the magic web it goes—bound in violet—for that is a colour that is felt to be beautiful, whether

"By mossy stone, half hidden to the eye,"

or on the open and sunny bank,—all by its single self—or easily distinguishable, unpresuming though it be, amid the brightest bouquet that e'er bloomed on the bosom of beauty.

Love and Friendship are sisters, and there is their joint "Offering,"—although Love, as usual, is shame-faced, and conceals her name. The editor, I have heard, is Mr. Charles Knight,—and I believe it; taste, and sensibility, and genius, have been brought to the work. It bears dreamy perusal well—and is like a collection of musical pieces, in which, by a certain rare felicity, the compositions of harmonists, comparatively little known to fame,

successfully rival the strains of the most famous. Thus, Southey's Grand Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte of Wales does not disincline us, at its close, to open our ears to the pathetic elegies of Moultrie,—Pringle and Praed touch the harp with a careless, but no unmasterly hand—and there is one song at least by Hervey,—

"Come touch the harp, my gentle one,"

"beautiful exceedingly,"—at least so it would be, my Caroline, if sung by thy voice when the fire was low, and this study of mine, visited occasionally, even as at present it is visited, by the best and fairest, "now in glimmer, and now in gloom," echoed to that voice which some have compared, in the variety of its thick-gushing richness, to that of the nightingale—but which I do then most dearly love to listen to, when, in its clear-singing and unornamented risings and falls, without one single intermediate grace, shake, or quaver, it doth, to my ears, still ready to catch the tones that awaken ancient memories, most of all resemble the song of Scotia's darling, the Linty, as, by the edge of some birken shaw, it hymns onwards, beginning at the hour of twilight,—its melody becoming still softer and sweeter, as if beneath the mellowing dews—and then, as if the bird wished to escape the eye of the Star of Eve, soon about to rise, all of a sudden hushed—and the songster itself dropped into the broomy brake, or flitted away into the low edge-trees of the forest!—There—let me gently place the "Amulet" in a hand fair even as that of the Lady of Ilkdale—"a phantom of delight," that will look upon you, Caroline, almost like your own image in a mirror, if you but allow the "Amulet" to open of its own accord—for often and long have I gazed upon that matchless elegance—if indeed elegance be not too feeble a word for one so captivating in her conscious accomplishments of art, so far more captivating in her unconscious graces of nature. Maiden like thyself is she—thine elder sister, Caroline—though thou art an only child—but the "Morning Walk" displays the easy dignity of the high-born matron—the happy mother teaching, it may be, her first-born son—the heir of an ancient and noble house—to brush away, with his gladsome footsteps, the

dews from the flowers and grass of his own illustrious father's wide-spread demesnes!

A fine genius hast thou, Caroline, for painting; and who of all the old masters, whose works line that long gallery in the Castle, surpasses in art or nature the works of our own Lawrence, pride of his nation and of his age? The gayest heart, my Caroline, when its gaiety is that of innocence, is likewise often, when need is, the most grave; and that such a heart is thine, I saw that night, with solemn emotions, when, by thy mother's sick-bed, thy head was bowed down in low sobbing prayers—therefore will the "Amulet" be not the less, nay, far the more, pleasant in thy privacy, because the word "Christian" is on its fair title-page, a sacred word, not misapplied, for a meek and unobtrusive religion breathes over its leaves undying fragrance; so that the "Amulet" may lie on the couch of the room where friends meet in health and cheerfulness,—below the pillow of the room where sickness lies afar from sorrow, and the patient feels that no medicine is better for the weakness of the body than that which soothes and tranquillises the soul.

Last of all—there is the bright-bound, beautiful "Bijou,"—so brightly bound, that by pressing it to thy bosom, it will impart very warmth, like a gently-burning fire. You have been at Abbotsford, Caroline? Indeed I have a notion that your image has been flitting before our great romancer's eyes, during more than one of his dreams of feminine firmness and force of character, that affects the shade without shunning the sunshine, and by its composure in the calm, tells how bravely it would stand the storm. There is Sir Walter and his family, all characteristically figured in rustic guise by the genuis of Wilkie. And the letter which gives the key to the picture, you will delight in, as a perfect model of manly simplicity,—of that dignified reserve with which a great and good man speaks of himself, and those most near and dear to him, before the world. You will find there, too, that fragment of Coleridge's which you have more than once heard me recite to you from memory—would that you could hear it murmured in the music of his own most poetical voice,—"The Wanderings of Cain." Yet why should his divine

genius deal so frequently in fragments? The Muse visits his slumbers nightly, but seems to forsake him during unfinished dreams. In "Christabelle," "that singularly wild and original poem," as Byron rightly called it, mystery is perhaps essential; and there is a wonder that ought never to be broken—a dim uncertain light, that is "darkness visible," and should neither be farther brightened nor obscured. But in the "Wanderings of Cain," the subject being Scriptural, and most ruefully and fatally true, the heart demands that its emotions shall be set at rest, and every thing told, how dreadful soever it may be, that the poet foresaw in the agonies of his inspiration. I fear Coleridge knows that he cannot conclude "The Wanderings of Cain" according to the meaning of the Bible, and, therefore, verily his lips are mute. But then, what exquisite diction! The imagery how simple,—yet Oriental all,—and placing us, as it were, on the deserts bordering on Paradise, at whose gates now flamed the fiery sword of the Cherubim!

And now, fairest, thou art released from that attitude in which thou hast so long been standing, obedient to a garrulous old man—nor yet "thinking his prattle to be tedious," for too thoroughly good art thou, my Caroline, to be wearied with any attention which thy high but humble heart willingly pays to one who bears on his forehead the authority of gray hairs.

Who now advances with the pink sash so broad—yet not too broad—with timid though not downcast eyes, and with footsteps so soft, as noiseless as their own shadows? Thy sirname is of no moment now—but thy Christian name is Mary—to my ear the mildest and most musical and most melancholy of all. Thy poetical library is already well stored—and so is thy poetical memory—for the music of sweet verse never enters there but to abide always—meeting with melodies within, perpetually inspired by a thoughtful spirit heeding all things in silent wonder and love. Yes, Mary, the old man loves to hear thy low sweet voice repeating some pure and plaintive strain of Hemans, whose finest verse is steeped in sound so exquisite, that it sinks with new and deeper meanings into the heart—or some feeling and fanciful effusion of

the rich-minded Landon, wandering at eve, with sighs and tears, amidst the scents of the orange-bloom, and the moonlight glimmer that tames the myrtle bower. But at present—I address thee as a small historian—and lo! here are "The Tales of a Grandfather, being Stories taken from Scottish History, humbly inscribed to Hugh Littlejohn!"

Hugh Littlejohn is about thine own age, Mary,—and pleased should I be to see you and him reposing together on this sofa, reading off one and the same book!—one of those three pretty little volumes! Great, long, broad quartos and folios, are not for little, short, narrow readers, like Mary and Hugh. Were one of them, in an attempt to push it out of its place on the shelf, to tumble upon your heads, you would all three fall down, with the floor, into the parlour below. But three such tiny volumes as these you may carry in your bosom out to the green knolls, when spring returns, and read them on your knees in the sunshine. Only you would have to remember not to leave them there all night; for on your return to look for them in the morning, you would lift up your hands to see that they had been stolen by the fairies, after their dance had ceased on those yellow rings. Children though you be—you, Mary and Hugh—yet it is natural for you to wish to know something about the great grown-up people of the world—how they behave and employ themselves in different countries—all enlightened, as you know, however distant from one another, by the same sun. But more especially you love—because you are children—to be told all about the country in which you yourselves, and your father and mother, and their father and mother, were born. Dearly do your young eyes love to pore over the pages of history, and your young ears to hear the darker passages explained by one who knows every thing, because he is old. Now, who do you think is the grandfather that tells those tales—and who is Hugh Littlejohn to whom they are told? Sir Walter Scott, Mary, is the grandfather,—and Hugh Littlejohn is no other than dear, sweet, clever Johnny Lockhart, whose health you and I, and all of us, shall drink by and by in a glass of cowslip wine. Men are often desperately wicked—as you who read your Bible know—and that which is commonly called history, is but

a tale after all of tears and blood—and the tale-teller too often cares little whether he is talking about the good or the bad, vices or virtues,—nay, he too often takes part with the bad against the good, and seems no more to hate sin because it triumphs. But Sir Walter is too good, too wise a man to do so--and as the people of Scotland have, for many hundred years been, on the whole, an excellent people, you will far oftener be glad than sorry in reading their history as it is told here--and when you have finished all the volumes and come to Finis, you will think—and there will be no harm in thinking--that you would rather be—what you are—a little Scottish girl, than even an English one—although, now that the two kingdoms have so long been united into one, Scottish and English girls are all sisters; and so on, indeed, up to the very oldest old women.

Never, never ought the time to come when one's own country is less beloved than any other land. Neither you, Mary, nor Hugh, must ever be citizens of the world. William Tell, you have heard, was a glorious Swiss peasant, who made all his countrymen free, and procured for them liberty to live as they liked, without a great king, who cared little about them, having it in his power to plague and humble them in their beautiful little cottages up among the mountains. Love always and honour his memory—but love and honour still more the memory of Sir William Wallace, because he did the same and more for Scotland.——I declare—John with the lunch-tray!

CHRISTOPHER IN HIS SPORTING JACKET.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1828.)

FYTTE FIRST.

We delight, as all the world has long well known, in every kind of fishing, from the whale to the minnow; but we also delight, as all the world now well knows, in every kind of fowling, from the roc to the wren. Not that we ever killed either a roc or a wren; but what comes to the same thing, we have, on two occasions, by design brought down an eagle, and, on one occasion, accidentally levelled a tom-tit. In short, we are considerable shakes of a shot; and, should any one of our readers doubt the fact, his scepticism will probably be removed by a perusal of the following article.

There is a fine and beautiful alliance between all pastimes pursued on flood and field and fell. The principles in human nature on which they are pursued, are in all the same; but those principles are subject to infinite modifications and varieties, according to the difference of individual and national character. All such pastimes, whether followed merely as pastimes, or as professions, or as the immediate means of sustaining life, require sense, sagacity, and knowledge of nature and nature's laws; nor less, patience, perseverence, courage even, and bodily strength or activity, while the spirit which animates and supports them is a spirit of anxiety, doubt, fear, hope, joy, exultation, and triumph,—in the heart of the young a fierce passion,—in the heart of the old a passion still, but subdued and tamed

down, without, however, being much dulled or deadened, by various experience of all the mysteries of the calling, and by the gradual subsiding of all impetuous impulses in the frame of all mortal men beyond perhaps threescore, when the blackest head will be becoming gray, the most nervous knee less firmly knit, the most steely-springed instep less elastic, the keenest eye less of a far-keeker, and, above all, the most boiling heart less like a cauldron or a crater—yea, the whole man subject to some dimness or decay, and, consequently, the whole duty of man like the new edition of a book, from which many passages that formed the chief glory of the *editio princeps* have been expunged, and the whole character of the style corrected indeed, without being improved,—just like the later editions of the Pleasures of Imagination, which were written by Akenside when he was about twenty-one, and altered by him at forty—to the exclusion or destruction of many most *splendida vitia*, by which process, the poem, in our humble opinion, was shorn of its brightest beams, and suffered disastrous twilight and severe eclipse—perplexing critics.

Now, seeing that these pastimes are in number almost infinite, and infinite the varieties of human character, pray what is there at all surprising in your being madly fond of shooting—and your brother Tom just as foolish about fishing—and cousin Jack perfectly insane on fox-hunting—while the old gentleman your father, in spite of wind and weather, perennial gout and annual apoplexy, goes a-coursing of the white-hipped hare on the bleak Yorkshire wolds—and uncle Ben, as if just escaped from Bedlam or St. Luke's, with Dr. Haslam at his heels, or with a few hundred yards' start of Dr. Warburton, is seen galloping, in a Welsh wig and strange apparel, in the rear of a pack of Lilliputian beagles, all barking as if they were as mad as their master, supposed to be in chase of an invisible animal that keeps eternally doubling in field and forest—"still hoped for, never seen," and well christened by the name of Escape?

Phrenology sets the question for ever at rest. All people have thirty-three faculties. Now there are but twenty-four letters in the alphabet—yet how many languages—some six thousand we believe, each of which is susceptible of

many dialects! No wonder then that you might as well try to count all the sands on the sea-shore as all the species of sportsmen.

There is, therefore, nothing to prevent any man with a large and sound developement from excelling, at once, in rat-catching and deer-stalking—from being in short a universal genius in sports and pastimes. Heaven has made us such a man.

Yet there seems to be a natural course or progress in pastimes. We do not speak now of marbles—or knuckling down at taw—or trundling a hoop—or pall-lall—or pitch and toss—or any other of the games of the school playground. We restrict ourselves to what, somewhat inaccurately perhaps, are called field-sports. Thus angling seems the earliest of them all in the order of nature. There the new-breeched urchin stands on the low bridge of the little bit burnie! and with crooked pin, baited with one unwrithing ring of a dead worm, and attached to a yarn thread, for he has not yet got into hair, and is years off gut, his rod of the mere willow or hazel wand, there will he stand during all his play-hours, as forgetful of his primer as if the weary art of printing had never been invented, day after day, week after week, month after month, in mute, deep, earnest, passionate, heart-mind-and-soul-engrossing hope of some time or other catching a minnow or a beardie! A tug—a tug! with face ten times flushed and pale by turns ere you could count ten, he at last has strength, in the agitation of his fear and joy, to pull away at the monster—and there he lies in his beauty among the gowans on the greensward, for he has whapped him right over his head and far away, a fish a quarter of an ounce in weight, and, at the very least, two inches long! Off he flies, on wings of wind, to his father, mother, and sisters, and brothers, and cousins, and all the neighbourhood, holding the fish aloft in both hands, still fearful of its escape, and, like a genuine child of corruption, his eyes brighten at the first blush of cold blood on his small fishy-fumy fingers. He carries about with him, up stairs and down stairs, his prey upon a plate; he will not wash his hands before dinner, for he exults in the silver scales adhering to the thumb-nail that scooped the pin out of the baggy's

maw—and at night, "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined," he is overheard murmuring in his sleep, a thief, a robber, and a murderer, in his yet infant dreams!

From that hour angling is no more a delightful day-dream, haunted by the dim hopes of imaginary minnows, but a reality—an art—a science—of which the flaxen-headed school-boy feels himself to be master—a mystery in which he has been initiated; and off he goes now, all alone, in the power of successful passion, to the distant brook—brook a mile off—with fields, and hedges, and single trees, and little groves, and a huge forest of six acres, between and the house in which he is boarded or was born! There flows on the slender music of the shadowy shallows—there pours the deeper din of the birch-tree'd waterfall. The scared water-pyet flits away from stone to stone, and dipping, disappears among the airy bubbles, to him a new sight of joy and wonder. And oh! how sweet the scent of the broom or furze, yellowing along the braes, where leap the lambs, less happy than he, on the knolls of sunshine! His grandfather has given him a half-crown rod in two pieces—yes, his line is of hair twisted—platted by his own soon-instructed little fingers. By heavens, he is fishing with the fly! and the Fates, who, grim and grisly as they are painted to be by full-grown, ungrateful, lying poets, smile like angels upon the paidler in the brook, winnowing the air with their wings into western breezes, while at the very first throw the yellow trout forsakes his fastness beneath the bog-wood, and with a lazy wallop, and then a sudden plunge, and then a race like lightning, changes at once the child into the boy, and shoots through his thrilling and aching heart the ecstasy of a new life expanding in that glorious pastime, even as a rainbow on a sudden brightens up the sky. *Fortuna favet fortibus*—and with one long pull and strong pull, and pull all together, Johnny lands a twelve-incher on the soft, smooth, silvery sand of the only bay in all the burn where such an exploit was possible, and dashing upon him like an Osprey, soars up with him in his talons to the bank, breaking his line as he hurries off to a spot of safety twenty yards from the pool, and then flinging him down on a heath-surrounded plat of sheep-nibbled verdure, lets

him bounce about till he is tired, and lies gasping with unfrequent and feeble motions, bright and beautiful, and glorious with all his yellow light, and crimson lustre, spotted, speckled, and starred in his scaly splendour, beneath a sun that never shone before so dazzlingly; but now the radiance of the captive creature is dimmer and obscured, for the eye of day winks and seems almost shut behind that slow-sailing mass of clouds, composed in equal parts of air, rain, and sunshine.

Springs, summers, autumns, winters,—each within itself longer, by many times longer than the whole year of grown-up life that slips at last through one's fingers like a knotless thread,—pass over the curled darling's brow; and look at him now, a straight and strengthy stripling, in the savage spirit of sport, springing over rock-ledge after rock-ledge, nor heeding aught as he plashes knee-deep, or waist-band-high, through river-feeding torrents, to the glorious music of his running and ringing reel, after a tongue-hooked salmon, insanely seeking with the ebb of tide, but all in vain, the white breakers of the sea. No hazel or willow wand, no half-crown rod of ash framed by village wright, is now in his practised hands, of which the very left is dexterous; but a twenty-feet rod of Phin's, all ring-rustling, and a-glitter with the preserving varnish, limber as the attenuating line itself, and lithe to its topmost tenuity as the elephant's proboscis—the hiccory and the horn without twist, knot, or flaw, from butt to fly, a faultless taper, "fine by degrees and beautifully less," the beau ideal of a rod by the skill of a cunning craftsman to the senses materialised! A fish—fat, fair, and forty! "She is a salmon, therefore to be woo'd—she is a salmon, therefore to be won"—but shy, timid, capricious, headstrong, now wrathful and now full of fear, like any other female whom the cruel artist has hooked by lip or heart, and, in spite of all her struggling, will bring to the gasp at last; and then with calm eyes behold her lying in the shade dead or worse than dead, fast-fading and to be reillumined no more the lustre of her beauty, insensible to sun or shower, even the most perishable of all perishable things in a world of perishing!—But the salmon has grown sulky, and must be made to spring to the plunging stone.

There, suddenly, instinct with new passion, she shoots out of the foam, like a bar of silver bullion; and, relapsing into the flood, is in another moment at the very head of the waterfall! Give her the butt—give her the butt—or she is gone for ever with the thunder into ten fathom deep! Now comes the trial of your tackle—and when was Phin ever known to fail at the edge of cliff or cataract? Her snout is southwards—right up the middle of the main current of the hill-born river, as if she would seek its very course where she was spawned! She still swims swift, and strong, and deep—and the line goes, steady, boys, steady—stiff and steady as a Tory in the roar of Opposition. There is yet an hour's play in her dorsal fin—danger in the flap of her tail—and yet may her silver shoulder shatter the gut against a rock. Why, the river was yesterday in spate, and she is fresh run from the sea. All the lesser waterfalls are now level with the flood, and she meets with no impediment or obstruction—the course is clear—no tree-roots here—no floating branches—for during the night they have all been swept down to the salt loch—*in medio tutissimus ibis*—ay, now you feel she begins to fail—the butt tells now every time you deliver your right. What! another mad leap! yet another sullen plunge! She seems absolutely to have discovered, or rather to be an impersonation of, the perpetual motion. Stand back out of the way, you son of a sea-cook—you in the tattered blue breeches, with the tail of your shirt hanging out. Who the devil sent you all here, ye vagabonds?—Ha! Watty Ritchie, my man, is that you? God bless your honest laughing phiz! What, Watty, would you think of a fish like that about Peebles? Tam Grieve never gruppit sae heavy a ane since first he belanged to the council. Curse that colley! Ay! well done Watty! Stone him to Stobbo. Confound these stirks—if that white one, with caving horns, kicking heels, and straight-up tail, come bellowing by between me and the river, then, "Madam! all is lost, except honour!" If we lose this fish at six o'clock, then suicide at seven. Our will is made—ten thousand to the Foundling—ditto to the Thames Tunnel—ha—ha—my beauty! Methinks we could fain and fond kiss thy silver side, languidly lying afloat on the foam, as if all

farther resistance now were vain, and gracefully thou wert surrendering thyself to death! No faith in female—she trusts to the last trial of her tail—sweetly workest thou, O Reel of Reels! and on thy smooth axle spinning sleep'st, even, as Milton describes her, like our own worthy planet. Scrope—Bainbridge—Maule—princes among anglers—oh! that you were here! Where the devil is Sir Humphrey? At his retort? By mysterious sympathy—far off at his own Trows, the Kerss feels that we are killing the noblest fish, whose back ever rippled the surface of deep or shallow in the Tweed. Tom Purdy stands like a seer, entranced in glorious vision, beside turreted Abbotsford. Shade of Sandy Givan! Alas! alas! Poor Sandy—why on thy pale face that melancholy smile!—Peter! The gaff! The gaff! Into the eddy she sails, sick and slow, and almost with a swirl—whitening as she nears the sand—there she has it—struck right into the shoulder, fairer than that of Juno, Diana, Minerva, or Venus—fair as the shoulder of our own beloved—and lies at last in all her glorious length and breadth of beaming beauty, fit prey for giant or demigod angling before the flood!

> "The child is father of the man,
> And I would wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety!"

So much for the angler. The shooter, again, he begins with his pop or pipe-gun, formed of the last year's growth of a branch of the plane-tree—the beautiful dark green-leaved and fragrant-flowered plane-tree, that stands straight in stem and round in head, visible and audible too from afar the bee-resounding umbrage, alike on stormy sea-coast and in sheltered inland vale, still loving the roof of the fisherman's or peasant's cottage.

Then comes, perhaps, the city pop-gun, in shape like a very musket, such as soldiers bear—a Christmas present from parent, once a colonel of volunteers—nor feeble to discharge the pea-bullet or barley-shot, formidable to face and eyes; nor yet unfelt, at six paces, by hinder-end of playmate, scornfully yet fearfully exposed. But the shooter soon tires of such ineffectual trigger—and his soul, as well as his hair, is set on fire by that extraordinary compound—

gunpowder. He begins with burning off his eyebrows on the king's birthday—squibs and crackers follow—and all the pleasures of the pluff. But he soon longs to let off a gun—"and follows to the field some warlike lord"—in hopes of being allowed to discharge one of the double-barrels, after Ponto has made his last point, and the half-hidden chimneys of home are again seen smoking among the trees. This is his first practice in fire-arms, and from that hour he is—a shooter.

Then there is in most rural parishes—and of rural parishes alone do we condescend to speak—a pistol, a horse one, with a bit of silver on the butt—perhaps one that originally served in the Scots Grays. It is bought, or borrowed, by the young shooter, who begins firing, first at barn-doors, then at trees, and then at living things—a strange cur, who, from his lolling tongue, may be supposed to have the hydrophobia—a cat that has purred herself asleep on the sunny churchyard wall, or is watching mice at their hole-mouths among the graves—a water-rat in the mill-lead—or weasel that, running to his retreat in the wall, always turns round to look at you—a goose wandered from his common in disappointed love—or brown duck, easily mistaken by the unscrupulous for a wild one, in pond remote from human dwelling, or on meadow by the river side, away from the clack of the muter-mill. The corby-crow, too, shouted out of his nest on some tree lower than usual, is a good flying mark to the more advanced class; or morning magpie, a-chatter at skreigh of day close to the cottage door among the chickens; or a flock of pigeons wheeling overhead on the stubble-field, or sitting so thick together that every stook is blue with tempting plumage.

But the pistol is discharged for a fowling-piece—brown and rusty, with a slight crack probably in the muzzle, and a lock out of all proportion to the barrel. Then the young shooter aspires at halfpennies thrown up into the air—and generally hit, for there is never wanting an apparent dent in copper metal; and thence he mounts to the glancing and skimming swallow, a household bird, and therefore to be held sacred, but shot at on the excuse of its being next to impossible to hit him, an opinion

strengthened into belief by several summers' practice. But the small brown and white marten wheeling through below the bridge, or along the many-holed red-sand bank, is admitted by all boys to be fair game—and still more, the long-winged legless black devilet, that, if it falls to the ground, cannot rise again, and therefore screams wheeling round the corners and battlements of towers and castles, or far out even of cannon-shot, gambols in companies of hundreds, and regiments of a thousand, aloft in the evening ether, within the orbit of the eagle's flight. It seems to boyish eyes, that the creatures near the earth, when but little blue sky is seen between the specks and the wallflowers growing on the coign of vantage—the signal is given to fire, but the devilets are too high in heaven to smell the sulphur. The starling whips with a shrill cry into his nest, and nothing falls to the ground but a tiny bit of mossy mortar, inhabited by a spider!

But the day of days arrives at last, when the school-boy—or rather the college-boy returning to his rural vacation—for in Scotland college winters tread close—too close—on the heels of academies—has a gun—a gun in a case—a double-barrel too—of his own—and is provided with a license—probably without any other qualification than that of hit or miss. On some portentous morning he effulges with the sun in velveteen jacket and breeches of the same—many-buttoned gaiters, and an unkerchiefed throat. 'Tis the fourteenth of September, and lo! a pointer at his heels—Ponto of course—a game-bag like a beggar's wallet by his side—destined to be at eve as full of charity—and all the paraphernalia of an accomplished sportsman. Proud, were she to see the sight, would be the "mother that bore him;" the heart of that old sportsman, his daddy, would sing for joy! The chained mastiff in the yard yowls his admiration; the servant-lassies uplift the pane of their garret, and, with suddenly withdrawn blushes, titter their delight in their rich paper curls and pure night-clothes. Rab Roger, who has been cleaning out the barn, comes forth to partake of the caulker; and away go the footsteps of the old poacher and his pupil through the autumnal rime, off to the uplands—where, for it is one of the earliest of harvests—there is scarcely

a single acre of standing corn. The turnip-fields are bright-green with hope and expectation—and coveys are couching on lazy beds beneath the potato-shaw. Every high hedge, ditch-guarded on either side, shelters its own brood—imagination hears the whirr shaking the dewdrops from the broom on the brae—and first one bird and then another, and then the remaining number, in itself no contemptible covey, seems to fancy's ear to spring single, or in clouds, from the coppice-brushwood, with here and there an intercepting standard tree.

Poor Ponto is much to be pitied. Either having a cold in his nose, or having ante-breakfasted by stealth on a red-herring, he can scent nothing short of a badger, and, every other field, he starts in horror, shame, and amazement, to hear himself, without having attended to his points, inclosed in a whirring covey. He is still duly taken between those inexorable knees; out comes the speck-and-span new dog-whip heavy enough for a horse; and the yowl of the patient is heard over the whole parish. Mothers press their yet unchastised infants to their breasts; and the schoolmaster, fastening a knowing eye on dunce and ne'erdoweel, holds up, in silent warning, the terror of the tawse. Frequent flogging will cow the spirit of the best man and dog in Britain. Ponto travels now in fear and trembling, but a few yards from his tyrant's feet, till, rousing himself to the sudden scent of something smelling strongly, he draws slowly and beautifully, and

"There fix'd, a perfect semicircle stands."

Up runs the tyro ready-cocked, and, in his eagerness, stumbling among the stubble, when mark and lo! the gabble of gray goslings, and the bill-protruded hiss of goose and gander! Bang goes the right-hand barrel at Ponto, who now thinks it high time to be off to the tune of

"Ower the hills and far away,"

while the young gentleman, half-ashamed and half-incensed, half-glad and half-sorry, discharges the left-hand barrel, with a highly improper curse, at the father of the feathered family before him, who receives the shot like a ball in his breast, throws a somerset quite surprising for a

bird of his usual habits, and, after biting the dust with his bill, and thumping it with his bottom, breathes an eternal farewell to this sublunary scene—and leaves himself to be paid for at the rate of eight-pence a pound to his justly-irritated owner, on whose farm he had led a long, and not only harmless, but honourable and useful life.

It is nearly as impossible a thing as we know, to borrow a dog about the time the sun has reached his meridian, on the first day of the partridges. Ponto by this time has sneaked, unseen by human eye, into his kennel, and coiled himself up into the arms of tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep. A farmer makes offer of a colley, who, from numbering among his paternal ancestors a Spanish pointer, is quite a Don in his way among the cheepers, and has been known in a turnip-field to stand in an attitude very similar to that of setting. Luath has no objection to a frolic over the fields, and plays the part of Ponto to perfection. At last he catches sight of a covey basking, and, leaping in upon them open-mouthed, dispatches them right and left, even like the famous dog Billy killing rats in the pit at Westminster. The birds are bagged, with a gentle remonstrance, and Luath's exploit rewarded with a whang of cheese. Elated by the pressure on his shoulder, the young gentleman laughs at the idea of pointing; and fires away, like winking, at every uprise of birds, near or remote; works a miracle by bringing down three at a time, that chanced, unknown to him, to be crossing; and wearied with such slaughter, lends his gun to the attendant farmer, who can mark down to an inch, and walks up to the dropped pout, as if he could kick her up with his foot; and thus the bag in a few hours is half full of feathers; while to close with eclat the sport of the day, the cunning elder takes him to a bramble bush, in a wall-nook, at the edge of a wood, and returning the gun into his hands, shows him poor pussie sitting with open eyes fast asleep! The pellets are in her brain, and turning herself over, she crunkles out to her full length, like a piece of untwisting Indian-rubber, and is dead. The posterior pouch of the jacket, yet unstained by blood, yawns to receive her—and in she goes plump; paws, ears, body, feet, fud and all—while Luath, all the way home to the

Mains, keeps snoking at the red drops oozing through—for well he knows in summer's heat and winter's cold, the smell of pussie, whether sitting beneath a tuft of withered grass on the brae, or burrowed beneath a snow-wreath. A hare, we certainly must say, in spite of haughtier sportsman's scorn, is, when sitting, a most satisfactory shot.

But let us trace no farther, thus step by step, the Pilgrim's Progress. Look at him now—a finished sportsman—on the moors—the bright black boundless Dalwhinnie Moors, stretching away, by long Loch-Erricht-side, into the dim and distant day that hangs, with all its clouds, over the bosom of far Loch-Rannoch. Is that the pluffer at partridge pouts who had nearly been the death of poor Ponto? Lord Kennedy himself might take a lesson now from the straight and steady style in which, on the mountain-brow, and up to the middle in heather, he brings his Manton to the deadly level! More unerring eye never glanced along brown barrel! Finer fore-finger never touched a trigger! Follow him a whole day, and not one wounded bird. All most beautifully arrested on their flight by instantaneous death! Down dropped right and left, like lead on the heather—old cock and hen singled out among the orphan'd brood, as calmly as a cook would do it in the larder—from among a pile of plumage. No random shot within—no needless shot out of distance—covered every feather before stir of finger—and body, back, and brain, pierced, broken, scattered! And what perfect pointers! There they stand still as death—yet instinct with life—the whole half-dozen—Mungo, the black-tanned—Don, the red-spotted—Clara, the snow-white—Primrose, the pale yellow—Basto, the bright brown, and Nimrod, in his coat of many colours, often seen afar through the mists like a meteor.

So much for the angler's and the shooter's progress—now briefly for the hunter's. Hunting, in this country, unquestionably commences with cats. Few cottages without a cat. If you do not find her on the mouse-watch at the gable-end of the house, just at the corner—take a solar observation, and by it look for her on bank or brae—somewhere about the premises—if unsuccessful, peep into

the byre, and up through a hole among the dusty divots of the roof, and chance is you see her eyes glittering far-ben in the gloom; but if she be not there either, into the barn and up on the mow—and surely she is on the straw or on the baulks below the kipples. No. Well, then, let your eye travel along the edge of that little wood behind the cottage—ay, yonder she is—but she sees both you and your two terriers—one rough and the other smooth—and, slinking away through a gap in the old hawthorn hedge in among the hazels, she either lies *perdue*, or is up a fir-tree almost as high as the magpie's or corby's nest.

Now—observe—shooting cats is one thing—and hunting them is another—and shooting and hunting, though they may be united, are here treated separately; so, in the present case, the cat makes her escape. But get her watching birds—young larks, perhaps, walking on the lea—or young linnets hanging on the broom—down by yonder in the holm lands, where there are no trees, except indeed that one glorious single tree, the golden oak, and he is guarded by Glowerer, and then what a most capital chase! Stretching herself up with a crooked back, as if taking a yawn—off she jumps, with tremendous spangs, and tail, thickened with fear and anger, perpendicular. Youf—youf—youf—go the terriers—head over heels perhaps in their fury—and not long in turning her—and bringing her to bay at the hedge-root, all a-blaze and a-bristle. A she-devil incarnate!—Hark—all at once now strikes up a trio—Catalani caterwauling the treble—Glowerer taking the bass—and Tearer the tenor—a cruel concert cut short by a squalling throttler. Away—away along the holm—and over the knowe—and into the wood—for lo! the gudewife, brandishing a besom, comes flying demented without her mutch, down to the murder of her tabby,—her son, a stout stripling, is seen skirting the potato-field to intercept our flight,—and, most formidable of all foes, the man of the house himself, in his shirt-sleeves and flail in his hand, bolts from the barn, down the croft, across the burn, and up the brae, to cut us off from the manse. The hunt's up, and 'tis a capital steeple-chase. Disperse—disperse! Down the hill, Jack—up the hill, Gill—dive the dell, Kit—thread the wood, Pat—a hundred yards start is

a great matter—a stern chase is always a long chase—schoolboys are generally in prime wind—the old man begins to puff, and blow, and snort, and put his paws to his paunch—the son is thrown out by a double of dainty Davy's—and the " sair begrutten mither" is gathering up the torn and tattered remains of Tortoise-shell Tabby, and invoking the vengeance of heaven and earth on her pitiless murderers. Some slight relief to her bursting and breaking heart, to vow that she will make the minister hear of it on the deafest side of his head,—ay, even if she have to break in upon him sitting on Saturday night, getting aff by rote his fushionless sermon, in his ain study.

Now, gentle reader, again observe, that though we have now described, *con amore*, a most cruel case of cat-killing, in which we certainly did play a most aggravated part, some sixty years since, far indeed are we from recommending such wanton barbarity to the rising generation. We are not inditing a homily on humanity to animals, nor have we been appointed to succeed the Rev. Dr. Somerville of Currie, the great patentee of the safety double bloody barrel, to preach the annual Gibsonian sermon on that subject—we are simply stating certain matters of fact, illustrative of the rise and progress of the love of pastime in the soul, and leave our subscribers to draw the moral. But may we be permitted to say, that the naughtiest schoolboys often make the most pious men ; that it does not follow, according to the wise saws and modern instances of prophetic old women of both sexes, that he who in boyhood has worried a cat with terriers, will, in manhood, commit murder on one of his own species ; or that peccadilloes are the progenitors of capital crimes. Nature allows to growing lads a certain range of wickedness, *sans peur et sans reproche*. She seems, indeed, to whistle into their ear, to mock ancient females—to laugh at Quakers—to make mouths at a decent man and his wife riding double to church—the matron's thick legs ludicrously bobbing from the pillion kept firm on Dobbin's rump by her bottom, "*ponderibus librata suis*,"—to tip the wink to young women during sermon on Sunday—and on Saturday, most impertinently to kiss them, whether they will or no, on

high-road or by-path—and to perpetrate many other little nameless enormities.

No doubt, at the time, such things will wear rather a suspicious character; and the boy who is detected in the fact, must be punished by palmy, or privation, or imprisonment from play. But when punished, he is of course left free to resume his atrocious career; nor is it found that he sleeps a whit the less soundly, or shrieks for Heaven's mercy in his dreams. Conscience is not a craven. Groans belong to guilt. But fun and frolic, even when trespasses, are not guilt; and though a cat have nine lives, she has but one ghost—and that will haunt no house where there are terriers. What! surely if you have the happiness of being a parent, you would not wish your only boy—your son and heir—the blended image of his mother's loveliness and his father's manly beauty—to be a smug, smooth, prim, and proper prig, with his hair always combed down on his forehead, hands always unglauered, and without spot or blemish on his white-thread stockings? You would not wish him, surely, to be always moping and musing in a corner with a good book held close to his nose—botanizing with his maiden aunts—doing the pretty at tea-tables with tabbies, in handing round the short-bread, taking cups, and attending to the kettle—telling tales on all naughty boys and girls—laying up his penny a-week pocket-money in a penny-pig—keeping all his clothes neatly folded up in an untumbled drawer—having his own peg for his uncrushed hat—saying his prayers precisely as the clock strikes nine, while his companions are yet at blind man's buff—and puffed up every Sabbath eve by the parson's praises of his uncommon memory for a sermon—while all the other boys are scolded for having fallen asleep before tenthly? You would not wish him, surely, to write sermons himself at his tender years, nay—even to be able to give you chapter and verse for every quotation from the Bible? No. Better far that he should begin early to break your heart, by taking no care even of his Sunday's clothes—blotting his copy—impiously pinning pieces of paper to the dominie's tail, who to him was a second father—going to the fishing not only without

leave but against orders—bathing in the forbidden pool, where the tailor was drowned—drying powder before the school-room fire, and blowing himself and two crack-skulled cronies to the ceiling—tying kettles to the tails of dogs—shooting an old woman's laying hen—galloping bare-backed shelties down stony steeps—climbing trees to the slenderest twig on which bird could build, and up the tooth-of-time-indented sides of old castles after wall-flowers and starlings—being run away with in carts by colts against turnpike gates—buying bad ballads from young gipsy-girls, who, on receiving a sixpence, give ever so many kisses in return, saying, "Take your change out of that"—on a borrowed broken-knee'd pony, with a switch tail—a devil for galloping—not only attending country-races for a saddle and collar, but entering for and winning the prize—dancing like a devil in barns at kirns—seeing his blooming partner home over the blooming heather, most perilous adventure of all in which virgin-puberty can be involved—fighting with a rival in corduroy breeches, and poll shorn beneath a cawp, till his eyes just twinkle through the swollen blue—and, to conclude "this strange eventful history," once brought home at one o'clock in the morning, God knows whence or by whom, and found by the shrieking servant, sent out to listen for him in the moonlight, dead-drunk on the gravel at the gate!

Nay, start not, parental reader—nor, in the terror of anticipation, send, without loss of a single day, for your son at a distant academy, mayhap pursuing even such another career. Trust thou to the genial, gracious, and benign *vis medicatrix naturæ*. What though a few clouds bedim and deform "the innocent brightness of the new-born day?" Lo! how splendid the meridian ether! What though the frost seem to blight the beauty of the budding and blowing rose! Look how she revives beneath dew, rain, and sunshine, till your eyes can even scarce endure the lustre! What though the waters of the sullen fen seem to pollute the snow of the swan? They fall off from her expanded wings, and, pure as a spirit, she soars away, and descends into her own silver lake, stainless as the water-lilies floating round her breast. And shall the immortal soul suffer lasting contamination from the transient

chances of its nascent state—in this, less favoured than material and immaterial things that perish? No—it is undergoing endless transmigrations,—every hour a being different, yet the same—dark stains blotted out—rueful inscriptions effaced—many an erasure of impressions once thought permanent, but soon altogether forgotten—and vindicating, in the midst of the earthly corruption in which it is immersed, its own celestial origin, character, and end, often flickering, or seemingly blown out like a taper in the wind, but all at once self-reillumined, and shining in inextinguishable and self-fed radiance—like a star in heaven.

Therefore, bad as boys too often are—and a disgrace to the mother who bore them—the cradle in which they were rocked—the nurse by whom they were suckled—the schoolmaster by whom they were flogged—and the hangman by whom it was prophesied they were to be executed—wait patiently for a few years, and you will see them all transfigured—one into a preacher of such winning eloquence, that he almost persuades all men to be Christians—another into a parliamentary orator, who commands the applause of listening senates, and

"Reads his history in a nation's eyes,"

—one into a painter, before whose thunderous heavens the storms of Poussin "pale their ineffectual fires"—another into a poet, composing and playing, side by side, on his own peculiar harp, in a concert of vocal and instrumental music, with Byron, Scott, and Wordsworth—one into a great soldier, who, when Wellington is no more, shall, for the freedom of the world, conquer a future Waterloo—another who, hoisting his flag on the "mast of some tall admiral," shall, like Eliab Harvey in the Temeraire, lay two three-deckers on board at once, and clothe some now nameless peak or promontory in immortal glory like that shining on Trafalgar.

Well, then, after cat-killing comes coursing. Cats have a look of hares—kittens of leverets—and they are all called pussy. The terriers are useful still, preceding the line like skirmishers, and with finest noses startling the mawkin from bracken-bush, or rush-bower, her sky-light garret in the old quarry, or her brown study in the brake.

Away with your coursing on Marlborough downs, where huge hares are seen squatted from a distance, and the sleek dogs, disrobed of their gaudy trappings, are let slip by a tryer, running for cups and collars before lords and ladies, and squires of high and low degree—a pretty pastime enough, no doubt, in its way, and a splendid cavalcade. But will it for a moment compare with the sudden and all-unlooked-for start of the "auld witch" from the bunweed-covered lea, when the throat of every pedestrian is privileged to cry halloo—halloo—halloo—and whipcord-tailed grayhound and hairy lurcher, without any invidious distinction of birth or bearing, lay their deep breasts to the sward at the same moment to the same instinct, and brattle over the brae after the disappearing ears, laid flat at the first sight of her pursuers, as with retroverted eyes she turns her face to the mountain, and seeks the cairn only a little lower than the falcon's nest?

What signifies any sport in the open air, except in congenial scenery of earth and heaven? Go, thou gentle cockney! and angle in the New River;—but, bold Englishman, come with us and try a salmon-cast in the old Tay. Go, thou gentle cockney! and course a suburban hare in the purlieus of Blackheath;—but, bold Englishman, come with us and course an animal that never heard a city-bell, by day a hare, by night an old woman, that loves the dogs she dreads, and, hunt her as you will with a leash and a half of lightfoots, still returns at dark to the same form in the turf-dike of the garden of the mountain cottage. The children who love her as their own eyes—for she has been as a pet about the family, summer and winter, since that chubby-cheeked urchin, of some five years old, first began to swing in his self-rocking cradle—will scarcely care to see her started—nay, one or two of the wickedest among them will join in the halloo—for often, ere this, "has she cheated the very jowlers, and lauched ower her shouther at the lang dowgs walloping ahint her, sair forfaquhen up the benty brae—and it's no the day that she's gaun to be killed by rough Robin, or smooth Spring, or the red Bick, or the hairy Lurcher—though a' fowr be let lowse on her at ance, and ye surround her or she rise." What are your great big fat lazy English hares, ten or twelve pounds and

upwards, who have the food brought to their very mouth in preserves, and are out of breath with five minutes scamper among themselves—to the middle-sized, hard-hipped, wiry-backed, steel-legged, long-winded mawkins of Scotland, that scorn to taste a leaf of a single cabbage in the wee moorland yardie that shelters them, but prey in distant fields, take a breathing every gloaming along the mountain-breast, untired as young eagles ringing the sky for pastime, and before the dogs seem not so much scouring for life as for pleasure, with such an air of freedom, liberty, and independence, do they fling up the moss, and cock their fuds in the faces of their pursuers. Yet stanch are they to the spine—strong in bone, and sound in bottom—see, see how Tickler clears that twenty-feet moss-hag at a single spang like a bird—tops that hedge that would turn any hunter that ever stabled in Melton Mowbray—and then, at full speed northward, moves as upon a pivot within his own length, and close upon his haunches, without losing a foot, off within a point of due south. A kennel! He never was and never will be in a kennel all his free joyful days. He has walked—and run—and leaped and swam about—at his own will—ever since he was nine days old—and he would have done so sooner had he had any eyes. None of your stinking cracklets for him—he takes his meals with the family, sitting at the right hand of the master's eldest son. He sleeps in any bed of the house he chooses. And though no Methodist, he goes every third Sunday to church. That is the education of a Scottish grayhound—and the consequence is, that you may pardonably mistake him for a deer dog from Badenoch or Lochaber, and no doubt in the world that he would rejoice in a glimpse of the antlers on the weather gleam,

> "Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trode
> To his hills that encircle the sea."

This may be called roughing it—slovenly—coarse—rude—artless—unscientific. But we say no—it is your only coursing. Gods! with what a bounding bosom the schoolboy salutes the dawning of the cool—clear—crisp, yes, crisp October morn,—for there has been a slight frost,

and the almost leafless hedgerows are all glittering with rime,—and, little time lost at dress or breakfast, crams the luncheon into his pouch—and away to the Trysting-hill Farm-House, which he fears the gamekeeper and his grews will have left ere he can run across the two long Scotch miles of moor between him and his joy! With step elastic, he feels flying along the sward as from a spring-board; like a roe, he clears the burns, and bursts his way through the brakes; panting not from breathlessness but anxiety, he lightly leaps the garden fence without a pole, and lo! the green jacket of one huntsman, the red jacket of another, on the plat before the door, and two or three tall raw-boned poachers—and there is mirth and music, fun and frolic, and the very soul of enterprise, adventure, and desperation, in that word—while tall and graceful stand the black, the brindled, and the yellow breed, with keen yet quiet eyes, prophetic of their destined prey, and though motionless now as stone statues of hounds at the feet of Meleager, soon to launch like lightning at the loved halloo!

Out comes the gudewife with her own bottle from the press in the spence, with as big a belly and broad a bottom as her own, and they are no trifle,—for the worthy woman has been making much beef for many years, is, moreover, in the family way, and surely this time there will be twins, at least—and pours out a canty calker for each crowing crony, beginning with the gentle, and ending with the semple, that is our and herself; and better speerit never steamed in sma'-still. She offers another with "hinny," by way of Athole brose; but it is put off till evening, for coursing requires a clear head, and the same sobriety then adorned our youth, that now dignifies our old age. The gudeman, although an elder of the kirk, and with as grave an aspect as suits that solemn office, needs not much persuasion to let the flail rest for one day, anxious though he be to show the first aits in the market; and donning his broad blue bonnet, and the shortest-tailed auld coat he can find, and taking his kent in his hand, he gruffly gives Wully his orders for a' things about the place, and sets out with the younkers for a holiday. Not a man on earth who has not his own pastime, depend on't, austere as he may look; and 'twould be well

for this wicked world if no elder in it had a "sin that maist easily beset him," worse than what Gibby Watson's wife used to call his "awfu' fondness for the Grews!"

And who that loves to walk or wander over the green earth, except, indeed, it merely be some sonnetteer or ballad-monger, if he had time and could afford it, and lived in a tolerable open country, would not keep, at the very least, three grayhounds? No better eating than a hare, though old blockhead Burton—and he was a blockhead, if blockhead ever there was one in this world—in his Anatomy, chooses to call it melancholy meat. Did he ever, by way of giving dinner a fair commencement, swallow a tureen of hare-soup, with half-a-peck of mealy potatoes? If ever he did—and notwithstanding called hare melancholy meat, there can be no occasion whatever for wishing him any farther punishment. If he never did—then he was on earth the most unfortunate of men. England—as you love us and yourself—cultivate hare-soup, without for a moment dreaming of giving up roasted hare well stuffed with stuffing, jelly sauce being handed round on a large trencher. But there is no such thing as melancholy meat—either fish, flesh, or fowl—provided only there be enough of it. Otherwise, the daintiest dish drives you to despair. But independently of spit, pot, and pan, what delight in even daunering about the home-farm seeking for a hare! It is quite an art or science. You must consult not only the wind and weather of to-day, but of the night before—and of every day and night back to last Sunday, when probably you were prevented by the rain from going to church. Then hares shift the sites of their country seats every season. This month they love the fallow-field,—that, the stubble—this, you will see them, almost without looking for them, big and brown on the bare stony upland lea—that, you must have a hawk's eye in your head to discern, discover, detect them, like birds in their nests, embowered below the bunweed or the bracken—they choose to spend this week in a wood impervious to wet or wind—that, in a marsh too plashy for the plover—now you may depend on finding madam at home in the sulks within the very heart of a bramble-bush or dwarf black-thorn thicket, while the squire cocks his

fud at you from the top of a knowe open to blasts from all the airts——in short, he who knows at all times where to find a hare, even if he knew not one single thing else but the way to his mouth, cannot be called an ignorant man—is probably a better informed man in the long run than the friend on his right, discoursing about the Turks, the Greeks, the Portugals, and all that sort of thing, giving himself the lie, on every arrival of his daily paper. We never yet knew an old courser, (him of the Sporting Annals included,) who was not a man both of abilities and virtues. But where were we? at the Trysting-hill Farm-House, jocularly called, Hunger-them-Out.

Line is formed, and with measured steps we march towards the hills—for we ourselves are the schoolboy, bold, bright, and blooming as the rose—fleet of foot almost as the very antelope—Oh! now, alas! dim and withered as a stalk from which winter has swept all the blossoms,—slow as the sloth along the ground—spindle-shanked as a lean and slippered pantaloon!

> "O heaven! that from our bright and shining years
> Age would but take the things youth heeded not!"

An old shepherd meets us on the long sloping rushy ascent to the hills—and putting his brown withered finger to his gnostic nose, intimates that she is in her old form behind the dike—and the noble dumb animals, with pricked-up ears and brandished tail, are aware that her hour is come. Plash, plash through the marsh, and then on the dry furze beyond, you see her large dark-brown eyes—Soho, soho, soho—Halloo, halloo, halloo—for a moment the seemingly horned creature appears to dally with the danger, and to linger ere she lays her lugs on her shoulder, and away, like thoughts pursuing thoughts—away fly hare and hounds towards the mountain.

Stand all still for a minute—for not a bush the height of our knee to break our view—and is not that brattling burst up the brae "beautiful exceedingly," and sufficient to chain in admiration the beatings of the rudest gazer's heart? Yes; of all beautiful sights—none more, none so much so, as the miraculous motion of a four-footed wild animal, changed at once from a seeming inert sod or

stone, into flight fleet as that of the falcon's wing! Instinct against instinct! fear and ferocity in one flight! Pursuers and pursued bound together, in every turning and twisting of their career, by the operation of two headlong passions! Now they are all three upon her—and she dies! No! glancing aside, like a bullet from a wall, she bounds almost at a right angle from her straight course—and, for a moment, seems to have made good her escape. Shooting headlong one over the other, all three, with erected tails, suddenly bring themselves up—like racing barks when down goes the helm, and one after another, bowsprit and boom almost entangled, rounds the buoy, and again bears up on the starboard tack upon a wind,—and in a close line—head to heel—so that you might cover them all with a sheet in slips of the Magazine—again, all open-mouthed on her haunches, seem to drive, and go with her over the cliff.

We are all on foot—and pray what horse could gallop through among all these quagmires, over all the hags in these peat-mosses, over all the water-cressy and puddocky ditches sinking soft on hither and thither side, even to the two-legged leaper's ankle or knee—up that hill on the perpendicular strewn with flint-shivers—down these loose-hanging cliffs—through that brake of old stunted birches with stools hard as iron—over that mile of quaking muir where the plover breeds—and finally—up—up—up to where the dwarfed heather dies away among the cinders, and in winter you might mistake a flock of ptarmigan for a patch of snow?

The thing is impossible—so we are all on foot—and the fleetest keeper that ever flew in Scotland shall not in a run of three miles give us twenty yards. "Ha! Peter, the wild boy, how are you off for wind?"—we exultingly exclaim, in giving Red-jacket the go-by on the bent. But see—see—they are bringing her back again down the Red Mount—glancing aside, she throws them all three out—yes, all three, and few enow too, though fair play be a jewel—and ere they can recover, she is a-head a hundred yards up the hill. There is a beautiful trial of bone and bottom! Now one, and then another, takes almost imperceptibly the lead—but she steals away from

them, inch by inch—beating them all blind—and, suddenly disappearing—Heaven knows how—leaves them all in the lurch. With out-lolling tongues, hanging heads, panting sides, and drooping tails, they come one by one down the steep, looking somewhat sheepish, and then lie down together on their sides as if indeed about to die in defeat. She carried away her cocked fud unscathed for the third time, from three of the best in all broad Scotland—nor can there any longer be the smallest doubt in the world, in the minds of the most sceptical, that she is—what all the country-side have long known her to be—a witch.

From cat-killing to coursing, we have seen that the transition is easy in the order of nature—and so is it from coursing to fox-hunting—by means, however, of a small intermediate step—the harriers. Musical is a pack of harriers as a peal of bells. How melodiously they ring the changes in the woods, and in the hollow of the mountains! A level country, we have already consigned to merited contempt (though there is no rule without an exception; and, as we shall see by and by, there is one too here), and commend us, even with harriers, to the ups and downs of the pastoral or sylvan heights. If old or indolent, take your station on a heaven-kissing hill, and hug the echoes to your heart. Or, if you will ride, then let it be on a nimble galloway of some fourteen hands, that can gallop a good pace on the road, and keep sure footing on bridle-paths, or upon the pathless braes—and by judicious horsemanship, you may meet the pack at many a loud-mouthed burst, and haply be not far out at the death. But the schoolboy—and the shepherd—and the whipper-in—as each hopes for favour from his own Diana—let them all be on foot—and have studied the country for every imaginable variety that can occur in the winter's campaign. One often hears of a cunning old fox—but the cunningest old fox is a simpleton to the most guileless young hare. What deceit in every double! What calculation in every squat! Of what far more complicated than Cretan labyrinth is the creature, now hunted for the first time, sitting in the centre! a-listening the baffled roar! Now into the pool she plunges to free

herself from the fatal scent that lures on death. Now down the torrent course she runs and leaps, to cleanse it from her poor paws, fur-protected from the sharp flints that lame the fiends that so sorely beset her, till many limp along in their own blood. Now along the coping of stone walls she crawls and scrambles—and now ventures from the wood along the frequented highroad, heedless of danger from the front, so that she may escape the horrid growling in the rear. Now into the pretty little garden of the wayside, or even the village cot, she creeps, as if to implore protection from the innocent children, or the nursing mother. Yes, she will even seek refuge in the sanctuary of the cradle. The terrier drags her out from below a tombstone, and she dies in the churchyard. The hunters come reeking and reeling on, we ourselves among the number—and to the winding horn the echoes reply from the walls of the house of worship—and now, in momentary contrition,

> "Drops a sad, serious tear upon our playful pen!"

and we bethink ourselves—alas, all in vain—for

> "*Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret*"—

of these solemn lines of the poet of peace and humanity:—

> "One lesson, reader, let us two divide,
> Taught by what nature shows and what conceals,
> Never to blend our pleasure and our pride
> With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

It is next to impossible to reduce fine poetry to practice—so let us conclude with a panegyric on fox-hunting. The passion for this pastime is the very strongest that can possess the heart—nor, of all the heroes of antiquity, is there one to our imagination more poetical than Nimrod. His whole character is given, and his whole history in two words—Mighty Hunter. That he hunted the fox is not probable—for the sole aim and end of his existence was—not to exterminate—that would have been cutting his own throat—but to thin man-devouring wild beasts—the pards—with Leo at their head. But in a land like this, where not even a wolf has existed for

centuries—nor a wild boar—the same spirit, that would have driven the British youth on the tusk and paw of the lion and the tiger, mounts them in scarlet on such steeds as never neighed before the flood, nor "summered high in bliss" on the sloping pastures of undeluged Ararat—and gathers them together in gallant array on the edge of the cover,

> "When first the hunter's startling horn is heard
> Upon the golden hills."

What a squadron of cavalry! What fiery eyes and flaming nostrils—betokening with what ardent passion the noble animals will revel in the chase! Bay, brown, black, dun, chestnut, sorrel, gray,—of all shades and hues—and every courser distinguished by his own peculiar character of shape and form,—yet all blending harmoniously as they crown the mount; so that a painter would only have to group and colour them as they stand, nor lose, if able to catch them, one of the dazzling lights or deepening shadows streamed on them from that sunny, yet not unstormy sky.

You read in books of travels and romances, of Barbs and Arabs galloping in the desert—and well doth Sir Walter speak of Saladin at the head of his Saracenic chivalry; but take our word for it, great part of all such descriptions are mere falsehood or fudge. Why in the devil's name should dwellers in the desert always be going at full speed? And how can that full speed be any thing more than a slow heavy hand-gallop at the best, the barbs being up to the belly at every stroke? They are always, it is said, in high condition—but we, who know something about horse-flesh, give that assertion the lie. They have seldom any thing either to eat or drink; are lean as church-mice; and covered with clammy sweat before they have trotted a league from the tent. And then such a set of absurd riders, with knees up to their noses, like so many tailors riding to Brentford, *via* the deserts of Arabia! Such bits, such bridles, and such saddles! But the whole set-out, rider and ridden, accoutrements and all, is too much for one's gravity, and must occasion a frequent

laugh to the wild ass as he goes braying unharnessed by. But look there! Arabian blood, and British bone! Not bred in and into the death of all the fine strong animal spirits—but blood intermingled and interfused by twenty crosses, nature exulting in each successive produce, till her power can no farther go, and in yonder glorious gray,

> "Gives the world assurance of a horse!"
> "A horse! A horse! A kingdom for a horse!"

Form the three hundred into squadron, or squadrons, and in the hand of each rider a sabre alone, none of your lances, all bare his breast but for the silver-laced blue, the gorgeous uniform of the hussars of England,—confound all cuirasses and cuirassiers,—let the trumpet sound a charge, and ten thousand of the proudest of the Barbaric chivalry be opposed with spear and scimitar,—and through their snow-ranks will the three hundred go like thaw—splitting them into dissolution with the noise of thunder.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it; and where, we ask, were the British cavalry ever overthrown? And how could the great north-country horse-coupers perform their contracts, but for the triumphs of the turf? Blood—blood there must be, either for strength, or speed, or endurance. The very heaviest cavalry—the Life Guards and the Scots Grays, and all other dragoons, must have blood. But without racing and fox-hunting, where could it be found? Such pastimes nerve one of the arms of the nation when in battle; but for them 'twould be palsied. What better education, too, not only for the horse, but rider, before playing a bloodier game in his first war campaign! Thus he becomes demicorpsed with the noble animal; and what easy, equable motion to him, is afterwards a charge over a wide level plain, with nothing in the way but a few regiments of flying Frenchmen! The hills and dales of merry England have been the best riding-school to her gentlemen—her gentlemen who have not lived at home at ease—but with Paget, and Stewart, and Seymour, and Cotton, and Somerset, and Vivian, have left their hereditary halls, and all the peaceful pas-

times pursued among the sylvan scenery, to try the mettle of their steeds, and cross swords with the vaunted Gallic chivalry; and still have they been in the shock victorious; witness the skirmish that astonished Napoleon at Saldanha—the overthrow that uncrowned him at Waterloo!

"Well, do you know, that after all you have said, Mr. North, I cannot understand the passion and the pleasure of fox-hunting? It seems to me both cruel and dangerous."

Cruelty! Is there cruelty in laying the rein on their necks, and delivering them up to their high condition—for every throbbing vein is visible—at the first full burst of that maddening cry, and letting loose to their delight the living thunderbolts? Danger? What danger but of breaking their own legs, necks, or backs, and those of their riders? And what right have you to complain of that, lying all your length, a huge hulking fellow, snoring and snorting half asleep on a sofa sufficient to sicken a whole street? What though it be but a smallish, reddish-brown, sharp-nosed animal, with pricked-up ears, and passionately fond of poultry, that they pursue? After the first tallyho, Reynard is rarely seen, till he is run in upon—once perhaps in the whole run, skirting a wood, or crossing a common. It is an idea that is pursued, on a whirlwind of horses to a storm of canine music,—worthy, both, of the largest lion that ever leaped among a band of Moors, sleeping at midnight by an extinguished fire on the African sands. There is, we verily believe it, nothing foxy in the fancy of one man in all that glorious field of three hundred. Once off and away—while wood and welkin rings—and nothing is felt—nothing is imaged in that hurricane flight, but scorn of all obstructions, dikes, ditches, drains, brooks, palings, canals, rivers, and all the impediments reared in the way of so many rejoicing madmen, by nature, art, and science, in an inclosed, cultivated, civilized, and Christian country. There they go—prince and peer, baronet and squire,—the nobility and gentry of England, the flower of the men of the earth, each on such steed as Pollux never reined, nor Philip's warlike son—for could we imagine Bucephalus here, ridden by his own tamer, Alexan-

der would be thrown out during the very first burst, and glad to find his way dismounted to a village alehouse for a pail of meal and water. Hedges, trees, groves, gardens, orchards, woods, farmhouses, huts, halls, mansions, palaces, spires, steeples, towers, and temples, all go wavering by, each demigod seeing, or seeing them not, as his winged steed skims or labours along, to the swelling or sinking music, now loud as a near regimental band, now faint as an echo. Far and wide over the country are dispersed the scarlet runners—and a hundred villagers pour forth their admiring swarms, as the main current of the chase roars by, or disparted runlets float wearied and all astray, lost at last in the perplexing woods. Crash goes the timber of the five-barred gate,—away over the ears, flies the ex-rough rider in a surprising somerset—after a succession of stumbles, down is the gallant gray on knees and nose, making sad work among the fallow—friendship is a fine thing, and the story of Damon and Pythias most affecting indeed—but Pylades eyes Orestes on his back sorely drowned in sludge, and tenderly leaping over him as he lies, claps his hand to his ear, and with a "hark forward, tan-tivy!" leaves him to remount, lame and at leisure—and ere the fallen has risen and shook himself, is round the corner of the white village-church, down the dell, over the brook, and close on the heels of the straining pack, all a-yell up the hill crowned by the Squire's Folly. "Every man for himself, and God for us all," is the devout and ruling apothegm of the day. If death befall, what wonder? since man and horse are mortal; but death loves better a wide soft bed with quiet curtains and darkened windows in a still room, the clergyman in the one corner with his prayers, and the physician in another with his pills, making assurance doubly sure, and preventing all possibility of the dying Christian's escape. Let oak branches smite the too slowly stooping skull, or rider's back not timely levelled with his steed's; let faithless bank give way, and bury in the brook; let hidden drain yield to fore-feet and work a sudden wreck; let old coal-pit, with briery mouth, betray; and roaring river bear down man and horse to banks unscaleable by the very Welsh goat; let duke's or earl's son go sheer over a

quarry fifty feet deep, and as many high; yet, "without stop or stay, down the rocky way" the hunter train flows on; for the music grows fiercer and more savage,—lo! all that remains together of the pack, in far more dreadful madness than hydrophobia, leaping out of their skins, under insanity from the scent, now strong as stink, for Vulpes can hardly now make a crawl of it; and ere he, they, whipper-in, or any one of the other three demoniacs, have time to look in one another's splashed faces, he is torn into a thousand pieces, gobbled up in the general growl; and smug, and smooth, and dry, and warm, and cozey, as he was an hour and twenty-five minutes ago exactly, in his furze-bush in the cover,—he is now piecemeal in about thirty distinct stomachs; and is he not, pray, well off for sepulture?

SOLILOQUY ON THE ANNUALS.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1829.)

Periodical literature—how sweet is the name! 'Tis a type of many of the most beautiful things and events in nature; or say, rather, that *they* are types of *it*—both the flowers and the stars. As to flowers, they are the prettiest periodicals ever published in folio—the leaves are wire-wove and hot-pressed by Nature's self; their circulation is wide over all the land; from castle to cottage they are regularly taken in; as old age bends over them, his youth is renewed; and you see childhood poring upon them, prest close to its very bosom. Some of them are ephemeral, and their contents are exhaled between the rising and setting sun. Once a-week others break through their green, pink, or crimson cover; and how delightful, on the seventh day, smiles in the sunshine the Sabbath flower—the only Sunday publication perused without blame by the most religious—even before morning prayer. Each month, indeed, throughout the whole year, has its own flower-periodical. Some are annual, some biennial, some triennial, and there are perennials that seem to live for ever—and yet are still periodical—though our love will not allow us to know when they die, and phœnix-like reappear from their own ashes. So much for flowers—typifying or typified;—leaves emblematical of pages—buds of binding—dew-veils of covers—and the wafting away of bloom and fragrance like the dissemination of fine feelings, bright fancies, and winged thoughts!

The flowers are the periodicals of the earth—the stars are those of heaven. With what unfailing regularity do the numbers issue forth! Hesperus and Lucifer! ye are

one concern! The pole-star is studied by all nations. How beautiful the poetry of the moon! On what subject does not the sun throw light! No fear of hurting your eyes by reading that fine clear large type on that softened page. Lo! as you turn over, one blue, another yellow, and another green, all, all alike delightful to the pupil, and dear to him as the very apple of his eye! Yes, the great periodical press of heaven is unceasingly at work—night and day; and though even it has been taxed, and its emanations confined, still their circulation is incalculable; nor have we yet heard that Ministers intend instituting any prosecution against it. It is yet free, the only free power all over the world. 'Tis indeed like the air we breathe—if we have it not, we die!

Look, then, at all our paper periodicals with pleasure, for sake of the flowers and the stars. Suppose them all extinct, and life would be like a flowerless earth, a starless heaven. We should soon forget the seasons themselves—the days of the week—and the weeks of the month—and the months of the year—and the years of the century—and the centuries of all time—and all time itself flowing away on into eternity. The periodicals of external nature would soon all lose their meaning, were there no longer any periodicals of the soul. These are the lights and shadows of life, merrily dancing or gravely stealing over the dial; remembrancers of the past—teachers of the present—prophets of the future hours. Were they all dead, spring would in vain renew her promise—wearisome would be the long, long, interminable summer days—the fruits of autumn would taste fushionless—and the winter ingle blink mournfully round the hearth. What are the blessed seasons themselves, in nature and in Thomson, but periodicals of a larger growth? They are the parents, or publishers, or editors, of all the others—principal contributors—nay, subscribers too—and may their pretty family live for ever, still dying, yet ever renewed, and on the increase every year. We should suspect him of a bad, black heart, who loved not the periodical literature of earth and sky—who would weep not to see one of its flowers wither—one of its stars fall—one beauty to die on its humble bed—one glory to drop from its lofty sphere. Let

them bloom and burn on—flowers in which there is no poison, stars in which there is no disease—whose blossoms are all sweet, and whose rays are all sanative—both alike steeped in dew, and both, to the fine ear of nature's worshipper, bathed in music.

Only look at Maga! One hundred and forty-eight months old! and yet lovely as maiden between frock and gown—even as sweet sixteen! Not a wrinkle on cheek or forehead! No crow-foot has touched her eyes—

"Her eye's blue languish, and her golden hair!"

Like an antelope in the wilderness—or swan on the river—or eagle in the sky. Dream that she is dead, and oh! what a world! Yet die she must some day—so must the moon and stars. Meanwhile there is a blessing in prayers—and hark! how the nations cry, "Oh! Maga, live for ever!"

We often pity our poor ancestors. How they contrived to make the ends meet, surpasses our conjectural powers. What a weary waste must have seemed expanding before their eyes between morning and night! Don't tell us that the human female never longs for other pastime than

"To suckle fools and chronicle small beer."

True, ladies sighed not then for periodicals—but there, in the depths of their ignorance, lay their utter wretchedness. What! keep pickling and preserving during the whole mortal life of an immortal being! Except when at jelly, everlastingly at jam! The soul sickens at the monotonous sweetness of such a wersh existence. True that many sat all life-long at needle-work; but is not that a very sew-sew sort of life? Then oh! the miserable males! We speak of times after the invention, it is true, of printing—but who read what were called books then? Books! no more like our periodicals, than dry, rotten, worm-eaten, fungous logs are like green living leafy trees, laden with dews, bees, and birds, in the musical sunshine. What could males do then but yawn, sleep, snore, guzzle, guttle, and drink till they grew dead and got buried? Fox-hunting won't always do—and often it is not to be had; who can be happy with his gun through good report and bad report in

an a' day's rain? Small amusement in fishing in muddy waters; palls upon the sense quarrelling with neighbours on points of etiquette and the disputed property of hedge-row trees; a fever in the family ceases to raise the pulse of any inmate, except the patient; death itself is no relief to the dulness; a funeral is little better; the yawn of the grave seems a sort of unhallowed mockery; the scutcheon hung out on the front of the old dismal hall, is like a sign on a deserted spittal; along with sables is worn a suitable stupidity by all the sad survivers,—and such, before the era of periodicals, such was life in—merry England. Oh! dear!—oh! dear me!

We shall not enter into any historical details—for this is not a monologue for the Quarterly—but we simply assert, that in the times we allude to (don't mention dates) there was little or no reading in England. There was neither the reading fly nor the reading public. What could this be owing to, but the non-existence of periodicals? What elderly-young lady could be expected to turn from house affairs, for example, to Spenser's Fairy Queen? It is a long, long, long poem, that Fairy Queen of Spenser's; nobody, of course, ever dreamt of getting through it; but though you may have given up all hope of getting through a poem or a wood, you expect to be able to find your way back again to the spot where you unluckily got in; not so, however, with the Fairy Queen. Beautiful it is indeed, most exquisitely and unapproachably beautiful in many passages, especially about ladies and ladies' love more than celestial, for Venus loses in comparison her lustre in the sky; but still people were afraid to get into it then as now; and "heavenly Una, with her milk-white lamb," lay buried in dust. As to Shakspeare, we cannot find many traces of him in the domestic occupations of the English gentry during the times alluded to; nor do we believe that the character of Hamlet was at all relished in their halls, though perhaps an occasional squire chuckled at the humours of Sir John Falstaff. We have Mr. Wordsworth's authority for believing that Paradise Lost was a dead letter, and John Milton virtually anonymous. We need say no more. Books like these, huge heavy vols. lay with other lumber in garrets and

libraries. As yet, periodical literature was not; and the art of printing seems long to have preceded the art of reading. It did not occur to those generations that books were intended to be read by people in general, but only by the select few. Whereas now, reading is not only one of the luxuries, but absolutely one of the necessaries of life, and we no more think of going without our book than without our breakfast; lunch consists now of veal-pies and Venetian Bracelets—we still dine on roast-beef, but with it, instead of Yorkshire pudding, a Scotch novel—Thomas Campbell and Thomas Moore sweeten tea for us—and in "Course of Time" we sup on a Welsh rabbit and a religious poem.

We have not time—how can we?—to trace the history of the great revolution. But a great revolution there has been, from nobody's reading any thing, to every body's reading all things; and perhaps it began with that good old proser Richardson, the father of Pamela, Clarissa, and Sir Charles Grandison. He seems to have been a sort of idiot, who had a strange insight into some parts of human nature, and a tolerable acquaintance with most parts of speech. He set the public a-reading, and Fielding and Smollett shoved her on—till the Minerva Press took her in hand—and then—the periodicals. But such periodicals! The Gentleman's Magazine—God bless it then, now, and for ever!—the Monthly Review, the Critical and the British Critic! The age had been for some years literary, and was now fast becoming periodical. Magazines multiplied. Arose in glory the Edinburgh, and then the Quarterly Review—Maga, like a new sun, looked out from heaven—from her golden urn a hundred satellites drew light—and last of all, "the planetary five," the annuals, hung their lamps on high; other similar luminous bodies emerged from the clouds, till the whole circumference was bespangled, and astronomy became the favourite study with all ranks of people, from the king upon the throne to the meanest of his subjects. Now, will any one presume to deny, that this has been a great change to the better, and that there is now something worth living for in the world? Look at our literature now, and it is all periodical together. A thousand daily, thrice-a-week, twice-a-

week, weekly newspapers, a hundred monthlies, fifty quarterlies, and twenty-five annuals! No mouth looks up now and is not fed! on the contrary, we are in danger of being crammed; an empty head is as rare as an empty stomach; the whole day is one meal, one physical, moral, and intellectual feast; the public goes to bed with a periodical in her hand, and falls asleep with it beneath her pillow.

What blockhead thinks now of reading Milton, or Pope, or Gray? Paradise Lost is lost; it has gone to the devil. Pope's Epistles are returned to the dead-letter office; the age is too loyal for "ruin seize thee, ruthless king," and the oldest inhabitant has forgotten "the curfew tolls."

All the great geniuses of the day are periodical. The Scotch novels—the Irish novels—the English novels—the American novels—the Family Library—the Library of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge—Napier's History of the Spanish War—Tytler's History of Scotland—Chalmer's Civic Economy—but what is the need of enumeration—every work worth reading is published in numbers, from the Excursion—being a portion belonging to the third part of that long, laborious, and philosophical poem, the Recluse, by William Wordsworth—down to the first six books of that long, laborious, and unphilosophical poem, Nineveh, by Edwin Atherstone.

What donkey was the first to bray that the annuals, the subject of this our monologue, were introduced into this country from Germany? Gentle reader, did you ever see a German annual or literary almanac? We beseech you look not at any one print, if you do not wish to die of laughing—to fall into guffaw-convulsions. Such a way of making love! But you know better—you know that the annuals are a native growth of the soil of England, springing up, like white and red clover beneath lime (a curious fact that) wherever the periodical ploughshare has drawn its furrows. Import what seeds, germs, roots, or plants, you choose from Germany; sow them; dibble them in; and in a week, it matters not whether the weather be wet or dry, they are all dead as David's sow. We want none of your German horticulture, or agriculture, or arboriculture in Britain. Let us grow our own flowers, and our

own corn, and our own trees, and we shall be well off for fragrance, for food, and for shelter.

But lo! arrayed in figure of a fan, and gorgeous as spread-peacock-tail—the annuals! The sunshine strikes the intermingled glow, and it threatens to set the house on fire. But softly—they are cool to the touch, though to the sight burning; innocuous is the lambent flame that plays around the leaves; even as, in a dewy night of fading summer, the grass-brightening circle of the still glowworm's light!

Singular! They have formed themselves into classes beneath our touch—according to some fine affinities of name and nature; and behold in one triad, the Forget-Me-Not, the Souvenir, and the Keepsake.

One word embraces them all—memorials. When "absent long, and distant far," the living, lovely, loving, and beloved, how often are they utterly forgotten! But let something that once was theirs suddenly meet our eyes, and in a moment, returning from the region of the rising or the setting sun, lo! the friend of our youth is at our side, unchanged his voice and his smile; and dearer to our eyes than ever, because of some slight, faint, and affecting change wrought on face and figure by climate and by years! Let it be but his name written with his own hand, on the title-page of a book; or a few syllables on the margin of a favourite passage which long ago we may have read together, "when life itself was new," and poetry overflowed the whole world! Or a lock of *her* hair in whose eyes we first knew the meaning of the word "depth" applied to the human soul, or the celestial sky! But oh! if death hath stretched out and out into the dim arms of eternity the distance—and removed away into that bourne from which no traveller returns the absence—of her on whose forehead once hung the relic we adore in our despair—what heart may abide the beauty of the ghost that, as at the touch of a talisman, doth sometimes at midnight appear before our sleepless bed, and with pale, uplifted arms waft over us—so momentary is the vision—at once a blessing and a farewell!

But we must be cheerful, for these are cheerful volumes, and they are bound in smiles. Yet often "cheerful

thoughts bring sad thoughts to the mind," and the eye slides away insensibly from the sunshine to the cloud-shadows, feeling that they are bound together in beauty by one spirit. Why so sad a word—farewell? We should not weep in wishing welfare, nor sully felicity with tears. But we do weep, because evil lies lurking in wait over all the earth for the innocent and the good, the happy and the beautiful, and when guarded no more by our eyes, it seems as if the demon would leap out upon his prey. Or is it because we are so selfish that we cannot bear the thought of losing the sight of the happiness of one we dearly love, and are troubled with a strange jealousy and envy of beings unknown to us, and for ever to be unknown, about to be taken into the very heart, perhaps, of the friend from whom we part, and to whom we breathe a sad, almost a sullen, yet still a sweet farewell? Or does the shadow of death pass over us while we stand for the last time together on the sea-shore, and see the ship with all her sails about to voyage away to the uttermost parts of the earth? Or do we shudder at the thought of mutability in all created things, insensate or with soul—and know that ere a few hours shall have brightened the path of the swift vessel on the far-off sea, we shall be dimly remembered—alas! at last forgotten, and all those days, months, and years, that once seemed as if they would never die, swallowed up in everlasting oblivion?

7*

THEODORA.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1830.)

It must be a heavenly life—wedlock—with one wife and one daughter. Not that people may not be happy with a series of spouses, and five-and-twenty children all in a row. But we prefer still to stirring life—and therefore, oh! for one wife and one daughter! What a dear delightful girl would she not have been by this time, if born in the famous vintage of 1811—the year, too, of the no less famous comet! But then—in spite of all her filial affection, speaking in silvery sound, and smiling in golden light, she would, in all human probability, have been forsaking her old father this very month; without compunction or remorse, forgetting her mother; and even like a fair cloud on the mountain's breast, cleaving unto her husband! Such separation would to us have been insupportable. Talk not of grandchildren, for they come but to toddle over your grave; —as for son-in-law, they are sulky about settlements, and wish you dead;—every man of feeling and every man of the world, too, knows that his last day of perfect happiness is that on which he sees his only daughter a bride.

But let us not run into the melancholics. We wish—notwithstanding all this—that we had now—one wife—one single wife—and one only daughter. Ourselves about fifty—my dear some six summers farther off heaven—and my darling, "beautiful exceedingly," on the brink of her expiring teens! Ay, we would have shown the world "how divine a thing a woman might be made." Our child would have seemed—alternately—Una—Juliet—Desdemona—Imogen; for those bright creatures were all kith and kin, and the angelical family expression would, after

a sleep of centuries, have broken out in beauty over the countenance of their fair cousin, Theodora North!

"And pray, sir, may I ask how you would have educated your sweet scion of the rising sun?"—whispers a dowager now at her third husband, and therefore at present somewhat sarcastically inclined towards bachelors of a certain age. We answer susurringly. "Think not, madam, though we have hitherto been the most barren, and you the most prolific of the children of men, that, therefore, were a daughter yet to be born to us, we should show ourselves ignorant of the principles of female education. There was Miss Hamilton—and there is Miss Edgeworth, who never had a child in their lives—though you have had a score and upwards—yet each of them writes about children as well or better than if she had had bantling after bantling annually, ever since the short peace of 1802. So are we—to our shame be it spoken—childless; that is, in the flesh, but not in the spirit. In the spirit we have had for nearly twenty years—an only daughter—and her Christian and Scriptural name is Theodora—the gift of God!"

Some day or other we intend publishing a poem with that title, which has been lying by us for several years—but meanwhile, let us, gentle reader, as if in a "twa-haun'd crack," chit-chat away together about those ideal daughters, of whom almost every man has one—two—or three—as it happens—and whose education he conducts, after a dreamy mode it is true, yet not untrue to the genial process of nature, in the school-room of imagination.

The great thing is, to keep them out of harm's way. Now, surely that is not hard to do, even in a wicked world. There is a good deal of thieving and robbing going on, all round about villages, towns, and cities, especially of flowers and vegetables. Yet, look at those pretty smiling suburban gardens, where rose-tree and pear-tree are all in full blossom or bearing, not a stalk or branch broken;—nor has the enormous Newfoundlander in yonder kennel been heard barking, except in sport, for a twelvemonth. Just so with the living flower beneath your eye in your own Eden—

No need for you to growl,
Be mute—but be at home.

Not a hair of her head shall be touched by evil; it is guarded by the halo of its own innocence; and you feel *that* every evening when you press it to your heart, and dismiss the pretty creature to her bed with a parental prayer. It is, then, the easiest of all things to keep your rose or your lily out of harm's way; for thither the dewy gales of gladness will not carry her; in sunlight, and moonlight, and in utter darkness, her beauty is safe—if you but knew what holy duties descended upon you from heaven the moment she was born, and that the God-given must be God-restored out of your own hand at the last day!

But we are getting too serious—so let us be merry as well as wise—yet still keep chatting about Theodora. She has, indeed, a fine temper. Then we defy Fate and Fortune to make her miserable, for as long a time as is necessary to boil an egg—neither hard nor soft—three minutes and a half; for Fate and Fortune are formidable only to a female in the sulks; and the smile in a serene eye scares them away to their own dominions. Temper is the atmosphere of the soul. When it is mild, pure, fresh, clear, and bright, the soul breathes happiness; when it is hot and troubled, as if there were thunder in the air, the soul inhales misery, and is aweary of very life. Yet there are times and places, seasons and scenes, when and where the atmosphere, the temper of every human soul, is like the foul air or damp in a coal-pit. The soul at work sets fire to it, by a single spark of passion; and there is explosion and death. But religion puts into the hand of the soul her safety-lamp; and, so guarded, she comes uninjured out of the darkest and deepest pit of Erebus.

You have kept your Theodora, we hope, out of harm's way; and cherished in her a heavenly temper. The creature is most religious; of all books she loves best her Bible; of all days most blessed to her is the Sabbath. She goeth but to one church. That one pew is a pleasant place, hung round by holy thoughts, as with garlands of flowers, whose bloom is perennial, and whose balm breathes of a purer region. The morning and the evening of each

week-day has still to her something of a Sabbath feeling—a solemnity that sweetly yields to the gladness and gaiety of life's human hours, whether the sunlight be astir in every room of the busy house, or the "parlour-twilight" illumined by the fitful hearth, that seems ever and anon to be blinking lovingly on the domestic circle. Humble in her happiness—fearful of offence to the Being from whom it is all felt to flow—affectionate to her earthly parents, as if she were yet a little child—pensive often as evening, yet oftener cheerful as dawn—what fears need you have for your Theodora, or why should her smiles sometimes affect you more than any tears?

Can a creature so young and fair have any *duties* to perform? Or will not all good deeds rather flow from her as unconsciously as the rays from her dewy eyes? No—she is not the mere child of impulse. In her bosom—secret and shady as is that sacred recess—feeling has grown up in the light of thought. Simple, indeed, is her heart, but wise in its simplicity; innocence sees far and clear with her dove-like eyes; unfaltering where'er they go, be it even among the haunts of sin and sorrow, may well be the feet of her who duly bends her knees in prayer to the Almighty Guide through this life's most mortal darkness; and "greater far than she knows herself to be," is the young Christian lady, who sees a sister in the poor sinner that in her hovel has ceased even to hope; but who all at once on some gracious hour, beholds, as if it were an angel from heaven, the face of one coming in her charity to comfort and to reclaim the guilty, and to save both soul and body from death.

Yes, Theodora has her *duties;* on them she meditates both day and night; seldom for more than an hour or two, are they entirely out of her thoughts; and sometimes does a faint shadow fall on the brightness of her countenance, even during the mirth which heaven allows to innocence, the blameless mirth that emanates in the voice of song from her breast,—even as a bird in spring, that warbles thick and fast from the top-spray of a tree in the sunshine, all at once drops down in silence to its nest. A life of duty is the only cheerful life; for all joy springs from the affections; and 'tis the great law of nature, that without

good deeds, all good affection dies, and the heart becomes utterly desolate. The external world, too, then loses all its beauty; poetry fades away from the earth; for what is poetry, but the reflection of all pure and sweet, all high and holy thoughts? But where duty is,

> "Flowers laugh beneath her in their beds,
> And fragrance in her footing treads;—
> She doth preserve the stars from wrong,
> And the eternal heavens, through her, are fresh and strong."

And what other books, besides her Bible, doth Theodora read? History, to be sure, and romances, and voyages and travels, and—POETRY. Preaching and praying is not the whole of religion. Sermons, certainly, are very spiritual, especially Jeremy Taylor's; but so is Spenser's Fairy Queen, if we mistake not, and Milton's Paradise Lost. What a body of divinity in those two poems! This our Theodora knows, nor fears to read them,—even on the Sabbath day. Not often so, perhaps; but as often as the pious spirit of delight may prompt her to worship her Creator through the glorious genius of his creatures!

And what may be the amusements of our Theodora? Whatever her own heart—thus instructed and guarded—may desire. No nun is she—no veil hath she taken—but the veil which nature weaves of mantling blushes, and modesty sometimes lets drop, but for a few moments, over the reddening rose-glow on the virgin's cheeks. All round and round her own home, as the centre, expand before her happy eyes, the many concentric circles of social life. She regards them all with liking or with love, and has showers of smiles and of tears too to scatter, at the touch of joys or sorrows that come not too near her heart, while yet they touch its strings. Of many of the festivities of this world—ay, even of this wicked world—she partakes with a gladsome sympathy—and, would you believe it?—Theodora sometimes dances, and goes to concerts and plays, and sings herself like St. Cecilia, till a drawing-room in a city, with a hundred living people, is as hushed as a tomb full of skeletons in some far-off forest beyond the reach of the voice of river or sea!

Now, were you to meet our Theodora in company,

ten to one you would not know it was she; possibly you might not see any thing *very* beautiful about her; for the beauty we love strikes not by a sudden and single blow,—but—allow us another simile—is like the vernal sunshine, still steal, steal, stealing through a dim, tender, pensive sky, and even when it has reached its brightest, tempered and subdued by a fleecy veil of clouds. To some eyes such a spring-day has but little loveliness, and passes away unregarded over the earth; but to others it seemeth a day indeed born in heaven, nor is it ever forgotten in the calendar kept in common by the imagination and the heart.

Would you believe it?—our Theodora is fond of dress! Rising up from her morning prayer, she goes to her mirror; and the beauty of her own face—though she is not philosopher enough to know the causes of effects—makes her happy as day-dawn. Ten minutes at the least—and never was time better employed—has the fair creature been busy with her ten delicate fingers and thumbs in tricking her hair;—ten more in arranging the simple adornment of her person; and a final ten in giving, ever and anon, somotimes before the mirror, and sometimes away from it, those skilful little airy touches to the *toute-ensemble*, which a natural sense of grace and elegance can alone bestow—of which never was so consummate a mistress—and of which Minerva knew no more than a modern Blue. Down she comes to the breakfast-table; for a spring-shower has prevented her from taking her morning walk;—down she comes to the breakfast-table, and her presence diffuses a new light over the room, as if a shutter had been suddenly opened to the east.

DESCRIPTIVE POETRY.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1830.)

Descriptive poetry is either the most dull or the most delightful thing in the united kingdoms of art and nature. To write it well, you must see with your eyes shut—no such easy operation. But to enable you to see with your eyes shut, you must begin with seeing with your eyes open—an operation, also, of much greater difficulty than is generally imagined—and indeed not to be well performed by one man in a thousand. Seeing with your eyes open is a very complicated concern—as it obviously must be, when perhaps fifty church-spires, and as many more barns, some millions of trees, and hay-stacks innumerable, hills and plains without end, not to mention some scores of cities, towns, villages, and hamlets, are all impressed—tiny images—on each retina—which tiny images the mind must see as in reflection within these miraculous mirrors. She is apt to get confused amidst that bewildering conglomeration—to mistake one object for another—to displace and disarrange to the destruction of all harmonies and proportions—and finally, to get, if not stone—at least, what is perhaps worse, sand-blind. The moment she opens her mouth to discourse of these her perceptions, the old lady is apt to wax so confused, that you unjustly suspect her of a bad habit; and as soon as she winks, or shuts her eyes, begins prosing away from memory, till you lose all belief in the existence of the external world. Chaos is come again—and old John Nox introduces you to Somnus. The poem falls out of your hand—for we shall suppose a poem—a composing draft of a descriptive poem to have been in it—but not till you have swallowed sufficient of one dose to produce another doze that threatens to last till doomsday.

We really cannot take it upon ourselves to say what is the best mode of composition for a gentleman or lady of poetical propensities to adopt with respect to a descriptive poem—whether to sketch it, and lay the colours on—absolutely to finish it off entirely—in the open air, sitting under the shade of an elm, or an umbrella ; or from a mere outline, drawn *sub dio*, to work up the picture to perfect beauty, in a room with one window, looking into a back-court inhabited by a couple of cockless hens, innocent of cackle. Both modes are dangerous—full of peril. In the one, some great Gothic cathedral is apt to get into the foreground, to the exclusion of the whole country ; in the other, the scenery too often retires away back by much too far into the distance—the groves look small, and the rivers sing small—and all nature is like a drowned rat.

The truth is—and it will out—that the poet alone sees this world. Nor does it make the slightest difference to him whether his eyes are open or shut—in or out—bright as stars, or " with dim suffusion veiled"—provided only the iris of each " particular orb" has, through tears of love and joy, been permitted for some twenty years, or thereabouts, to span heaven and earth, like seeing rainbows. All the imagery it ever knows has been gathered up by the perceiving soul during that period of time—afterwards 'tis the divining soul that works—and it matters not then whether the material organ be covered with day or with night. Milton saw without eyes more of the beauty and sublimity of the heavens than any man has ever done since with eyes—except Wordsworth ;—and were Wordsworth to lose his eyes—which heaven forbid—still would he

> " Walk in glory and in joy,
> Following his soul upon the mountain side."

The sole cause of all this power possessed by the poet over nature, is the spirit of delight, the sense of beauty, in which, from the dawning of moral and intellectual thought, he has gazed upon all her aspects. He has always felt towards her " as a lover or a child"—she hath ever been his mother—his sister—his bride—his wife—all in one

wonderful living charm breathed over the shapings of his brain and the yearnings of his blood;—and no wonder that all her sights dwell for ever and ever in the fountains of his eyes, and all her sounds in the fountains of his ears—for what are these fountains but the depths and recesses of his own happy yet ever agitated heart?

A poet, then, at all times, whether he will or not, commerces with the skies, and with the seas, and with the earth, in a language of silent symbols; and when he lays it aside, and longs to tell correctly of what he sees and feels to his brethren of mankind not so gifted by God, though then he must adopt their own language, the only one they understand, yet from his lips it becomes, while still human, an angelic speech. Ay—even their homeliest phrases—their everyday expressions—in which they speak of life's dullest goings-on and most unimpassioned procedure—seem kindled as by a coal from heaven, and prose brightens into poetry. True, that the poet selects all his words—but he selects them in a spirit of inspiration, which is a discriminating spirit—as well as a moving and creating spirit. All that is unfit for his high and holy purpose, of itself fades away; and out of all that is fit, genius, true to nature, chooses whatever is fittest—out of the good—the best. Not with a finer, surer instinct, flies the bee from flower to flower—touching but for a moment, like a shadow, on the bloom where no honey is—and where that ambrosia lies, piercing with passion into the rose's heart. Poetical language, indeed—who may tell what it is? What else can it be but poetry itself? And what is poetry—we know not—though "our heart leaps up when we behold" it—even as at sight of a something in the sky—faint at first as a tinging dream, cloud-born—but growing gradually out of the darkness of the showery sky—child of the sun—dying almost as soon as born—yet seeming to be a creature—a being—a living thing that might endure for ever—and not a mere apparition, too, too soon deserting the earth and the heaven it has momentarily glorified with a—rainbow!

But is poetry indeed thus evanescent? Yes—in the poet's soul. For it is produced upon the shadowy and showery background of the imagination, by genius shin-

ing upon it sunlike; that visionary world fades away, and leaves him "shorn of his beams," like a common man in this common world; but words once uttered may live for ever—in that lies their superiority over clouds; and thus poetry—when printed by Bensley or Ballantyne—becomes a stationary world of rainbows. And there are ways—sacred ways which religion teaches—of preserving in the spirit of men who read poetry—even till their dying day—that self-same ecstasy with which Noah and his children first beheld the arch of promise.

There was a long period of our poetry, during which poets paid, apparently, little or no devotion to external nature; when she may be said to have lain dead. Perhaps, we poets of this age pay her—we must not say too much homage—but too much tribute—as if she exacted it—whereas it ought all to be a free-will offering, spontaneous as the flower-growth of the hills. It is possible to be religious overmuch at her shrine—to deal in long prayers, and longer sermons, forgetting to draw the practical conclusions. Without knowing it, we may become formalists in our worship; nay, even hypocrites; for all moods of mind are partly hypocritical that are not thoroughly sincere—and truth abhors exaggeration. True passion is often sparing of words; compressedly eloquent; not doting upon and fondling mere forms, but carrying its object by storm—spirit by spirit—a conflict—a catastrophe—and peace. There is rather too long a courtship—too protracted a wooing of nature now by shilly-shallying bards; they do not sufficiently insist on her, their bride, naming the nuptial day; some of them would not for the world run away with her to Gretna-Green. They get too philosophical—too Platonic; *amicitia* seems their watchword rather than *amor;* and the consequence is, that nature is justified in jilting them, and privately espousing a mate of more flesh and blood—Passion, who not only pops the question, but insinuates a suit of saffron, and takes the crescent honeymoon by the horns. Nature does not relish too metaphysical a suitor; she abhors all that is gross, but still loves something in a tangible shape; no cloud herself, she hates being embraced by a cloud; and her chaste nuptials, warm as they are chaste, must be celebrated after our human

fashion, not spiritually and no more, but with genial embraces, beneath the moon and stars, else how, pray, could she ever be—mother earth! Unfruitful communion else, —and the fairy-land of poetry would soon be depopulated.

But observe—that if true poets are sometimes rather too cold and frigid in their tautological addresses to Nymph Nature, those wooers of hers who are no poets at all, albeit they lisp to her in numbers, carry their rigmaroling beyond all bounds of her patience, and assail her with sonnets as cold as icicles. Never was there a time when poetasters were more frigid in their lays than at present; never was there a greater show of fantastic frost-frost; instead of a living Flora, you are put off with a Hortus Siccus. And therefore it was, that in the first sentence of this article we said that descriptive poetry might be the dullest—and we now add—the driest and deadest thing in the united kingdom of Art and Nature—or the most delightful—just as the true poet is wedded to Nature, or the true proser keeps dallying with her, till he with a flea in his ear is ordered out of her presence, and kicked by Cupid and Hymen into the debatable land between Imagination and Reality, where luckless wights are, like fish without fins, or fowls without wings, unable either to swim or fly, and yet too conceited to use their feet like either walking, creeping, or crawling creatures. Never —never was there such a multitude of pretenders elbowing themselves into notice among the inspired; and one and all of them it is our intention to take—monthly during the next ten years—by the nape of the neck—and after exhibiting them in writhing contortions for a few minutes, to duck them—for evermore—into the Pool of Oblivion.

But tremble not—gentle reader—whoever you be—at such denunciation of our wrath; for sure we are that no friends of Maga can ever be brought under that ban. Perhaps we may relent and spare even the dunces; for our wrath is like that of a summer-wave, rising and falling with a beautiful burst and break of foam, that frightens not the seamew, nor even the child sporting on the shore. And thou—thou art a poet—whatever be the order to which thou mayest belong—and there are many orders,

believe us, among the true sons of song. Mediocrity indeed! Where may that line be drawn? How many ranks—degrees of glory—between William Shakspeare and Allan Ramsay! Between Allan Ramsay and the humblest shepherd that ever tuned the rural pipe to love on Scotia's pastoral hills! Nature is not such a niggard to her children—but scatters her blessed boons wide over life. Each nook has its own native flower—each grove its own songster—and methinks the daisy, "wee, modest, crimson-tippit flower," is little less lovely than the imperial rose; to our hearing, when the nightingale is mute, most sweetly doth the linnet sing;

"One touch of Nature wakes the whole world of kin."

Surely touches of Nature are not so rare as to be thought miraculous; her harp gives forth music to many a hand; and though highest genius is the endowment but of a few, yet genius—that is, *geniality*—dwells in unnumbered bosoms, and its breathings are heard wide over all the world on a thousand airs. Its voice is always recognised at last, let it whisper as humbly—as lowly as it may; and the brow that misses the laurel, or merits it not, may be encircled with the holly or the broom, emblems both, in their greenness, of immortality. 'Tis not much of the divine spirit, after all, that is needed to give a name its magic. One song—one verse of a song—has consecrated a peasant's name, who cared not for fame the phantom; and unborn ages have wept over the pathos of some tune which flowed almost unconsciously from the shepherd's heart, at the "Wauken of the fauld," or when waiting by moonlight at the Trysting Thorn. Now, much of the poetical literature of every people is of this character. Is not Scotland full of it—and all Scottish hearts? Not the work of intellect, surely—but the finer breath of the spirit, passion-roused and fancy-fired by the hopes, joys, and fears of this mortal life!

Surely this must be the spirit in which all poetry—high or low, humble or ambitious—ought to be read; for only in such a spirit can its spirit be fully, fairly, and freely felt; and in any other mood, inspiration itself will be

wasted and thrown away on even the most gifted mind. True, that in states of society exceedingly cultivated and refined—that is to say, artificial—when the most exquisite and consummate skill of execution is necessarily aimed at, and therefore expected, nothing short of the most faultless perfection of style will secure to any poet the highest honours of his art—and at such a period did Horace deliver his celebrated anathema against mediocre bards. But poetry in the modern world has rarely been so trammelled; and genius and feeling have been allowed their triumphs, in spite of the accompanying defects, deficiencies, and faults in taste. It is far better so; and indeed the cause of this lies deep in human nature, which seems to have had depths opened up in it altogether unknown in the world of old. The very perfection of the Greek drama proves its inferiority to that of Shakspeare. His materials are not in nature susceptible of being moulded into such shapes and forms as were required on the Greek stage. And as of Shakspeare, so in due degree, in the cases of all true poets, down to those of even the lowest order—all of them, without exception, have excelled, not so much by the power of art as of nature, in whose free spirit they had their being as poets. An indefinable feeling is excited by their productions—imperfect, mediocre in execution, nay, even in design, as many of them are—a feeling which rises but beneath the breath of genius, and a certain proof, therefore, of its existence. So noble—so sacred an achievement is it to give delight to the spirit through its finer emotions! So that glory is his who so moves us, and gratitude; though he has done no more than present to us a few new images, round which, by the mysterious constitution of our souls, we can gather some dearly-cherished thoughts and feelings, and, when they are so gathered, know that they are for ever embalmed, as it were, in words which it was genius for the first time to utter, and which, but for genius, could never have been for our delight or our consolation.

Thus explained, mediocrity in poetry appears at once to be a height to which, though many aspire, but few attain—and which can be reached only by genius. There are at present in this island, hundreds, ay, thousands,

nay, millions, of writers in verse, who would disdain to accept the palm of mediocrity, who turn up their noses at senior and junior Ops, and dream of nothing less than being high Wranglers. Yet, among the οι πολλοι will they remain while they consume crops. It is not in them to beautify—or to embalm beauty; and therefore, as Cowley says, they "like beasts or common people die;" and their Christian and sirnames get confused among a vast multitude of the same sound, engraved on tombstones or printed in directories. The moment a man mounts up on the scale of mediocrity, he is safe from oblivion, and may snap his fingers at time. A mediocre poet may be shortly defined—a man of a million. In poetry, about a devil's dozen of celestial spirits stand in the first order of the seraphim or cherubim. The second and third orders contain about fifty lesser angels—but all of them radiant creatures, with wings. All "the rest," who have names on earth and in heaven, in number about a hundred, are marshalled in the mediocre phalanx—and constitute the main body of the immortals; and a pretty fellow for impudence you would be, to refuse the gold guinea put into the palm of your hand by Apollo enlisting you as a young recruit into the battalion. We verily believe that the numbers of the grenadier company—though there be no positive law against it—will never go beyond the devil's dozen—so high is the standard to which the men must come up, on their stocking-soles and with shaved heads. The Light-bobs—now a smart company of fifty—may, perhaps, on some future day, amount to threescore—and the battalion, it is probable, may yet reach the number of those who died at Thermopylæ. But were Apollo to constitute us his recruiting sergeant, and allow us ten gallons of Glenlivet on each poet's head, we are free to confess that the mountain-dew would not lie heavy on the land, for we do not know above a couple of mediocre young gentlemen to whom we should offer the king's bounty—and one of them, we believe, would go off in a huff, and the other hesitate to enlist into the service, for fear of angering his mother.

We therefore love all poets, and all poetry; and the rank of the man having once been ascertained—which is

done by the human race holding up its hand—we never henceforth dream of making odious comparisons—but enough for us to know from his uniform—green and gold —from the stars on his breast, and the sun on his standard —that such or such a hero belongs to the immortals. But when the whole regiment deploys into line, on some grand review day—hundreds of thousands of spectators glorying in the sublime spectacle—Heavens! what a rabble of camp-followers! Of gillies pretending to be real soldiers —in green corduroys—with wooden muskets—and paper-caps—treading down the heels of each other's shoes—or marking time, like so many "hens on a het girdle," to a band of instrumental music, consisting of three penny trumpets, and six sonorous small-teeth combs, playing "*Hey tutie tatie*," in a style far superior to that in which it ever could have been skirled up to the

> Scots wha had wi' Wallace bled,
> Scots wham Bruce had aften led—

at the battle of Bannockburn.

Such being the nature of true poets and true poetry, and such the light in which they are regarded by the race whom they elevate—what, pray, it may be asked, did Mr. Jeffrey mean, t'other day, by saying that all the poets of this age are forgotten? There are few people whom we love and admire more than Mr. Jeffrey—though we believe he does not know it; but why will he, in his elegant and graceful way, speak such nonsense? Scott, Byron, Southey, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Moore, are, he assures us, already all forgotten—or nearly so—fading away—mere specks on the distant horizon of men's clouded memories! Why, our dear sir, you might just as well affirm that the stars are forgotten, because thousands of coachfuls of people, coming and going to and from evening parties, are not at the time aware that the heavens are full of them—that shepherds are watching by them on the hills—and sailors sailing by them on the seas—and astronomers counting them in observatories—and occasionally discovering one that had been invisible to the mole-eyes of men since the creation.

Yet in all the nonsense Mr. Jeffrey ever spoke, or may

speak, you always may find some grains of sense—for who doubts his sagacity and his genius? True it is that much admiration do gaping people ejaculate for things that are admirable, without knowing why or wherefore they admire; their jaws get wearied—they begin to yawn—they doze—they sleep—they snore, and the stars, which are the poetry of heaven, and poetry, which is the flowerage as well as the herbage of earth—are of course forgotten by their loud-nosed worshippers. But "millions of spiritual creatures" are awake amid that snore; they forget not the stars of heaven nor the poets of earth. They hear still the music of the celestial spheres and the terrestrial singers. In their memories all the hymns have an abiding place—while they live, think not

"That heaven can want spectators—God want praise!"

The distinction at which we have now pointed, seems to us to be one which deserves to be attended to by those who might be disposed to bow to the authority of the most accomplished ex-editor of the Edinburgh Review, and, without thought, to adopt the shallow dictum which lately dropped from his ingenious pen. Your great and good living poets are indeed forgotten by thousands who are incapable of remembering what they never felt nor understood,—the creations of inspired genius. All such despicable idolaters drop away from their own superstitions; and soon cease to worship at shrines built only for those who belong to the true religion. But the true religion stands fast—such secession strengthens the established faith—nor will the poets we have named—and others little less illustrious—ever be forgotten, till Lethe bursts its banks and overflows the globe.

Not one of our great or good living poets is forgotten at this hour by Mr. Jeffrey himself—nor any of those critiques of his own either, in which he did noble justice to some of them, and ignoble injustice to others, according to the transient or permanent moods by which his taste, feeling, and judgment were swayed. Nor are his critiques themselves likely to be forgotten—soon or ever; for many of them belong, we verily believe, to our philosophical

literature. But they hold the tenure of their existence by the existence of the poetry which they sought to illustrate or obscure; from the "golden urns of those Poets" did he "draw light"—the light in which he is himself conspicuous—and were it extinguished, his literary life would be a blank. But if the name of Francis Jeffrey will not be forgotten, till those of Scott, Crabbe, and Wordsworth, and Byron, and the rest are dark or dead, he may be assured of immortality; nor, without ingratitude, can he assert present, or predict future oblivious doom to luminaries, who, whatever be its own native lustre, have certainly showered over his genius no small portion of the brilliance with which it now burns.

Nothing that blockheads are so proud of as to retail the paradoxes of some distinguished man. T'other evening we allowed one to bother a company for some minutes with a preachment of the above; and having got him fairly to entangle himself in the net, out of which Mr. Jeffrey would have nibbled himself in a moment, and made his escape with all the agility of a squirrel, we wrapt it so round his body from snout to tail, that he literally seemed one bunch of small twine, and had not left in him so much as the squeak of a mouse. On being let out of the toils, he took his toddy in silence during the rest of the evening, and prated no more about the oblivion of Byron.

Two living poets, however, it seems there are, who, according to Mr. Jeffrey, are never to be dead ones—two who are unforgetable, and who owe their immortality—to what think ye?—their *elegance?* That "*Gracilis Puer*," Samuel Rogers, is one of the dual number. His perfect beauties will never be brought to decay in the eyes of an enamoured world. He is so polished, that time can never take the shine out of him—so classically correct are his charms, that to the end of time they will be among the principal Pleasures of Memory. Jacqueline, in her immortal loveliness, seeming Juno, Minerva, and Venus all in one, will shed in vain "tears such as angels weep" over the weeds that have in truth "no business there," on the forgotten grave of Childe Harold! Very like a whale. Thomas Campbell is the other pet-poet—"the last of all

the flock." Ay—he, we allow, is a star that will know no setting; but of this we can assure the whole world, not excluding Mr. Jeffrey, that were Mr. Campbell's soul deified, and a star in the sky, and told by Apollo, who placed him in the blue region, that Scott and Byron were both buried somewhere between the Devil and the Deep Sea, he the author of Lochiel's Warning, would either leap from Heaven in disdain, or insist on their being instanter one triple constellation. What to do with his friend Mr. Rogers, it might not be easy for Mr. Campbell to imagine or propose at such a critical juncture; but we think it probable that he would hint to Apollo, on the appearance of his Lordship and the Baronet, that the Banker, with a few other pretty poets, might be permitted to scintillate away to all eternity as their—tail.

TREES.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1828.)

Trees are indeed the glory, the beauty, and the delight of nature. The man who loves not trees—to look at them —to lie under them—to climb up them, (once more a schoolboy,)—would make no bones of murdering Mrs. Jeffs. In what one imaginable attribute, that it ought to possess, is a tree, pray, deficient? Light, shade, shelter, coolness, freshness, music, all the colours of the rainbow, dew and dreams dropping through their umbrageous twilight at eve or morn,—dropping direct,—soft, sweet, soothing, and restorative, from heaven. Without trees, how, in the name of wonder, could we have had houses, ships, bridges, easy-chairs, or coffins, or almost any single one of the necessaries, conveniences, or comforts of life? Without trees, one man might have been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but not another with a wooden ladle.

Tree by itself tree, "such tents the patriarchs loved,"—Ipse nemus,—"the brotherhood of trees,"—the grove, the coppice, the wood, the forest,—dearly, and after a different fashion, do we love you all!—And love you all we shall, while our dim eyes can catch the glimmer, our dull ears the murmur, of the leaves,—or our imagination hear at midnight, the far-off swing of old branches groaning in the tempest. Oh! is not merry also sylvan England? And has not Scotland, too, her old pine forests, blackening up her highland mountains? Are not many of her rivered valleys not unadorned with woods,—her braes beautiful with their birken shaws?—And does not stately ash or sycamore tower above the kirk-spire, in many a quiet glen, overshadowing the humble house of God, "the dial-stone

aged and green," and all the deep-sunk, sinking, or upright array of grave-stones, beneath which

> "The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep?"

We have the highest respect for the ghost of Dr. Johnson; yet were we to meet it by moonlight, how should we make it hang its head on the subject of Scottish trees! Look there, you old, blind, blundering blockhead! That pine forest is twenty miles square! Many million trees, there, have at least five hundred arms each, six times as thick as ever your body was, sir, when you were at your very fattest in Bolt Court. As for their trunks—some straight as cathedral pillars—some flung all awry in their strength across cataracts—some without a twig till your eye meets the hawk's nest diminished to a black-bird's, and some overspread, from within a man's height of the mossy sward, with fantastic branches, cone-covered, and green as emerald—what say you, you great, big, lumbering, unwieldy ghost you, to trunks like these? And are not the forests of Scotland the most forgiving that ever were self-sown, to suffer you to flit to and fro, haunting unharmed their ancient umbrage? Yet—Doctor—you were a fine old Tory every inch of you, for all that, my boy—so come glimmering away with you into the gloom after us—don't stumble over the roots—we smell a still at work—and neither you nor I—shadow nor substance (but, prithee, why so wan, good Doctor? Prithee, why so wan?) can be much the worse, eh, of a caulker of Glenlivat?

Every man of landed property, that lies fairly out of arm's-length of a town, whether free or copyhold, be its rental above or below forty shillings a-year, should be a planter. Even an old bachelor, who has no right to become the father of a child, is not only free, but in duty bound to plant a tree. Unless his organ of philoprogenitiveness be small indeed, as he looks at the young, tender plants in his own nursery-garden, his heart will yearn towards them with all the longing and instinctive fondness of a father. As he beholds them putting forth the tender buds of hope, he will be careful to preserve them from all blight,—he will "teach the young idea how to shoot,"—

and, according to their different natures, he will send them to different places to complete their education, according as they are ultimately intended for the church, the bar, or the navy. The old gentleman will be surprised to see how soon his young plants have grown as tall as himself, even though he should be an extraordinary member of the Six Feet Club. An oak sapling, of some five or six springs, shall measure with him on his stocking-soles,—and a larch, considerably younger, laugh to shake its pink cones far over his wig. But they are all dutiful children,—never go stravaiging from home after youthful follies,—and standing together in beautiful bands, and in majestic masses, they will not suffer the noonday sun to smite their father's head, nor the winds of heaven to "visit his face too roughly."

People are sometimes prevented from planting trees by the slowness of their growth. What a mistake that is! People might just as well be prevented from being wed, because a man-child takes one-and-twenty years to get out of his minority, and a woman-child, except in hot climates, is rarely marriageable before fifteen. Not the least fear in the world, that Tommy and Thomasine and the tree will grow up fast enough—wither at the top—and die! It is a strange fear to feel—a strange complaint to utter—that any one thing in this world, animate or inanimate, is of too slow growth; for the nearer to its perfection, the nearer to its decay.

No man, who enjoys good health, at fifty, or even sixty, would hesitate, if much in love, to take a wife, on the ground that he could have no hope or chance of seeing his numerous children all grown up into hobbledehoys and Priscilla Tomboys. Get your children first, and let them grow at their own leisure afterwards. In like manner, let no man, bachelor or Benedict, be his age beyond the limit of conversational confession, fear to lay out a nursery-garden,—to fill it with young seedlings,—and thenceforward, to keep planting away, up hill and down brae, all the rest of his life.

Besides, in every stage, how interesting, both a wood and sap tree, and a flesh and blood child! Look at pretty, ten-year-old, rosy-cheeked, golden-haired Mary, gazing, with all the blue brightness of her eyes, at that large dew-

drop, which the sun has let escape unmelted even on into the meridian hours, on the topmost pink-bud, within which the teeming leaf struggles to expand into beauty,—the topmost pink-bud of that little lime-tree, but three winters old, and half a spring!—Hark! that is Harry, at home on a holiday, rustling like a roe in the coppicewood, in search of the nest of the blackbird or mavis;—yet ten years ago that rocky hill-side was unplanted, and "that bold boy, so bright and beautiful," unborn. Who, then,—be his age what it may,—would either linger, "with fond, reluctant, amorous delay," to take unto himself a wife, for the purpose of having children, or to enclose a waste for the purpose of having trees?

At what time of life a human being,—man or woman,—looks best, it might be hard to say. A virgin of eighteen, straight and tall, bright, blooming, and balmy, seems, to our old eyes, a very beautiful and delightful sight. Inwardly we bless her, and pray that she may be as happy as she is innocent. So, too, is an oak tree, about the same age, standing by itself, without a twig on its straight, smooth, round, glossy, silver stem, for some few feet from the ground, and then branching out into a stately flutter of dark green leaves; the shape being indistinct in its regular but not formal over-fallings, and over-foldings, and over-hangings, of light and shade. Such an oak tree is indeed truly beautiful, with all its tenderness, gracefulness, and delicacy,—ay, a delicacy almost seeming to be fragile,—as if the cushat, whirring from its concealment, would crush the new spring-shoots, sensitive almost as the gossamer, with which every twig is intertwined. Leaning on our staff, we bless it, and call it even by that very virgin's name; and ever thenceforth behold Louisa lying in its shade.—Gentle reader, what it is to be an old, dreamy, visionary, prosing poet!

Good God! let any one who accuses trees of laziness in growing only keep out of sight of them for a few years; and then, returning home to them under cloud of night, all at once open his eyes, of a fine, sunny, summer morning, and ask them how they have been since he and they mutually murmured farewell! He will not recognise the face, or the figure of a single tree. That sycamore, whose top-

shoot a cow, you know, browsed off, to the breaking of your heart, some four or five years ago, is now as high as the "riggin" of the cottage, and is murmuring with bees among its blossoms quite like an old tree. What precocity! That Wych elm, hidebound as it seemed of yore, and with only one arm that it could hardly lift from its side, is now a Briareus. Is that the larch you used to hop over?—now almost fit to be a mast of one of the fairy fleet on Windermere!—you thought you would never have forgotten the triangle of the three birches,—but you stare at them now as if they had dropped from the clouds!—and since you think that beech—that round hill of leaves—is not the same shrub you left sticking in the gravel, why call the old gardener hither, and swear him to its identity on the Bible.

Before this confounded gout attacked our toe, we were great pedestrians, and used to stalk about all over the banks and braes from sunrising to sunsetting, through all seasons of the year. Few sights would please us more than that of a new mansion-house, or villa, or cottage ornée, rising up in some sheltered, but open-fronted nook, commanding a view of a few bends of a stream or river winding along old lea, or rich holm ploughed fields,—sloping uplands, with here and there a farm-house and trees,—and in the distance hill-tops quite clear, and cutting the sky, wreathed with mists, or for a time hidden in clouds. It set the imagination and the heart at work together, to look at the young hedgerows and plantations, belts, clumps, and single trees, hurdled in from the nibbling sheep. Ay, some younger brother, who, twenty, or thirty, or forty years ago, went abroad to the East, or the West, to push his fortune, has returned to the neighbourhood of his native vale at last, to live and to die among the braes, where once, among the yellow broom, the schoolboy sported gladsome as any bird. Busy has he been in adorning,—perhaps the man who fixes his faith on Price on the Picturesque, would say in disfiguring,—the inland haven where he has dropt anchor, and will continue to ride till the vessel of life parts from her moorings, and drifts away on the shoreless sea of eternity. For our own parts, we are not easily offended by any conformation

into which trees can be thrown—the bad taste of another must not be suffered to throw us into a bad temper—and as long as the trees are green in their season, and in their season, purple, and orange, and yellow, and refrain from murdering each other, to our eye they are pleasant to look upon,—to our ear it is music, indeed, to hear them all a-murmur along with the murmuring winds. Hundreds—thousands of such dwellings have, in our time, arisen all over the face of Scotland; and there is room enough, we devoutly trust, and verily believe, for hundreds and thousands more. Of a people's prosperity what pleasanter proof! And, therefore, may all the well-fenced woods make more and more wonderful shoots every year. Beneath and among their shelter, may not a single slate be blown from the blue roof, peering through the trees, on the eyes of distant traveller, as he wheels along on the top of his most gracious majesty's mail-coach;—may the dryads soon wipe away their tears for the death of the children that must, in thinnings, be " wede away;"—and may the rookeries and heronries of Scotland increase in number for the long space of ten thousand revolving years!

Not that we hold it to be a matter of pure indifference, how people plant trees. We have an eye for the picturesque, the sublime, and the beautiful, and cannot open it, without seeing at once the very spirit of the scene. O ye! who have had the happiness to be born among the murmers of hereditary trees, can ye be blind to the system pursued by that planter—nature? Nature plants often on a great scale, darkening, far as the telescope can command the umbrage, sides of mountains that are heard roaring still with hundreds of hidden cataracts. And nature often plants on a small scale, dropping down the stately birk so beautiful, among the sprinkled hazels, by the side of the little waterfall of the wimpling burnie, that stands dishevelling there her tresses to the dew-wind, like a queen's daughter, who hath just issued from the pool of pearls, and shines aloft and aloof from her attendant maidens. But man is so proud of his own works, that he ceases to regard those of nature. Why keep poring on that book of plates, purchased at less than half price at a sale, when nature flutters before your eyes her own folio, which all

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who run may read,—although to study it as it ought to be studied, you must certainly sit down on mossy stump, ledge of an old bridge, stone wall, stream bank, or broomy brae, and gaze, and gaze, till woods and sky become like your very self, and your very self like them, at once incorporated together and spiritualized. After a few years' such lessons—you may become a planter—and under your hands not only shall the desert blossom like the rose, but murmur like the palm, and if "southward through Eden goes a river large," and your name be Adam, what a sceptic not to believe yourself the first of men, your wife the fairest of her daughters Eve, and your policy Paradise!

Unless you look and listen, and lay to heart what you see and hear, you will make a pretty pickle of planting. Huge wagons come hulking along the cross-roads piled up with all sorts of young trees swathed in mats, and you and your Grieve and his men cannot rest till they are all stuck into the soil—higgledy, piggledy, promisky, and on the principle of liberty and equality—each plant being allowed the same want of elbow-room, and the same chance—no choice—of dry or moisture. Here a great awkward overgrown hobbledehoy of a poplar, who keeps perpetually turning up the whites of his leaves at every breath that blows, stands shivering like an aspen cheek by jowl with a squat, sturdy, short-necked, bandy-legged pech of a Scotch fir, as dour as the devil in a squall; though, unlike that gentleman, unable to stand hot weather, and looking in a brown study, indeed during the dog-days. Here, again, the greenest of all saughs, brightening with the love of life, in a small marsh,—for the saugh loves wet like the whaup,—by the side of the yellowest of all larches, pining and dwindling in the fear of death, shooting six inches on an average every year, but which is the top-shoot no man can tell, and eaten alive by insects. There, seven as pretty young oaks as you may see on a spring or summer's morning committing fratricide for possession of that knoll! Now that yonder ash has, after a sore tussle, got these two elms down, you may depend upon it he will not let them up again in a hurry; or if he does, why that sycamore will settle him for such stupidity, having the

advantage of the ground, and being his superior in height, weight, and length, and at least his equal in science. And then is there not something exceedingly pretty in the variegation of such patchwork policy? Pretty as any coverlet to any old woman's bed in all the parish? No great, huge, black, sullen, sulky masses of shade—no broad bright bursts of sunshine, enough to drive a man mad with sudden mirth or melancholy, as he wanders among the woods—but every tree standing by itself, with an enormous organ of individuality, so that you cannot help trying to count them, yet never get beyond a score, being put out of your reckoning by an unexpected poplar standing with his back against a rock, in vain combat with a sharp-nailed silver fir, scratching his very eyes out—a beech bathing in a puddle of moss-water—or something in the shape of an ornamental shrub, struggling in the many-fingered grasp of the strangulating heather, like a Cockney entangled among the Scottish thistles of Blackwood's Magazine.

Then what a pest are your prigs of professional planters! They walk with such an air about your rural premises, as if you had not a single eye in your head, and did not know a frowning ash from a weeping birch, a bour-tree from a gooseberry bush, whins from broom, or rasps from rowans. If there be a barn or byre on the estate, they begin with planting it out as if it were a poors' house, or an infirmary, or a tanyard, or perhaps pulling it down; in which case, what becomes of the corn and the cows?

> "Of a' the airts the wind can blaw,
> You dearly lo'e the west;
> For there the bonny lassie lives,
> The lass that you lo'e best."

And with many a beautiful sunset has your soul sunk away behind the gorgeous weather-gleam, into her fair and far-off bosom. The monster plants it out, too, and be hanged to him, with a spindle-shanked grove, that will continue to wear a truly transplanted and haggard appearance to the day of judgment.

Having thus, day after day, planted out all "old familiar faces," nothing will satisfy him but to open up; and down go temples and towers that never can be rebuilt—trees old as sin, stately as Satan, beautiful as virtue, and reve-

rend as religion. The river, robbed of all the magnificence with which imagination blackened and whitened it, as it moved unseen through the woods—unseen, but in one bright bend here—one sullen stretch there—one deadened cataract, steaming and gleaming yonder through its oak-canopy, now rolls on disenchanted through the light of common day; and you may see ladies, and ladies' maids, with green parasols, hunting butterflies all by themselves, or flirting with dragoon officers, and undergraduates from Oxford. That mile-long elm avenue—a cathedral in which a hundred thousand penitentials might have prayed—is swept away in the reformation, and you now approach the modern mansion, (for the old hall is down or deserted,) circuitously, after the fashion of one of the representatives of the people making a speech in parliament, who prefers taking two hours to reach a conclusion at which he might have arrived by driving on straight forward, in about five minutes and a half, going at the accelerated but not unreasonable rate of eight miles an hour. Perhaps an old kirk, or church be it—the very parish one—is found to be too near the house; for, though faint, and far off, still when the atmosphere is clear, and the wind west, you can hear the voice of psalms; and therefore that the silence of Sabbath may not be rudely disturbed, the kirk or church, with spire or tower, is swept away, and its burial-ground, so inoffensive with its "low memorials still erected nigh," shut up—but no—that may not be—for the poor parishioners will insist on laying their bones beside those of their forefathers; and surely a few funerals in the year—say a score at the most—need not spoil the rich man's appetite for dinner—if appetite he otherwise would have had; nor may the holy bell that used to toll to prayer now be heard with its little cracked tinkling, so much louder is the gong that summons to lunch or tiffin, and sets the flunkies afloat through all the staircases from parlour to pantry, from Moll, the peony-rose of the kitchen, to Louisa, the white lily of the drawing-room, languishing and luxury being alike the order of the day, from cellar to garret; for in high life, both above and below stairs,

"Love is heaven, and heaven is love."

Let all people, then, beware of dealers in the picturesque; for they are universally greedy, and generally ignorant, and may do more harm in a week than nature can repair in a year. Get some painter of genius, like Andrew Wilson, or William Allan, or John Watson Gordon, or Hugh Williams, or Alexander Nasmyth, or Mr. Thomson of Duddingstone, to come sauntering out with his portfolio, and take up his abode for a few days in your friendly house, strolling about with you during the forenoons among the banks and braes, and beautifying the paper during the evenings with fair creations of taste and fancy, prophetic of the future beauties and glories that shall ere long be overshadowing your estate. They will not scare the naiads, the dryads, and the hamadryads, from their old haunted nooks—the fairies will not fly their approach, any more than the rooks and herons—in every pool and tarn, nature will behold herself not only in undiminished but in heightened charms—Flora will walk hand in hand with Pomona, and the two together will smile sweetly on old Father Pan, roaming in all his original hairiness in the forests. And haply you may have among your friends some poet

> "Who murmurs near the hidden brooks
> A music sweeter than their own;"

Him you may consult, at close of his noontide revery, and from his sown words will spring up all varieties of grace, loveliness, and majesty, till every woodland murmur breathes of poetry, and poetry brightens from the heaven of every tree-and-cloud-shadowed water, asleep within the silence of the solitary woods.

Of the multitude of thoughts within us, we know not one more cheering than the belief, that the world is, and ever must be, in a state of very great ignorance about all those things that are of most avail to human use or pleasure. There is a perpetual flux and reflux—ebb and flow of all things on the face of this our pleasant earth. Look up to the hill-side, and you see the waterline of beauty, parallel to that on the opposite green range, telling that long ago a loch filled the valley, till it burst the mound that confined it, and away it flowed on, in a river, to the sea. Look on

those ruins, apparently of houses—inland now, it may be said—yet shells are to be gathered still round the garden wall, touched in the olden time by the foot of the flowing Neptune. Or look into that lucid bay, and you will see the roofs and chimney-tops of what once were cottages—cottages that stood at night on the shore, twinkling like stars; while on the silvery sands between them and the sea the fishermen dried their nets. All this is at once melancholy and consoling, to be thought of alternately with a smile and a tear. Then for the march of intellect, it is fortunately often retrograde; for, if it were not, intellect would march on to the utmost possible length of its tether—break the tether—and fall over "the back of beyond." But intellect has more sense; and, therefore, may be often seen suddenly ordering the whole army to halt, light and heavy brigades alike, going into winter quarters,—encamping on the spot, or perhaps falling back upon the wagons and commissariat. Thus it is impossible that the grand campaign can ever come to an end till the stars slacken in their courses, and the sun is kicked out of that solar system of his, where he is seen "outshining like a visible god, the path on which he trode,"—kicked out of his own solar system, just like a football.

Thus, to return to trees. Trees have been planted for these six thousand years and upwards, and yet were some forester who planted, long before the Christian era, the palm-trees by the wells of Palestine—or the cedars from Lebanon along the banks of the brook Kedron—to open his eyes to a perusal of Monteath's Forest Guide, we do not believe that the good old Jew would think the Galwegian a whit wiser than himself—or that he would even think Sir Walter had worked a miracle in that famous article of his on Planting, No. 72, of that thriving journal the Quarterly Review. Though we think we could point out a few rather important mistakes in the moral wisdom of Solomon, yet we perfectly agree with him in his apothegm, "that there is nothing new under the sun." That Solomon knew both the theory and practice of transplanting old trees, we are not without good reason for believing; though, at the same time, could we suppose him, by a bold anachronism, to have visited Allanton along with the

Committee of the Highland Society, to see and report on the wonders wrought there by Sir Henry Steuart, Bart., we have no doubt that he would have lifted up his hands in no little astonishment, and confessed, that in all his transplantings, from the cedar on Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall, he had never beheld such a sudden and fairy enchantment, not even raised by his own magical ring that built Balbec and Syrian Tadmor in the desert, as that now overshading that park and its own swan-frequented loch.

BIRDS.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1826.)

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We had once intended to entitle our leading article, "Characters of Living Poets."　　*　　*　　*

After dashing off the concluding words of our essay, ("the most glorious age of British Poetry,") our thoughts began to wander away, by some fine associations, into the woods of our childhood, "Bards of Scotland! Birds of Scotland!" and at that very moment, we heard the loud, clear, mellow, bold song of the Blackbird. There he flits along upon a strong wing, with his yellow bill visible in distance, and disappears in the silent wood. Not long silent. It is a spring-day in our imagination,—his clay-wall nest holds his mate at the foot of the silver-fir, and he is now perched on its pinnacle. That thrilling hymn will go vibrating down the stem till it reaches her brooding breast. The whole vernal air is filled with the murmur and the glitter of insects,—but the blackbird's song is over all other symptoms of love and life, and seems to call upon the leaves to unfold into beauty. It is on that one tree-top, conspicuous among many thousands on the fine breast of wood, where, here and there, the pine mingles not unmeetly with the prevailing oak,—that the forest-minstrel sits in his inspiration. The rock above is one which we have often climbed. There lies the glorious loch and all its islands—one dearer than the rest to eye and imagination, with its old religious house,—year after year crumbling away unheeded into more entire ruin! Far away, a sea of mountains, with all their billowing summits distinct in the sky, and now uncertain and changeful as the clouds! Yonder castle stands well on the peninsula among the

trees which the herons inhabit. Those coppice woods on the other shore stealing up to the heathery rocks, and sprinkled birches, are the haunts of the roe! That great glen, that stretches sullenly away into the distant darkness, has been for ages the birth and the death-place of the red deer. Hark, 'tis the cry of an eagle! There he hangs poised in the sunlight, and now he flies off towards the sea. —But again the song of our BLACKBIRD "rises like a steam of rich distilled perfumes," and our heart comes back to him upon the pinnacle of his own home-tree. The source of song is yet in the happy creature's heart—but the song itself has subsided, like a mountain-torrent that has been rejoicing in a sudden shower among the hills; the bird drops down among the balmy branches; and the other faint songs which that bold anthem had drowned, are heard at a distance, and seem to encroach every moment on the silence.

You say you greatly prefer the song of the THRUSH. Pray, why set such delightful singers by the ears? We dislike the habit that very many people have of trying every thing by a scale. Nothing seems to them to be good—positively—only relatively. Now, it is true wisdom to be charmed with what is charming, to live in it, for the time being, and compare the emotion with no former edition whatever—unless it be unconsciously in the working of an imagination set a-going by delight. Who, in reading this magazine, for example, would compare or contrast it with any other periodical under heaven? You read it—and each article is felt to be admirable or execrable—purely for its own sake. You love or you hate it, as THE, not as A magazine. You hug it to your heart, or you make it spin to the other end of the room, simply because it is Blackwood's Magazine, without, during the intensity of your emotion, remembering that Colburn's or the Monthly, or the London, or the European, or the Ladies', or the Gentleman's, exists. No doubt, as soon as the emotion has somewhat subsided, you do begin to think of the other periodicals. On stooping to pick up the number that so aroused your wrath, you say, "I will subscribe for the New Monthly,"—yet no sooner have the words escaped your lips than you blush, like a flower unseen, at

your own folly. Your own folly stares you in the face, and out of countenance—you bless your stars that nobody was in the room at the time—you re-read the article, and perceive, in your amended temper, that it is full of the most important truths, couched in the most elegant language. You dissolve into tears of remorse and penitence, —and vow to remain a faithful subscriber on this side—at least—of the grave.

Although, therefore, we cannot say that we prefer the thrush to the blackbird, yet we agree with you in thinking it a most delightful bird. Where a thrush is, we defy you to anticipate his song in the morning. He is indeed an early riser. By the way, chanticleer is far from being so. You hear him crowing away from shortly after midnight, and, in your simplicity, may suppose him to be up, and strutting about the premises. Far from it;—he is at that very moment perched in his polygamy between two of his fattest wives. The sultan will perhaps not stir a foot for several hours to come; while all the time the thrush, having long ago rubbed his eyes, is on his topmost twig, broad awake, and charming the ear of dawn with his beautiful vociferation. During midday he disappears, and is mute; but again at dewy even, as at dewy morn, he pours his pipe like a prodigal, nor ceases sometimes, when night has brought the moon and stars. Best beloved, and most beautiful of all thrushes that ever broke from the blue-spotted shell!—thou who, for five springs, hast "hung thy procreant cradle" among the roses, and honeysuckles, and ivy, and clematis, that embower in bloom the lattice of my cottage-study—how farest thou now in the snow!—Consider the whole place as your own, my dear bird; and remember, that when the gardener's children sprinkle food for you and yours all along your favourite haunts, that it is done by our orders. And when all the earth is green again, and all the sky blue, you will welcome us to our rural domicile, with light feet running before us among the winter leaves, and then skim away to your new nest in the old spot, then about to be somewhat more cheerful in the undisturbing din of the human life within the flowery walls.

Why do the songs of the Blackbird and Thrush make us think of the songless Starling? It matters not. We

do think of him, and see him too—a beautiful bird, and his abode is majestic. What an object of wonder and awe is an old castle to a boyish imagination! Its height how dreadful! up to whose mouldering edges his fear carries him, and hangs him over the battlements! What beauty in those unapproachable wall-flowers, that cast a brightness on the old brown stones of the edifice, and make the horror pleasing! That sound so far below is the sound of a stream the eye cannot reach—of a waterfall echoing for ever among the black rocks and pools. The schoolboy knows but little of the history of the old castle,—but that little is of war, and witchcraft, and imprisonment, and bloodshed. The ghostly glimmer of antiquity appals him —he visits the ruin only with a companion and at midday. There and then it was that we first saw a starling. We heard something wild and wonderful in their harsh scream, as they sat upon the edge of the battlements, or flew out of the chinks and crannies. There were martens too, so different in their looks from the pretty house-swallows—jackdaws clamouring afresh at every time we waved our hats, or vainly slung a pebble towards their nests—and one grove of elms, to whose top, much lower than the castle, came, ever and anon, some noiseless heron from the muirs.

Higher and higher than ever rose the tower of Belus, soars and sings the LARK, the lyrical poet of the sky. Listen, listen! and the more remote the bird, the louder is his hymn in heaven. He seems in his loftiness, to have left the earth for ever, and to have forgotten his lowly nest. The primroses and daisies, and all the sweet hill-flowers, must be unremembered in the lofty region of light. But just as the lark is lost—he and his song together—both are again seen and heard wavering down the sky, and in a little while he is walking contented along the furrows of the brairded corn, or on the clover lea, that has not felt the plough-share for half a century.

In our boyish days, we never felt that the spring had really come, till the clear-singing lark went careering before our gladdened eyes away up to heaven. Then all the earth wore a vernal look, and the ringing sky said,

"winter is over and gone." As we roamed, on a holiday, over the wide pastoral moors, to angle in the lochs and pools, unless the day were very cloudy, the song of some lark or other was still warbling aloft, and made a part of our happiness. The creature could not have been more joyful in the skies, than we were on the greensward. We, too, had our wings, and flew through our holiday. Thou soul of glee! who still leddest our flight in all our pastimes!—bold, bright, and beautiful child of Erin!—for many and many a long, long year hast thou been mingled with the dust! Dead and gone, as if they had never been, all the captivations of thy voice, eye, laugh, motion, and hand, open as day to "melting charity!"—He, too, the grave and thoughtful English boy, whose exquisite scholarship we all so enthusiastically admired, without one single particle of hopeless envy,—and who accompanied us on all our wildest expeditions, rather from affection to his playmates than any love of their sports,—he who, timid and unadventurous as he seemed to be, yet rescued little Marian of the Brae from a drowning death, when so many grown up men stood aloof in selfish fear,—gone, too, for ever art thou, my beloved Edward Harrington! and, after a few brilliant years in the oriental clime,

——"on Hoogley's banks afar,
Looks down on thy lone tomb the evening star."

Methinks we hear the "song o' the Gray Lintie," perhaps the darling bird of Scotland. None other is more tenderly sung of in our old ballads. When the simple and fervent love-poets of our pastoral times first applied to the maiden the words "my bonnie burdie," they must have been thinking of the gray lintie—its plumage ungaudy and soberly pure—its shape elegant, yet unobtrusive—and its song various without any effort—now rich, gay, sprightly, but never rude or riotous—now tender, almost mournful, but never gloomy or desponding. So, too, are all its habits endearing and delightful. It is social, yet not averse to solitude, singing often in groups, and as often by itself in the furze-brake, or on the briary knoll. You often find the lintie's nest in the most solitary places—in

some small self-sown clump of trees by the brink of a wild hill-stream, or on the tangled edge of a forest; and just as often you find it in the hedgerow of the cottage garden, or in a bower within, or even in an old gooseberry bush that has grown into a sort of tree.

One wild and beautiful place we well remember—ay, the very bush in which we first found a gray linnet's nest—for, in our native parish, from some cause or other, it was rather a rarish bird. That far-away day is as distinct as the present NOW. Imagine, friend, first, a little well surrounded with wild cresses on the moor, something like a rivulet flows from it, or rather you see a deep tinge of verdure, the line of which, you believe, must be produced by the oozing moisture—you follow it, by and by there is a descent palpable to your feet—then you find yourself between low broomy knolls, that, heightening every step, become ere long banks, and braes, and hills. You are surprised now to see a stream, and look round for its source—there seem now to be a hundred small sources in fissures, and springs on every side—you hear the murmurs of its course over beds of sand and gravel—and hark, a waterfall! A tree or two begins to shake its tresses on the horizon—a birch or a rowan. You get ready your angle—and by the time you have panniered three dozen, you are at a wooden bridge—you fish the pool above it with the delicate dexterity of a Boaz, capture the monarch of the flood, and on lifting your eyes from his starry side as he gasps his last on the silvery shore, you behold a cottage, at one gable end an ash, at the other a sycamore, and standing perhaps at the lonely door, a maiden far more beautiful than any angel.

This is the age of confessions; and why, therefore, may we not make a confession of first love? I had finished my sixteenth year,—I was almost as tall as I am now,—almost as tall! Yes, yes,—for my figure was then straight as an arrow, and almost like an arrow in its flight. I had given over bird-nesting,—but I had not ceased to visit the dell where first I found the gray lintie's brood. Tale-writers are told by critics to remember that the young shepherdesses of Scotland are not beautiful as the fictions of a poet's dream. But SHE was beautiful beyond poetry. She was

so then, when passion and imagination were young,—and her image, her undying, unfading image, is so now, when passion and imagination are old, and when from eye and soul have disappeared much of the beauty and glory both of nature and life. I loved her from the first moment that our eyes met,—and I see their light at this moment, the same soft, bright, burning light, that set body and soul on fire. She was but a poor shepherd's daughter; but what was that to me, when I heard her voice singing one of her old plaintive ballads among the braes,—when I sat down beside her,—when the same plaid was drawn over our shoulders in the rain-storm,—when I asked her for a kiss, and was not refused,—for what had she to fear in her beauty, and her innocence, and her filial piety,—and was not I a mere boy, in the bliss of passion, ignorant of deceit or dishonour, and with a heart open to the eyes of all as to the gates of heaven? What music was in that stream! Could "Sabean odours from the spicy shores of Araby the Blest" so penetrate my soul with joy, as the balmy breath of the broom on which we sat, forgetful of all other human life! Father, mother, brothers, sisters, uncles, and aunts, and cousins, and all the tribe of friends that would throw me off,—if I should be so base and mad as to marry a low-born, low-bred, ignorant, uneducated, crafty, ay, crafty and designing beggar,—were all forgotten in my delirium,—if indeed it were delirium,—and not an everlastingly sacred devotion of the soul to nature and to truth. For in what was I deluded? A voice,—a faint and dewy voice,—deadened by the earth that fills up her grave, and by the turf that, at this very hour, is expanding its primroses to the dew of heaven,—answers, "In nothing!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" exclaims some reader in derision, "here's an attempt at the pathetic, a miserable attempt indeed, for who cares about the death of a mean hut-girl? we are sick of low life." Why, as to that matter, who cares for the death of any one mortal being? Who weeps for the death of the late Emperor of all the Russias? Who wept over Napoleon the Great? When Chatham or Burke, Pitt or Fox died—don't pretend to tell lies about a nation's tears. And if yourself, who, perhaps, are not in low life, were to die in half an hour, (don't be alarmed,) all who

knew you, except two or three of your bosom friends, who, partly from being somewhat dull, and partly from wishing to be decent, might blubber—would walk along Prince's Street at the fashionable hour of three, the very day after your funeral. Nor would it ever enter their heads to abstain from a comfortable dinner at the British Hotel, ordered, perhaps, a month ago, at which time you were in rude health, merely because you had foolishly allowed a cold to fasten upon your lungs, and carry you off in the prime and promise of your professional life. In spite of all your critical slang, therefore, Mr. Editor or Master Contributor to some literary journal, SHE, though a poor *Scottish Herd*, was most beautiful; and when, but a week after taking farewell of her, I went, according to our tryst, to fold her in my arms, and was told by her poor father that she was dead,—ay, dead and buried—that she had no existence—that neither the daylight nor I should ever more be gladdened by her presence—that she was in a coffin, six feet in earth—that the worms were working their way towards the body, to crawl into her bosom—that she was fast becoming one mass of corruption—when I awoke from the dead-fit of horrid dreams in which I had lain on the floor of my Agnes's own cottage, and cursed the sight of the heaven and the earth, and shuddered at the thought of the dread and dismal God—when I——

We wish that we had lying on the table before us Grahame's pleasant poem, "The Birds of Scotland;" but we lent our copy some years ago to a friend—and a friend never returns a borrowed book. But here is a very agreeable substitute—"A Treatise on British Song Birds," published by John Anderson, jun., Edinburgh, and Simpkin & Marshall, London. The small musicians are extremely well engraved by Mr. Scott, of Edinburgh, from very correct and beautiful drawings, done by an English artist, and there is a well-written introduction, of forty pages, from the pen of Mr. Patrick Syme. We presume that the rest of the letter-press is by the same gentleman—and it does him very great credit. The volume includes observations on their natural habits, and manner of incubation; with remarks on the treatment of the young, and management of the old birds, in a domestic state.

"The delightful music of song-birds is, perhaps, the chief reason why these charming little creatures are, in all countries, so highly prized. Music is an universal language;—it is understood and cherished in every country—the savage, the barbarian, and the civilized individual, are all passionately fond of music, particularly of melody. But, delightful as music is, perhaps there is another reason that may have led man to deprive the warblers of the woods and fields of liberty, particularly in civilized states, where the intellect is more refined, and, consequently, the feelings more adapted to receive tender impressions;—we mean the associations of ideas. Their sweet melody brings him more particularly in contact with groves and meadows—with romantic banks, or beautiful sequestered glades—the cherished scenes, perhaps, of his early youth. But, independent of this, the warble of a sweet song-bird is, in itself, very delightful;—and, to men of sedentary habits, confined to cities by professional duties, and to their desks most part of the day, we do not know a more innocent or more agreeable recreation than the rearing and training of these little feathered musicians."

Now, we hear many of our readers crying out against the barbarity of confining the free denizens of the air in wire or wicker cages. Gentle readers, do, we pray, keep your compassion for other objects. Or, if you are disposed to be argumentative with us, let us just walk down stairs to the larder, and tell the public truly what we there behold—three brace of partridges, two ditto of moor-fowl, a cock-pheasant, poor fellow,—a man and his wife of the aquatic, or duck kind, and a woodcock, vainly presenting his long Christmas bill—

> "Some sleeping kill'd—
> All murder'd."—

Why, you are indeed a most logical reasoner, and a most considerate Christian, when you launch out into an invective against the cruelty exhibited in our cages. Let us leave this den of murder, and have a glass of our wife's home-made frontiniac in her own boudoir. Come, come, sir,—look on this newly married couple of canaries. The

architecture of their nest is certainly not of the florid order, but my Lady Yellowlees sits on it a well satisfied bride. Come back in a day or two, and you will see her nursing triplets. Meanwhile, hear the earpiercing fife of the bridegroom!—Where will you find a set of happier people, unless, perhaps, it be in our parlour, or our library, or our nursery? For, to tell you the truth, there is a cage or two in almost every room of the house. Where is the cruelty—here, or in your blood-stained larder? But you must eat, you reply. We answer—not necessarily birds. The question is about birds—cruelty to birds; and were that sagacious old wild-goose, whom one single moment of heedlessness brought last Wednesday to your hospitable board, at this moment alive, to bear a part in our conversation, can you dream that, with all your Jeffreyan ingenuity and eloquence, you could persuade him—the now defunct and dejected—that you were under the painful necessity of eating him with stuffing and apple-sauce?

The intelligent author of the treatise on British birds does not condescend to justify the right we claim to encage them; but he shows his genuine humanity in instructing us how to render happy and healthful their imprisonment. He says very prettily, "What are town-gardens and shrubberies in squares, but an attempt to ruralize the city? So strong is the desire in man to participate in country pleasures, that he tries to bring some of them even to his room. Plants and birds are sought after with avidity, and cherished with delight. With flowers he endeavours to make his apartments resemble a garden; and thinks of groves and fields, as he listens to the wild sweet melody of his little captives. Those who keep and take an interest in song-birds, are often at a loss how to treat their little warblers during illness, or to prepare the proper food best suited to their various constitutions; but that knowledge is absolutely necessary to preserve these little creatures in health: for want of it, young amateurs and bird-fanciers have often seen, with regret, many of their favourite birds perish."

Now, here we confess is a good physician. In Edinburgh we understand there are about five hundred medical practitioners on the human race,—and we have dog-doc-

tors, and horse-doctors, who come out in numbers—but we have had no bird-doctors. Yet often, too often, when the whole house rings from garret to cellar with the cries of children teething, or in the hooping-cough, the little linnet sits silent on his perch, a moping bunch of feathers, and then falls down dead, when his lilting life might have been saved by the simplest medicinal food skilfully administered. Surely if we have physicians to attend our treadmills, and regulate the diet and day's work of merciless ruffians, we should not suffer our innocent and useful prisoners thus to die unattended. Why do not the ladies of Edinburgh form themselves into a society for this purpose?

Not one of all the philosophers in the world has been able to tell us what is happiness. Sterne's Starling is weakly supposed to have been miserable. Probably he was one of the most contented birds in the universe. Does confinement,—the closest, most uncompanioned confinement—make one of ourselves unhappy? Is the shoemaker, sitting with his head on his knees in a hole in the wall from morning to night, in any respect to be pitied? Is the solitary orphan, that sits all day sewing in a garret, while the old woman for whom she works is out washing, an object of compassion? or the widow of fourscore, hurkling over the embers, with a stump of a pipe in her toothless mouth? Is it so sad a thing indeed to be alone? or to have one's motions circumscribed within the narrowest imaginable limits?—Nonsense all. Nine-tenths of mankind, in manufacturing and commercial countries, are cribbed and confined into little room,—generally, indeed, together, but often solitary.

Then, gentle reader, were you ever in a highland shieling? It is built of turf, and is literally alive; for the beautiful heather is blooming, and wild-flowers too—and walls and roof are one sound of bees. The industrious little creatures must have come several long miles for their balmy spoil. There is but one human creature in that shieling, but he is not at all solitary. He no more wearies of that lonesome place, than do the sunbeams or the shadows. To himself alone, he chants his old Gaelic songs, or frames wild ditties of his own to the raven or red deer. Months thus pass on; and he descends again to the lower

country. Perhaps he goes to the wars—fights—bleeds—and returns to Badenoch or Lochaber; and once more, blending in his imagination the battles of his own regiment, in Egypt, or Spain, or at Waterloo, with the deeds done of yore by Ossian sung, lies contented by the door of the same shieling, restored and beautified, in which he had dreamt away the summers of his youth.

To return to birds in cages;—they are, when well, uniformly as happy as the day is long. What else could oblige them, whether they will or no, to burst out into song,—to hop about so pleased and pert,—to play such fantastic tricks like so many whirligigs,—to sleep so soundly, and to awake into a small, shrill, compressed twitter of joy at the dawn of light? So utterly mistaken was Sterne, and all the other sentimentalists, that his starling, who he absurdly opined was wishing to get out, would not have stirred a peg had the door of his cage been flung wide open, but would have pecked like a very gamecock at the hand inserted to give him his liberty. Depend upon it, that starling had not the slightest idea of what he was saying; and had he been up to the meaning of his words, would have been shocked at his ungrateful folly. Look at canaries, and chaffinches, and bullfinches, and "the rest," how they amuse themselves for a while flitting about the room, and then finding how dull a thing it is to be citizens of the world, bounce up to their cages, and shut the door from the inside, glad to be once more at home. Begin to whistle or sing yourself, and forthwith you have a duet, or a trio. We can imagine no more perfectly tranquil and cheerful life than that of a goldfinch in a cage, in spring, with his wife and his children. All his social affections are cultivated to the utmost. He possesses many accomplishments unknown to his brethren among the trees;—he has never known what it is to want a meal in times of the greatest scarcity; and he admires the beautiful frostwork on the windows when thousands of his feathered friends are buried in the snow, or what is almost as bad, baked up into pies, and devoured by a large supper party of both sexes, who fortify their flummery and flirtation by such viands, and, remorseless, swallow dozens upon dozens of the warblers of the woods.

Ay, ay, Mr. Goldy! you are wondering what I am now doing, and speculating upon me with arch eyes and elevated crest, as if you would know the subject of my lucubrations. What the wiser or better wouldst thou be of human knowledge? Sometimes that little heart of thine goes pit-a-pat, when a great, ugly, staring contributor thrusts his inquisitive nose within the wires—or when a strange cat glides round and round the room, fascinating thee with the glare of his fierce fixed eyes;—but what is all that to the woes of an editor?—Yes, sweet simpleton! do you not know that I am the editor of Blackwood's Magazine—Christopher North! Yes, indeed, we are that very man,—that self-same much-calumniated man-monster and Ogre.—There, there!—perch on my shoulder, and let us laugh together at the whole world.

COTTAGES.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1829.)

Have you any intention, dear reader, of building a house in the country? If you have, pray, for your own sake and ours, let it not be a cottage. We presume that you are obliged to live, one half of the year at least, in a town. Then why change altogether the character of your domicile and your establishment? You are an inhabitant of Edinburgh, and have a house in the Circus, or Heriot-Row, or Abercromby Place, or Queen Street. The said house has five or six stories, and is such a palace as one might expect in the City of Palaces. Your drawing-rooms can, at a pinch, hold some ten score of modern Athenians—your dining-room might feast one half of the contributors to this Magazine—your "placens uxor" has her boudoir—your eldest daughter, now verging on womanhood, her music-room—your boys their own studio—the governess her retreat—and the tutor his den—the housekeeper sits like an overgrown spider in her own sanctum—the butler bargains for his dim apartment—and the four maids must have their front-area-window. In short, from cellarage to garret, all is complete, and number forty-two is really a splendid mansion.

Now, dear reader, far be it from us to question the propriety or prudence of such an establishment. Your house was not built for nothing—it was no easy thing to get the painters out—the furnishing thereof was no trifle—the feu-duty is really unreasonable, and taxes are taxes still, notwithstanding the principles of free trade, and the universal prosperity of the country. Servants are wasteful, and their wages absurd—and the whole style of living,

with long-necked bottles, most extravagant. But still we do not object to your establishment,—far from it, we admire it much—nor is there a single house in town where we make ourselves more agreeable to a late hour, or that we leave with a greater quantity of wine of a good quality under our girdle. Few things would give us more temporary uneasiness, than to hear of any embarrassment in your money concerns. We are not people to forget good fare, we assure you; and long and far may all shapes of sorrow keep aloof from the hospitable board, whether illuminated by gas, oil-lamp, or candle.

But what we were going to say was this—that the head of such a house ought not to live, when ruralizing, in a cottage. He ought to be consistent. Nothing so beautiful as consistency. What then is so absurd as to cram yourself, your wife, your numerous progeny, and your scarcely less numerous menials, into a concern called a cottage? The ordinary heat of a baker's oven is very few degrees above that of a brown study, during the month of July, in a substantial, low-roofed cottage. Then the smell of the kitchen! How it aggravates the sultry closeness! A strange, compounded, inexplicable smell of animal, vegetable, and mineral matter! It is at the worst during the latter part of the forenoon, when every thing has been got into preparation for cookery. There is then nothing savoury about the smell,—it is dull, dead,—almost catacombish. A small back kitchen has it in its power to destroy the sweetness of any cottage. Add a scullery, and the three are omnipotent. Of the eternal clashing of pots, pans, plates, trenchers, and general crockery, we now say nothing; indeed, the sound somewhat relieves the smell, and the ear comes occasionally in to the aid of the nose. Such noises are Godsends; but not so the scolding of the cook and butler,—at first low and tetchy, with pauses,—then sharp, but still interrupted,—by and by loud and ready in reply,—finally a discordant gabble of vulgar fury, like maniacs quarrelling in bedlam. Hear it you must,—you and all the strangers. To explain it away is impossible; and your fear is, that Alecto, Tisiphone, or Megæra, will come flying into the parlour with a bloody cleaver, dripping with the butler's brains. During

the time of the quarrel, the spit has been standing still, and a jigot of the five-year-old black-face burnt on one side to a cinder.—"To dinner with what appetite you may."

It would be quite unpardonable to forget one especial smell which irretrievably ruined our happiness during a whole summer,—the smell of a dead rat. The accursed vermin died somewhere in the cottage; but whether beneath a floor, within lath and plaster, or in roof, baffled the conjectures of the most sagacious. The whole family used to walk about the cottage for hours every day, snuffing on a travel of discovery; and we distinctly remember the face of one elderly maiden lady at the moment she thought she had traced the source of the fumèe to the wall behind a window-shutter. But even at the very same instant we ourselves had proclaimed it with open nostril from a press in an opposite corner. Terriers were procured,—but the dog Billy himself would have been at fault. To pull down the whole cottage would have been difficult,—at least to build it up again would have been so; so we had to submit. Custom, they say, is second nature, but not when a dead rat is in the house. No, none can ever be accustomed to that; yet good springs out of evil, for the live rats could not endure it, and emigrated to a friend's house, about a mile off, who has never had a sound night's rest from that day. We have not revisited our cottage for several years; but time does wonders, and we were lately told by a person of some veracity, that the smell was then nearly gone,—but our informant is a gentleman of blunted olfactory nerves, having been engaged from seventeen to seventy in a soap-work.

Smoke too! More especially that mysterious and infernal sort, called back-smoke! The old proverb, "No smoke without fire," is a base lie. We have seen smoke without fire in every room in a most delightful cottage we once inhabited during the dog-days. The moment you rushed for refuge even in a closet, you were blinded and stifled; nor shall we ever forget our horror on being within an ace of smotheration in the cellar. At last, we groped our way into the kitchen. Neither cook nor jack was

visible. We heard, indeed, a whirring and revolving noise—and then suddenly Girzie swearing through the mist. Yet all this while people were admiring our cottage from a distance, and especially this self-same accursed back-smoke, some portions of which had made an excursion up the chimneys, and was wavering away in a spiral form to the sky, in a style captivating to Mr. Price on the Picturesque.

No doubt, there are many things very romantic about a cottage. Creepers, for example. Why, sir, these creepers are the most mischievous nuisance that can afflict a family. There is no occasion for mentioning names, but—devil take all parasites. Some of the rogues will actually grow a couple of inches upon you in one day's time; and when all other honest plants are asleep, the creepers are hard at it all night long, stretching out their toes and their fingers, and catching an inextricable hold of every wall they can reach, till, finally, you see them thrusting their impudent heads through the very slates. Then, like other low-bred creatures, they are covered with vermin. All manner of moths—the most grievous grubs—slimy slugs—spiders spinning toils to ensnare the caterpillar—earwigs and slaters, that would raise the gorge of a country curate—wood-lice—the slaver of gowk's-spittle—midges—jocks-with-the-many-legs—in short, the whole plague of insects infest that—Virgin's bower. Open the lattice for half an hour, and you find yourself in an entymological museum. Then, there are no pins fixing down the specimens. All these beetles are alive, more especially the enormous blackguard crawling behind your ear. A moth plumps into your tumbler of cold negus, and goes whirling round in meal, till he makes absolute porritch. As you open your mouth in amazement, the large blue-bottle-fly, having made his escape from the spiders, and seeing that not a moment is to be lost, precipitates himself head-foremost down your throat, and is felt, after a few ineffectual struggles, settling in despair at the very bottom of your stomach. Still, no person will be so unreasonable as to deny that creepers on a cottage are most beautiful. For the sake of their beauty, some little sacrifices must be made of one's comforts, especially as it is only for one

half of the year, and last really was a most delightful summer.

How truly romantic is a thatch roof! The eaves how commodious for sparrows! What a paradise for rats and mice! What a comfortable colony of vermin! They all bore their own tunnels in every direction, and the whole interior becomes a Cretan labyrinth. Frush, frush becomes the whole cover in a few seasons; and not a bird can open his wing, not a rat switch his tail, without scattering the straw like chaff. Eternal repairs! Look when you will, and half a dozen thatchers are riding on the rigging: of all operatives they are most inoperative. Then there is always one of the number descending the ladder for a horn of ale! Without warning, the straw is all used up; and no more fit for the purpose can be got within twenty miles. They hint heather—and you sigh for slate—the beautiful sky-blue, sea-green, Ballahulish slate! But the summer is nearly over and gone, and you must be flitting back to the city—so you let the job stand over to spring, and the soaking rains and snows of a long winter search the cottage to its heart's core, and every floor is ere long laden with a crop of fungi—the bed-posts are ornamented curiously with lichens, and mosses bathe the walls with their various and inimitable lustre.

Every thing is romantic that is pastoral—and what more pastoral than sheep? Accordingly, living in a cottage, you kill your own mutton. Great lubberly Leicesters or South-Downs are not worth the mastication, so you keep the small black-face. Stone walls are ugly things, you think, near a cottage, so you have rails or hurdles. Day and night are the small black-face, out of pure spite, bouncing through or over all impediments, after an adventurous leader, and despising the daisied turf, keep nibbling away at all your rare flowering shrubs, till your avenue is a desolation. Every twig has its little hall of wool, and it is a rare time for the nest-makers. You purchase a colley, but he compromises the affair with the fleecy nation, and contents himself with barking all night long at the moon, if there happen to be one, if not, at the firmament of his kennel. You are too humane to hang or drown Luath, so you give him to a friend. But Luath is

in love with the cook, and pays her nightly visits. Afraid of being entrapped, should he step into the kennel, he takes up his station, after supper, on a knoll within ear-range, and pointing his snout to the stars, joins the music of the spheres, and is himself a perfect Sirius. The gardener at last gets orders to shoot him—and the gun being somewhat rusty, bursts and blows off his left hand—so that Andrew Fairservice retires on a pension.

Of all breeds of cattle we most admire the Alderney. They are slim, delicate, wild-deer-looking creatures, that give an air to a cottage. But they are most capricious milkers. Of course you may make your own butter; that is to say, with the addition of seven or eight purchased pounds weekly, you are not very often out of that commodity. Then, once or twice in a summer, they suddenly lose their temper, and chase the governess and your daughters over the edge of a gravel-pit. Nothing they like so much as the tender sprouts of cauliflower, nor do they abhor green pease. The garden-hedge is of privet, a pretty fence, and fast growing, but not formidable to a four-year-old. On going to eat a few gooseberries by sunrise, you start a covey of cows, that in their alarm plunge into the hot-bed with a smash, as if all the glass in the island had been broken—and rushing out at the gate at the critical instant little Tommy is tottering in, they leave the heir-apparent, scarcely deserving that name, half hidden in the border. There is no sale for such outlandish animals in the home-market, and it is not Martinmas, so you must make a present of them to the president or five silver-cup-man of an agricultural society, and receive, in return, a sorry red-round, desperately salt-petred, at Christmas.

What is a cottage in the country, unless "your banks are all furnished with bees, whose murmurs invite one to sleep!" There the hives stand, like four-and-twenty fiddlers all in a row. Not a more harmless insect in all this world than a bee. Wasps are devils incarnate, but bees are fleshly sprites, as amiable as industrious. You are strolling along, in delightful mental vacuity, looking at a poem of Barry Cornwall's, when smack comes an infuriated honey-maker against your eye-lid, and plunges into

you the fortieth part of an inch of sting saturated in venom. The wretch clings to your lid like a burr, and it feels as if he had a million claws to hold him on while he is darting his weapon into your eye-ball. Your banks are indeed well furnished with bees, but their murmurs do not invite you to sleep; on the contrary, away you fly, like a madman, bolt into your wife's room, and roar out for the recipe. The whole of one side of your face is most absurdly swollen, while the other is *in statu quo*. One eye is dwindled away to almost nothing, and is peering forth from its rainbow-coloured envelope, while the other is open as day to melting charity, and shining over a cheek of the purest crimson. Infatuated man! Why could you not purchase your honey? Jemmy Thomson, the poet, would have let you have it, from Habbie's-Howe, the true Pentland elixir, for five shillings the pint; for during this season both the heather and the clover were prolific of the honey-dew, and the Skeps rejoiced over all Scotland on a thousand hills.

We could tell many stories about bees, but that would be leading us away from the main argument. We remember reading in an American newspaper, some years ago, that the United States lost one of their most upright and erudite judges by bees, which stung him to death in a wood, while he was going the circuit. About a year afterwards, we read in the same newspaper, "We are afraid we have lost another judge by bees;" and then followed a somewhat affrightful description of the assassination of another American Blackstone by the same insects. We could not fail to sympathise with both sufferers, for in the summer of 1811 (that of the famous comet) we ourselves had nearly shared the same fate. Our Newfoundlander upset a hive in his vagaries—and the whole swarm unjustly attacked us. The buzz was an absolute roar—and for the first time in our lives we were under a cloud. Such bizzing in our hair! and of what avail were fifty-times-washed nankeen breeches against the Polish Lancers? With our trusty crutch we made thousands bite the dust—but the wounded and dying crawled up our legs, and stung us cruelly over the lower regions. At last we took to flight, and found shelter in the ice-house.

But it seemed as if a new hive had been disturbed in that cool grotto. Again we sallied out, stripping off garment after garment, till, *in puris naturalibus*, we leaped into a window, which happened to be that of the drawing-room, where a large party of ladies and gentlemen were awaiting the dinner-bell—but fancy must dream the rest.

We now offer a set of the Magazine to any scientific character who will answer this seemingly simple question —what is damp? Quicksilver is a joke to it, for getting into or out of any place. Capricious as damp is, it is faithful in its affections to all cottages ornées. What more pleasant than a bow-window? You had better, however, not sit with your back against the wall, for it is as blue and ropey as that of a charnel-house. Probably the wall is tastily papered—a vine-leaf pattern perhaps—or something spriggy—or in the aviary line—or, mayhap, hay-makers, or shepherds piping in the dale. But all distinctions are levelled in the mould—Phyllis has a black patch over her eye, and Strephon seems to be playing on a pair of bellows. Damp delights to descend chimneys, and is one of smoke's most powerful auxiliaries. It is a thousand pities you hung up—just in that unlucky spot—Grecian William's Thebes—for now one of the finest water-coloured paintings in the world is not worth six-and-eightpence. There is no living in the country without a library. Take down, with all due caution, that enormous tome, the Excursion, and let us hear something of the pedlar. There is an end to the invention of printing. Lo and behold, blank verse indeed! You cannot help turning over twenty leaves at once, for they are all amalgamated in must and mouldiness. Lord Byron himself is no better than an Egyptian mummy; and the Great Unknown addresses you in hieroglyphics.

We have heard different opinions maintained on the subject of damp sheets. For our own part, we always wish to feel the difference between sheets and cearments. We hate every thing clammy. It is awkward, on leaping out of bed to admire the moon, to drag along with you, glued round the body and members, the whole paraphernalia of the couch. It can never be good for rheumatism—problematical even for fever. Now, be candid—did you ever

sleep in perfectly dry sheets in a cottage ornée? You would not like to say "No, never," in the morning—privately, to host or hostess. But confess publicly, and trace your approaching retirement from all the troubles of this life, to the dimity-curtained cubiculum on Tweedside.

We know of few events so restorative as the arrival of a coachful of one's friends, if the house be roomy. But if every thing there be on a small scale, how tremendous a sudden importation of live cattle! The children are all trundled away out of the cottage, and their room given up to the young ladies, with all its enigmatical and emblematical wall-tracery. The captain is billetted in the boudoir, on a shakedown. My lady's maid must positively pass the night in the butler's pantry, and the valet makes a dormitory of the store-room. Where the old gentleman and his spouse have been disposed of, remains as controversial a point as the authorship of Junius; but next morning at the breakfast-table, it appears that all have survived the night, and the hospitable hostess remarks, with a self-complacent smile, that small as the cottage appears, it has wonderful accommodation, and could have easily admitted half a dozen more patients. The visiters politely request to be favoured with a plan of so very commodious a cottage, but silently swear never again to sleep in a house of one story, till life's brief tale be told.

But not one half the comforts of a cottage have yet been enumerated—nor shall they be by us at the present juncture. Suffice it to add, that the strange coachman had been persuaded to put up his horses in the outhouses instead of taking them to an excellent inn about two miles off. The old black, long-tailed steeds, that had dragged the vehicle for nearly twenty years, had been lodged in what was called the stable, and the horse behind had been introduced into the byre. As bad luck would have it, a small, sick, and surly shelty was in his stall; and without the slightest provocation, he had, during the night-watches, so handled his heels against Mr. Fox, that he had not left the senior a leg to stand upon, while he had bit a lump out of the buttocks of Mr. Pitt little less than an orange. A cow, afraid of her calf, had committed an assault on the

roadster, and tore up his flank with her crooked horn as clean as if it had been a ripping chisel. The party had to proceed with post-horses; and although Mr. Gray be at once one of the most skilful and most modest of veterinary surgeons, his bill was nearly as long as that of a proctor. Mr. Fox gave up the ghost—Mr. Pitt was put on the superannuated list—and Joseph Hume, the hack, was sent to the dogs.

To this condition then we must come at last, that if you build at all in the country, it must be a mansion three stories high, at the lowest—large airy rooms—roof of slates and lead—and walls of the free-stone or the Roman cement. No small black-faces, no Alderneys, no bee-hives. Buy all your vivers, and live like a gentleman. Seldom or never be without a houseful of company. If you manage your family matters properly, you may have your time nearly as much at your own disposal, as if you were the greatest of hunkses, and never gave but unavoidable dinners. Let the breakfast-gong sound at ten o'clock—quite soon enough. The young people will have been romping about the parlours or the purlieus for a couple of hours—and will all make their appearance in the beauty of high health and high spirits. Chat away as long as need be, after muffins and mutton-ham, in small groups on sofas and settees—and then slip you away to your library, to add a chapter to your novel, or your history, or to any other task that is to make you immortal. Let gigs and curricles draw up in the circle, and the wooing and betrothed wheel away across a few parishes. Let the pedestrians saunter off into the woods or to the hill-side—the anglers be off to loch or river. No great harm even in a game or two at billiards—if such be of any the cue—sagacious spinsters of a certain age, staid dowagers, and bachelors of sedentary habits, may have recourse, without blame, to the chess or backgammon board. At two the lunch—and at six the dinner-gong will bring the whole flock together, all dressed—mind that—all dressed, for slovenliness is an abomination. Let no elderly gentleman, however bilious and rich, seek to monopolize a young lady—but study the nature of things. Champaigne, of course, and if not all the delicacies, at least all the sub-

stantialities, of the season. Join the ladies in about two hours—a little elevated or so—almost imperceptibly—but still a little elevated or so—then music—whispering in corners—if moonlight and stars, then an hour's out-of-door study of astronomy—no very regular supper—but an appearance of plates and tumblers, and to bed, to happy dreams and slumbers light, at the witching hour. Let no gentleman or lady snore, if it can be avoided, lest they annoy the crickets; and if you hear any extraordinary noise round and round about the mansion, be not alarmed, for why should not the owls choose their hour of revelry?

Fond as we are of the country, we would not, had we our option, live there all the year round. We should just wish to linger into the winter about as far as the middle of December—then to a city—say at once Edinburgh. There is as good skating-ground, and as good curling-ground, at Lochend and Duddingstone, as any where in all Scotland—nor is there any where else better beef and greens. There is no perfection any where, but Edinburgh society is excellent. We are certainly agreeable citizens; with just a sufficient spice of party spirit to season the feast of reason and the flow of soul, and to prevent society from becoming drowsily unanimous. Without the fillup of a little scandal, honest people would fall asleep; and surely it is far preferable to that to abuse one's friends with moderation. Even literature and belles letters are not entirely useless; and our human life would be as dull as that of Mr. Rogers, without a few occasional Noctes Ambrosianæ.

But the title of our article recalls our wandering thoughts, and our talk must be of cottages. Now think not, beloved reader, that we care not for cottages, for that would indeed be a gross mistake. But our very affections are philosophical; our sympathies have all their source in reason; and our admiration is always built on the foundation of truth. Taste, and feeling, and thought, and experience, and knowledge of this life's concerns, are all indispensable to the true delights the imagination experiences in beholding a beautiful *bona fide* cottage. It must be the dwelling of the poor; and it is that which gives it its whole character. By the poor, we mean not paupers, beggars; but families

who to eat, must work, and who, by working, may still be able to eat. Plain, coarse, not scanty, but unsuperfluous fare is theirs from year's-end to year's-end, excepting some decent and grateful change on chance holidays of nature's own appointment, a wedding, a christening, or a funeral. Yes, a funeral; for when this mortal coil has been shuffled off, why should the hundreds of people that come trooping over muirs and mosses to see the body deposited, walk so many miles and lose a whole day's work, without a dinner? And, if there be a dinner, should it not be a good one? And if a good one, will the company not be social? But this is a subject for a future article, nor need such article be of other than of a cheerful character. Poverty is then the builder and beautifier of all huts and cottages. But the views of honest poverty are always hopeful and prospective. Strength of muscle and strength of mind form a truly Holy Alliance; and the future brightens before the steadfast eyes of contentment. Therefore, when a house is built in the valley, or on the hillside, —be it that of the poorest cottar,—there is some little room, or nook, or spare place, which hope consecrates to the future. Better times may come,—a shilling or two may be added to the week's wages,—parsimony may accumulate a small capital in the savings bank sufficient to purchase an old eight-day clock, a chest of drawers for the wife, a curtained bed for the lumber place, which a little labour will convert into a bed-room. It is not to be thought that the pasture-fields become every year greener, and the corn-fields every harvest more yellow,—that the hedgerows grow to thicker fragrance, and the birch tree waves its tresses higher in the air, and expands its white-rined stem almost to the bulk of a tree of the forest,—and yet that there shall be no visible progress from good to better in the dwellings of those whose hands and hearts thus cultivate the soil into rejoicing beauty. As the whole land prospers, so does each individual dwelling. Every ten years, the observing eye sees a new expression on the face of the silent earth; the law of labour is no melancholy lot; for to industry the yoke is easy, and content is its own exceeding great reward.

Therefore, it does our heart good to look on a cottage.

Here the objections to straw-roofs have no application. A few sparrows chirping and fluttering in the eaves can do no great harm, and they serve to amuse the children. The very baby in the cradle, when all the family are in the fields, mother and all, hears the cheerful twitter, and is reconciled to solitude. The quantity of corn that a few sparrows can eat,—greedy creatures as they are,—cannot be very deadly; and it is chiefly in the winter time that they attack the stacks, when there is much excuse to be made on the plea of hunger. As to the destruction of a little thatch, why, there is not a boy about the house, above ten years, who is not a thatcher, and there is no expense in such repairs. Let the honey-suckle too steal up the wall, and even blind unchecked a corner of the kitchen-window. Its fragrance will often cheer unconsciously the labourer's heart, as, in the midday hour of rest, he sits dandling his child on his knee, or converses with the passing pedlar. Let the moss-rose-tree flourish, that its bright blush-balls may dazzle in the kirk the eyes of the lover of fair Helen Irwin, as they rise and fall with every movement of a bosom yet happy in its virgin innocence. Nature does not spread in vain her flowers in flush and fragrance over every obscure nook of earth. Simple and pure is the delight they inspire. Not to the poet's eye alone is the language of flowers addressed. Those beautiful symbols are understood by lowliest minds; and while the philosophical Wordsworth speaks of the meanest flower that blows giving a joy too deep for tears, so do all mankind feel the exquisite truth of Burns's more simple address to the mountain-daisy, which his ploughshare had upturned. The one touches sympathies too profound to be general—the other speaks as a son of the soil affected by the fate of the very senseless flowers that spring from the bosom of our common dust.

Generally speaking, there has been a spirit of improvement at work, during these last twenty years, upon all the cottages in Scotland. The villages are certainly much neater and cleaner than formerly, and in very few respects, if any, positively offensive. Perhaps none of them have,—nor ever will have, the exquisite trimness, the long habitual and hereditary rustic elegance, of the best villages of

England. There, even the idle and worthless have an instinctive love of what is decent, and orderly, and pretty in their habitations. The very drunkard must have a well-sanded floor, a clean-swept hearth, clear-polished furniture, and uncobwebbed walls to the room in which he quaffs, guzzles, and smokes himself into stupidity. His wife may be a scold, but seldom a slattern,—his children ill taught, but well apparelled. Much of this is observable even among the worst of the class; and, no doubt, such things must also have their effect in tempering and restraining excesses. Whereas, on the other hand, the house of a well-behaved, well-doing English villager is a perfect model of comfort and propriety. In Scotland, the houses of the dissolute are always dens of dirt, and disorder, and distraction. All ordinary goings-on are inextricably confused,—meals eaten in different nooks, and at no regular hour,—nothing in its right place or time,—the whole abode as if on the eve of a flitting; while, with few exceptions, even in the dwellings of the best families in the village, one may detect occasional forgetfulness of trifling matters, that, if remembered, would be found greatly conducive to comfort,—occasional insensibilities to what would be graceful to their condition, and might be secured at little expense and less trouble,—occasional blindness to minute deformities that mar the aspect of the household, and which an awakened eye would sweep away as absolute nuisances. Perhaps the very depth of their affections,—the solemnity of their religious thoughts,—and the reflective spirit in which they carry on the warfare of life, hide from them the perception of what, after all, is of such very inferior moment, and even create a sort of austerity of character which makes them disregard, too much, trifles that appear to have no influence or connexion with the essence of weal or wo. But if there be any truth in this, it affords an explanation rather than a justification.

Our business at present, however, is rather with single cottages than with villages, which of course will be the subject of a future leading article. We Scotch people have, for some years past, been doing all we could to make ourselves ridiculous, by claiming for our capital the name of Modern Athens, and talking all manner of non-

sense about a city which stands nobly on its own proper foundation, while we have kept our mouths shut about the beauty of our hills and vales, and the rational happiness that every where overflows our native land. Our character is to be found in the country; and, therefore, gentle reader, behold along with us a small Scottish glen. It is not above a mile, or a mile and a half long,—its breadth somewhere about a fourth of its length; a fair oblong, sheltered and secluded by a line of varied eminences, on some of which lies the power of cultivation, and over others the vivid verdure peculiar to a pastoral region; while, telling of disturbed times past for ever, stand yonder the ruins of an old fortalice, or keep, picturesque in its deserted decay. The plough has stopped at the edge of the profitable and beautiful coppice-woods, or encircled the tall elm-grove. The rocky pasturage, with its clovery and daisied turf, is alive with sheep and cattle,—its briary knolls with birds, —its broom and whins with bees,—and its wimpling burn with trouts and minnows glancing through the shallows, or leaping among the cloud of insects that glitter over its pools. Here and there a cottage,—not above half a dozen in all,—one low down in the holm, another on a cliff beside the waterfall,—that is the mill,—another breaking the horizon in its more ambitious station,—and another far up at the hill-foot, where there is not a single tree, only shrubs and brackens. On a bleak day, there is but little beauty in such a glen; but when the sun is cloudless, and all the light serene, it is a place where poet or painter may see visions, and dream dreams, of the very age of gold. At such seasons, there is a homefelt feeling of humble reality, blending with the emotions of imagination. In such places, the low-born, high-souled poets of old breathed forth their songs, and hymns, and elegies,—the undying lyrical poetry of the heart of Scotland.

Take the remotest cottage first in order, Hill-foot, and hear who are its inmates—the schoolmaster and his spouse. The schoolhouse stands on a little unappropriated piece of ground—at least it seems to be so—quite at the head of the glen—for there the hills sink down, on each side, and afford an easy access to the seat of learning from two neighbouring vales, both in the same parish. Perhaps

thirty scholars are there taught—and with their small fees, and his small salary, Allan Easton is contented. Allan was originally intended for the church, but some peccadilloes obstructed his progress with the presbytery, and he never was a preacher. That disappointment of all his hopes was for many years grievously felt, and somewhat soured his mind with the world. It is often impossible to recover one single false step in the slippery road of life—and Allan Easton, year after year, saw himself falling farther and farther into the rear of almost all his contemporaries. One became a minister, and got a manse, with a stipend of thirty chalders; another grew into an East India nabob; one married the laird's widow, and kept a pack of hounds—another expanded into a colonel—one cleared a plum by a cotton-mill—another became the Crœsus of a bank—while Allan, who had beat them all hollow at all the classes, wore second-hand clothes, and lived on the same fare with the poorest hind in the parish. He had married, rather too late, the partner of his frailties—and after many trials, and, as he thought, not a few persecutions, he got settled at last, when his head, not very old, was getting gray, and his face somewhat wrinkled. His wife, during his worst poverty, had gone again into service, the lot, indeed, to which she had been born; and Allan had struggled and starved upon private teaching. His appointment to the parish-school had, therefore, been to them both a blessed elevation. The office was respectable—and loftier ambition had long been dead. Now they are old people—considerably upwards of sixty—and twenty years' professional life have converted Allan Easton, once the wild and eccentric genius, into a staid, solemn, formal, and pedantic pedagogue. All his scholars love him, for even in the discharge of such very humble duties, talents make themselves felt and respected; and the kindness of an affectionate and once sorely wounded, but now healed heart, is never lost upon the susceptible imaginations of the young. Allan has sometimes sent out no contemptible scholars, as scholars go in Scotland, to the universities; and his heart has warmed within him when he has read their names, in the newspaper from the manse, in the list of successful competitors for prizes. During vacation-

time, Allan and his spouse leave their cottage locked up, and disappear, none know exactly whither, on visits to an old friend or two, who have not altogether forgotten them in their poverty. During the rest of the year, his only out-of-doors amusement is an afternoon's angling, an art in which it is universally allowed he excels all mortal men, both in river and loch; and often, during the long winter nights, when the shepherd is walking by his dwelling, to visit his "ain lassie," down the burn, he hears Allan's fiddle playing, in the solitary silence, some one of those Scottish melodies, that we know not whether it be cheerful or plaintive, but soothing to every heart that has been at all acquainted with grief. Rumour says too, but rumour has not a scrupulous conscience, that the schoolmaster, when he meets with pleasant company, either at home or a friend's house, is not averse to a hospitable cup, and that then the memories of other days crowd upon his brain, and loosen his tongue into eloquence. Old Susan keeps a sharp warning eye upon her husband on all such occasions; but Allan braves its glances, and is forgiven.

We see only the uncertain glimmer of their dwelling through the low-lying mist: and therefore we cannot describe it, as if it were clearly before our eyes. But should you ever chance to angle your way up to Hill-foot, admire Allan Easton's flower-garden, and the jargonel pear-tree on the southern gable. The climate is somewhat high, but it is not cold; and except when the spring-frosts come late and sharp, there do all blossoms and fruits abound, on every shrub and tree native to Scotland. You will hardly know how to distinguish—or rather, to speak in clerkly phrase, to analyse the sound prevalent over the fields and air, for it is made up of that of the burn, of bees, of old Susan's wheel, and the hum of the busy school! But now it is the play-hour, and Allan Easton comes into his kitchen for his frugal dinner. Brush up your Latin, and out with a few of the largest trouts in your pannier. Susan fries them in fresh butter and oat-meal—the gray-haired pedagogue asks a blessing—and a merrier man, within the limits of becoming mirth, you never passed an hour's talk withal. So much for Allan Easton and Susan his spouse.

You look as if you wished to ask, who inhabits the cottage—on the left hand yonder—that stares upon us with four front windows, and pricks up its ears like a new started hare. Why, sir, that was once a shooting-box. It was built about twenty years ago, by a sporting gentleman, of two excellent double-barrelled guns, and three staunch pointers. He attempted to live there, several times, from the 12th of August till the end of September, and went pluffing disconsolately among the hills, from sunrise to sunset. He has been long married and dead; and the box, they say, is now haunted. It has been attempted to be let furnished, and there is now a board to that effect hung out like an escutcheon. Picturesque people say, it ruins the whole beauty of the glen; but we must not think so, for it is not in the power of the ugliest house that ever was built to do that, although, to effect such a purpose, it is unquestionably a skilful contrivance. The window-shutters have been closed for many years, and the chimneys look as if they had breathed their last. It stands in a perpetual eddy, and the ground shelves so all around it, that there is barely room for a barrel to catch the rain-drippings from the slate-eaves. If it be indeed haunted, pity the poor ghost. You may have it on a lease of seven years, for merely paying the taxes. Every year it costs several pounds in advertisements. What a jointure-house it would be for a relict! By name, WINDY-KNOWE.

Let us descend, then, from that most inclement front, into the lown boundaries of the HOLM. The farm-steading covers a goodly portion of the peninsula shaped by the burn, that here looks almost like a river. With its out-houses it forms three sides of a square, and the fourth is composed of a set of jolly stacks, that will keep the thrashing-machine at work during all the winter. The interior of the square rejoices in a glorious dunghill, (O breathe not the name,) that will cover every field with luxuriant harvests—fifteen bolls of wheat to the acre. There the cattle—oxen yet "lean, and lank, and brown as is the ribbed sea-sand," will, in a few months, eat themselves up, on straw and turnip, into obesity. There turkeys walk demure—there geese waddle, and there the feathery-legged king of Bantam struts among his seraglio, keeping pertly

aloof from double-combed Chanticleer, that squire of dames, crowing to his partlets. There a cloud of pigeons often descends among the corny chaff, and then whirrs off to the uplands. No chained mastiff looking grimly from the kennel's mouth, but a set of cheerful and sagacious colleys are seen sitting on their hurdies, or "worrying ither in diversion." A shaggy colt or two, and a brood mare, with a spice of blood, and a foal at her heels, know their shed, and evidently are favourites with the family. Out comes the master, a rosy-cheeked carl, upwards of six feet high, broad-shouldered, with a blue bonnet and velveteen breeches, a man not to be jostled on the crown o' the causeway, and a match for any horse-couper from Bewcastle, or gipsy from Yetholm. But let us into the kitchen. There's the wife—a bit tidy body—and pretty withal—more authoritative in her quiet demeanour, than the most tyrannical mere housekeeper that ever thumped a servant lass with the beetle. These three are her daughters. First, Girzie, the eldest—seemingly older than her mother, for she is somewhat hard-favoured, and strong red hair dangling over a squint eye, is apt to give an expression of advanced years, even to a youthful virgin. Vaccination was not known in Girzie's babyhood, but she is, nevertheless, a clean-skinned creature, and her full bosom is white as snow. She is what is delicately called a strapper, rosy-armed as the morning, and not a little of an Aurora about the feet and ancles. She makes her way, in all household affairs, through every impediment, and will obviously prove, whenever the experiment is made, a most excellent wife. Mysie, the second daughter, is more composed, more genteel, and sits sewing, with her a favourite occupation, for she has very neat hands; and is, in fact, the milliner and mantua-maker for all the house. She could no more lift that enormous pan of boiling water off the fire, than she could fly, which in the grasp of Girzie, is safely landed on the hearth. Mysie has somewhat of a pensive look, as if in love—and we have heard that she is betrothed to young Mr. Rentoul, the divinity student, who lately made a speech before the Anti-patronage Society, and therefore may reasonably expect very soon to get a kirk. But look—there comes dancing in from the ewe

bughts, the bright-eyed Bessy, the flower of the flock, the most beautiful girl in Almondale, and fit to be bosom-burd of the gentle shepherd himself! O that we were a poet, to sing the innocence of her budding breast! But—heaven preserve us—what is the angelic creature about? Making rumble-de-thumps! Now she bruises the potatoes and cabbages as with pestle and mortar! Ever and anon licking the butter off her fingers, and then dashing in the salt! Methinks her laugh is out of all bounds loud—and unless my eyes deceived me, that stout lout whispered in her delicate ear some coarse jest, that made the eloquent blood mount up into her not undelighted countenance. Heavens and earth!—perhaps an assignation in the barn, or byre, or bush aboon Traquair. But the long dresser is set out with dinner—the gudeman's bonnet is reverently laid aside—and if any stomach assembled there be now empty, it is not likely, judging from appearances, that it will be in that state again before next Sabbath—and it is now but the middle of the week. Was it not my Lord Byron who liked not to see women eat? Poo—poo—nonsense. We like to see them not only eat—but devour. Not a set of teeth round that kitchen-dresser, that is not white as the driven snow. Breath too (bating onions) sweet as dawn's dew—the whole female frame full of health, freshness, spirit, and animation! Away all delicate wooers, thrice high-fantastical! The diet is wholesome—and the sleep will be sound—therefore eat away, Bessy—nor fear to laugh, although your pretty mouth be full—for we are no poet, to madden into misanthropy at your mastication; and, in spite of the heartiest meal ever virgin ate, to us these lips are roses still, "thy eyes are lode-stars, and thy breath sweet air." Would for thy sake we had been born a shepherd-groom! No—no—no! For some few joyous years mayest thou wear thy silken snood unharmed, and silence with thy songs the linnet among the broom, at the sweet hour of prime. And then mayest thou plight thy troth—in all the warmth of innocence—to some ardent, yet thoughtful youth, who will carry his bride exultingly to his own low-roofed home—toil for her and the children at her knees, through summer's heat and winter's cold—and sit with her, in the kirk, when long years have gone

by, a comely matron, attended by daughters acknowledged to be fair—but neither so fair, nor so good, nor so pious, as their mother.

What a contrast to the jocund Holm—is the ROWAN-TREE HUT—so still, and seemingly so desolate! It is close upon the public road, and yet so low, that you might pass it without observing its turf-roof. There live old Aggy Robinson, the carrier, and her consumptive daughter. Old Aggy has borne that epithet for twenty years, and her daughter is not under sixty. That poor creature is bed-ridden and helpless, and has to be fed almost like a child. Old Aggy has for many years had the same white pony—well named Sampson—that she drives three times a-week, all the year round, to and from the nearest market-town, carrying all sorts of articles to nearly twenty different families, living miles apart. Every other day in the week—for there is but one Sabbath either to herself or Sampson—she drives coals, or peat, or wood, or lime, or stones for the roads. She is clothed in a man's coat, an old rusty beaver, and a red petticoat. Aggy never was a beauty, and now she is almost frightful, with a formidable beard, and a rough voice—and violent gestures, encouraging the overladen enemy of the Philistines. But the poor creature, as soon as she enters her hut, is silent, patient, and affectionate, at her daughter's bed-side. They sleep on the same chaff-mattress, and she hears, during the dead of night, her daughter's slightest moan. Her voice is not rough at all, when the poor old creature says her solitary prayers; nor, we may be well assured, is one single whisper unheard in heaven.

Your eyes are wandering away to the eastern side of the vale, and they have fixed themselves on the cottage of the SEVEN OAKS. The grove is a noble one; and, indeed, these are the only timber-trees in the valley. There is a tradition belonging to the grove, but we shall tell it some other time; now, we have to do with that mean-looking cottage, all unworthy of such magnificent shelter. It is slated, and has a cold cheerless look,—almost a look of indigence. The walls are sordid in the streaked white-wash,—a wisp of straw supplies the place of a broken pane,—the door seems as if it were inhospitable,—and

every object about it is in untended disorder. The green pool in front, with its floating straws and feathers, and miry edge, is at once unhealthy and needless; the hedge-rows are full of gaps, and open at the roots; the few garments spread upon them seem to have stiffened in the weather, forgotten by the person who placed them there; and half-starved young cattle are straying about in what was once a garden. Wretched sight it is; for that dwelling, although never beautiful, was once the tidiest and best kept in all the district. But what has misery to do with the comfort of its habitation?

The owner of that house was once a man well to do in the world; but he minded this world's goods more than was fitting to do, and made mammon his god. Abilities he possessed far beyond that of the common run of men, and he applied them all, with all the energy of a strong mind, to the accumulation of wealth. Every rule of his life had that for its ultimate end; and he despised a bargain unless he outwitted his neighbour. Without any act of downright knavery, he was not an honest man—hard to the poor—and a tyrannical master. He sought to wring from the very soil more than it could produce; his servants, among whom were his wife and daughter, he kept at work, like slaves, from twilight to twilight; and was a forestaller and a regrater—a character which, when political economy was unknown, was of all the most odious in the judgment of simple husbandmen. His spirits rose with the price of meal, and every handful dealt out to the beggar was paid like a tax. What could the Bible teach to such a man? What good could he derive from the calm air of the house of worship? He sent his only son to the city, with injunctions instilled into him to make the most of all transactions, at every hazard but that of his money; and the consequence was, in a few years, shame, ruin, and expatriation. His only daughter, imprisoned, dispirited, enthralled, fell a prey to a sensual seducer; and being driven from her father's house, abandoned herself, in hopeless misery, to a life of prostitution. His wife, heart-broken by cruelty and affliction, was never afterwards altogether in her right mind, and now sits weeping by the hearth, or wanders off to distant places,

lone houses and villages, almost in the condition of an idiot—wild-eyed, loose-haired, and dressed like a very beggar. Speculation after speculation failed—he had to curse four successive plentiful harvests—and his mailing was now destitute. The unhappy man grew sour, stern, fierce, in his calamity; and when his brain was inflamed with liquor, a dangerous madman. He is now a sort of cattle-dealer—buys and sells miserable horses—and at fairs associates with knaves and reprobates, knowing that no honest man will deal with him except in pity or derision. He has more than once attempted to commit suicide—but palsy has stricken him—and in a few weeks he will totter into the grave.

There is a cottage in that hollow, and you see the smoke—even the chimney-top, but you could not see the cottage itself, unless you were within fifty yards of it, so surrounded is it with knolls and small green eminences, in a den of its own, a shoot or scion from the main stem of the valley. It is called the Broom, and there is something singular, and not uninteresting, in the history of its owner. He married very early in life, indeed when quite a boy, which is not, by the way, very unusual among the peasantry of Scotland, prudent and calculating as is their general character. Gabriel Adamson, before he was thirty years of age, had a family of seven children, and a pretty family they were as might be seen in all the parish. Gabriel's life was in theirs, and his mind never wandered far from his fireside. His wife was of a consumptive family, and that insidious and fatal disease never showed in her a single symptom during ten years of marriage; but one cold evening awoke it at her very heart, and in less than two months it hurried her into the grave. Poor creature, such a spectre! when her husband used to carry her, for the sake of a little temporary relief, from chair to couch, and from her couch back again to her bed, twenty times in a day, he never could help weeping, with all his consideration, to feel her frame as light as a bundle of leaves. The medical man said, that in all his practice he never had known soul and body keep together in such utter attenuation. But her soul was as clear as ever—and pain, racking pain, was in her fleshless bones. Even

he, her loving husband, was relieved from wo when she expired, for no sadness, no sorrow, could be equal to the misery of groans from one so patient and so resigned. Perhaps consumption is infectious; so, at least, it seemed here; for first one child began to droop, and then another —the elder ones first—and within the two following years, there were almost as many funerals from this one house as from all the others in the parish. Yes—they all died —of the whole family not one was spared. Two, indeed, were thought to have pined away in a sort of fearful foreboding—and a fever took off a third—but four certainly died of the same hereditary complaint with the mother; and not a voice was heard in the house. Gabriel Adamson did not desert the Broom; and the farm-work was still carried on, nobody could tell how. The servants, to be sure, knew their duty, and often performed it without orders. Sometimes the master put his hand to the plough, but oftener he led the life of a shepherd, and was by himself among the hills. He never smiled—and at every meal, he still sat like a man about to be led to die. But what will not retire away—recede—disappear from the vision of the souls of us mortals! Tenacious as we are of our griefs, even more than of our joys, both elude our grasp. We gaze after them with longing or self-upbraiding aspirations for their return, but they are as shadows, and like shadows evanish. Then human duties, lowly though they may be, have their sanative and salutary influence on our whole frame of being. Without their performance conscience cannot be still; with it, conscience brings peace in extremity of evil. Then occupation kills grief, and industry abates all passion. No balm for sorrow like the sweat of the brow poured into the furrows of the earth, in the open air, and beneath the sunshine of heaven. These truths were felt by Gabriel Adamson, the childless widower, long before they were understood by him; and when two years had gone drearily, ay, dismally, almost despairingly, by—he began at times to feel something like happiness when sitting among his friends in the kirk, or at their firesides, or in the labours of the field, or even on the market-day, among this world's concerns. Thus, they who knew him and

his sufferings, were pleased to recognise what might be called resignation and its grave tranquillity, while strangers discerned in him nothing more than a staid and solemn demeanour, which might be natural to many a man never severely tried, and offered no interruption to the cheerfulness that pervaded their ordinary life.

Gabriel Adamson had a cousin, a few years younger than himself, who had also married when a girl, and when little more than a girl had been left a widow. Her parents were both dead, and she had lived for some years, as an upper servant, or rather companion and friend, in the house of a relation. As cousins, they had all their lives been familiar and affectionate, and Alice Gray had frequently lived for months at a time, at the Broom, taking care of the children, and in all respects one of the family. Their conditions were now almost equally desolate, and a deep sympathy made them now more firmly attached than they ever could have been in better days. Still, nothing at all resembling love was in either of their hearts, nor did the thought of marriage ever pass across their imaginations. They found, however, increasing satisfaction in each other's company; and looks and words of sad and sober endearment gradually bound them together in affection stronger far than either could have believed. Their friends saw and spoke of the attachment, and of its probable result, long before they were aware of its full nature; and nobody was surprised, but, on the contrary, all were well pleased, when it was understood that Gabriel Adamson and Alice Gray were to be man and wife. There was something almost mournful in their marriage—no rejoicing—no merry-making—but yet visible symptoms of gratitude, contentment, and peace. An air of cheerfulness was not long of investing the melancholy Broom—the very swallows twittered more gladly from the window-corners, and there was joy in the cooing of the pigeons on the sunny roof. The farm awoke through all its fields, and the farm-servants once more sang and whistled at their work. The wandering beggar, who remembered the charity of other years, looked with no cold expression on her who now dealt out his dole; and as his old eyes were dimmed with tears for the sake of those who were gone, gave a

fervent blessing on the new mistress of the house, and prayed that she might live for many years. The neighbours, even they who had best loved the dead, came in with cheerful countenances, and acknowledged in their pensive hearts, that since change is the law of life, there was no one, far or near, whom they could have borne to see sitting in that chair but Alice Gray. Gabriel knew their feelings from their looks, and his fireside blazed once more with a cheerful lustre.

O, gentle reader, young perhaps, and inexperienced of this world, wonder not at this so great change! Thy heart is full, perhaps, of a pure and holy affection, nor can it die, even for an hour of sleep. May it never die but in the grave! Yet die it may, and leave thee blameless. The time may come when that bosom, now thy elysium, will awaken not, with all its heaving beauty, one single passionate or adoring sigh. Those eyes, that now stream agitation and bliss into thy throbbing heart, may, on some not very distant day, be cold to thy imagination, as the distant and unheeded stars. That voice, now thrilling through every nerve, and expressive of paradise, may fall on thy ear a disregarded sound. Other hopes, other fears, other troubles, may possess thee wholly—and that more than angel of heaven seem to fade away into a shape of earth's most common clay. But here there was no change—no forgetfulness—no oblivion—no unfaithfulness to a holy trust. The widower still saw his Hannah, and all his seven sweet children—now fair in life—now pale in death. Sometimes, perhaps, the sight, the sound—their smiles, and their voices, disturbed him, till his heart quaked within him, and he wished that he too was dead. But God it was who had removed them from our earth—and was it possible to doubt that they were all in blessedness! Shed your tears over change from virtue to vice, happiness to misery; but weep not for those still, sad, mysterious processes by which gracious nature alleviates the afflictions of our mortal lot, and enables us to endure the life which the Lord our God has given us. Ere long, Gabriel Adamson and his wife could bear to speak of those who were now no more seen; when the phantoms rose before them in the silence of the night, they all wore pleasant and

approving countenances, and the beautiful family often came from heaven to visit their father in his dreams. He did not wish, much less hope, in this life, for such happiness as had once been his—nor did Alice Gray, even for one hour, imagine that such happiness was in her power to bestow. They knew each other's hearts—what they had suffered and survived—and since the meridian of life and joy was gone, they were contented with the pensive twilight.

Look, there is a pretty cottage—by name LEASIDE—one that might almost do for a painter—just sufficiently shaded by trees, and showing a new aspect every step you take, and each new aspect beautiful. There is, it is true, neither moss nor lichens, nor weather-stains on the roof—but all is smooth, neat, trim, deep thatch, from rigging to eaves, with a picturesque elevated window covered with the same material, and all the walls white as snow. The whole building is at all times as fresh as if just washed by a vernal shower. Competence breathes from every lattice, and that porch has been reared more for ornament than defence, although, no doubt, it is useful both in March and November winds. Every field about it is like a garden, and yet the garden is brightly conspicuous amidst all the surrounding cultivation. The hedgerows are all clipped, for they have grown there for thirty years, at least, and the shears were necessary to keep them down, from shutting out the vista of the lovely vale. That is the dwelling of Adam Airlie the elder. Happy old man! This life has gone uniformly well with him and his; yet, had it been otherwise, there is a power in his spirit that would have sustained the severest inflictions of Providence. His gratitude to God is something solemn and awful, and ever accompanied with a profound sense of his utter unworthiness of all the long-continued mercies vouchsafed to his family. His own happiness, prolonged to extreme old age, has not closed within his heart one source of pity or affection for his brethren of mankind. In his own guiltless conscience, guiltless before man, he yet feels incessantly the frailties of his nature, and is meek, humble, and penitent as the greatest sinner. He, his wife, an old faithful female servant, and a sweet grandaughter of twelve

years, now form the whole household. His three sons have all prospered in the world. The eldest went abroad when a mere boy, and many fears went with him, a bold, adventurous, and somewhat reckless creature. But consideration came to him in a foreign climate, and tamed down his ardent mind to a thoughtful, not a selfish prudence. Twenty years he lived in India—and what a blessed day was the day of his return! Yet in the prime of life, by disease unbroken, and with a heart full to overflowing with all its old sacred affections, he came back to his father's lowly cottage, and wept as he crossed the threshold. His parents needed not any of his wealth, but they were blamelessly proud, nevertheless, of his honest acquisitions—proud when he became a landholder in his native parish, and employed the sons of his old companions, and some of his old companions themselves, in the building of his unostentatious mansion, or in cultivating the wild but not unlovely moor, which was dear to him for the sake of the million remembrances that clothed the bare banks of its lochs, and murmured in the little stream that ran among the pastoral braes. The new mansion is a couple of miles from his parental cottage; but not a week, indeed seldom half that time elapses, without a visit to that dear dwelling. They likewise not unfrequently visit him—for his wife is dear to them as a daughter of their own—and the ancient couple delight in the noise and laughter of his pretty flock. Yet the son understands perfectly well that aged people love best their own roof—and that its familiar quiet is every day dearer to their habituated affections. Therefore he makes no parade of filial tenderness—forces nothing new upon them—is glad to see the uninterrupted tenor of their humble happiness; and if they are proud of him, which all the parish knows, so is there not a child within its bounds that does not know, that Mr. Airlie, the rich gentleman from India, loves his poor father and mother as tenderly as if he had never left their roof; and is prouder of them too, than if they were clothed in fine raiment, and fared sumptuously every day. Mr. Airlie of the mount has his own seat in the gallery of the kirk—his father, as an elder, sits below the pulpit—but occasionally the pious and proud son joins his mother in the pew, where he and

his brothers sat long ago; and every Sabbath one or other of his children takes its place beside the venerated matron. The old man generally leaves the churchyard leaning on his Gilbert's arm—and although the sight has long been so common as to draw no attention, yet no doubt there is always an under and unconscious pleasure in many a mind witnessing the sacredness of the bond of blood. Now and then the old matron is prevailed upon, when the weather is bad and roads miry, to take a seat home in the carriage—but the elder always prefers walking thither with his son, and he is stout and hale, although upwards of threescore and ten years.

Walter, the second son, is a captain in the navy, having served for years before the mast. His mind is in his profession, and he is perpetually complaining of being unemployed—a ship, is still the burden of his song. But when at home—which he often is, for weeks together—he attaches himself to all the on-goings of rural life, as devotedly as if a plougher of the soil instead of the sea. His mother wonders, with tears in her eyes, why, having a competency, he should still wish to provoke the dangers of the deep; and beseeches him sometimes to become a farmer in his native vale. And perhaps more improbable things have happened; for the captain, it is said, has fallen desperately in love with the daughter of the clergyman of a neighbouring parish, and the doctor will not give his consent to the marriage, unless he promise to live, if allowed, on shore. The political state of Europe certainly seems at present favourable to the consummation of the wishes of all parties.

Of David, the third son, who has not heard, that has heard any thing of the pulpit eloquence of Scotland?—Should his life be spared, there can be no doubt that he will one day or other be moderator of the General Assembly, perhaps professor of divinity in a college. Be that as it may, a better Christian never expounded the truth of the Gospel, although some folks pretend to say that he is not evangelical. He is, however, beloved by the poor—the orphan and the widow; and his religion, powerful in the kirk to a devoutly listening congregation, is so too at the sick-bed, when only two or three are gathered around it,

and when the dying man feels how a fellow-creature can, by scriptural aids, strengthen his trust in the mercy of God.

Every year, on each birth-day of their sons, the old people have a festival—in May, in August, and on Christmas. The sailor alone looks disconsolate as a bachelor, but that reproach will be wiped away before autumn; and should God grant the cottagers a few more years, some new faces will yet smile upon the holidays; and there is in their unwithered hearts warm love enough for all that may join the party. We too—yes, gentle reader—we too shall be there—as we have often been during the last ten years—and you yourself will judge from all you know of us, if we have a heart to understand and enjoy such rare felicity.

Let us be off to the mountains, and endeavour to interest our beloved reader, in a highland cottage—in any one, taken at hap-hazard, from a hundred. You have been roaming all day among the mountains, and perhaps seen no house except at a dwindling distance. Probably you have wished not to see any house, but a ruined shieling—a deserted hut—or an unroofed and dilapidated shed for the out-lying cattle of some remote farm. But now the sun has inflamed all the western heaven, and darkness will soon descend. There is a muteness in the desert more stern and solemn than during unfaded daylight. List—the faint, far-off, subterranean sound of the bagpipe! Some old soldier, probably, playing a gathering or a coronach. The narrow dell widens and widens into a great glen, in which you just discern the blue gleam of a loch. The martial music is more distinctly heard—loud, fitful, fierce, like the trampling of men in battle. Where is the piper? In a cave, or within the fairies' knoll? At the door of a hut. His eyes are extinguished by ophthalmia, and there he sits, fronting the sunlight, stone-blind. Long silver hair flows down his broad shoulders, and you perceive that when he rises, he will rear up a stately bulk. The music stops, and you hear the bleating of goats. There they come, dancing down the rocks, and stare upon the stranger. The old soldier turns himself towards the voice of the Sassenach, and with the bold

courtesy of the camp, bids him enter the hut. One minute's view has sufficed to imprint the vision for ever on the memory—a hut whose turf-walls and roof are incorporated with the living mountain, and seem not the work of man's hand, but the casual architecture of some convulsion—the tumbling down of fragments from the mountain side by raging torrents, or a partial earthquake; for all the scenery about is torn to pieces—like the scattering of some wide ruin. The imagination dreams of the earliest days of our race, when men harboured, like the other creatures, in places provided by nature. But even here, there are visible traces of cultivation working in the spirit of a mountainous region—a few glades of the purest verdure opened out among the tall brackens, with a birch tree or two dropped just where the eye of taste could have wished, had the painter planted the sapling, instead of the winds of heaven having wafted thither the seed—a small croft of barley, surrounded by a cairn-like wall, made up of stones cleared from the soil, and a patch of potato-ground, neat almost as the garden that shows in a nook its fruit-bushes, and a few flowers. All the blasts that ever blew must be unavailing against the briary rock that shelters the hut from the airt of storms; and the smoke may rise under its lee, unwavering on the windiest day. There is sweetness in all the air, and the glen is noiseless, except with the uncertain murmur of the now unswollen waterfalls. That is the croak of the raven sitting on his cliff half way up Benevis; and hark, the last belling of the red-deer, as the herd lies down in the mist among the last ridge of heather, blending with the shrubless stones, rocks, and cliffs that girdle the upper regions of the vast mountain.

Within the dimness of the hut you hear greetings in the Gaelic tongue, in a female voice, and when the eye has by and by become able to endure the smoke, it discerns the household—the veteran's ancient dame—a young man that may be his son, or rather his grandson, but whom you soon know to be neither, with black, matted locks, the keen eye, and the light limbs of the hunter—a young married woman his wife, suckling a child, and yet with a girlish look, as if, but one year before, her silken snood

had been untied—and a lassie of ten years, who had brought home the goats, and now sits timidly in a nook eyeing the stranger. The low growl of the huge, brindled stag-hound had been hushed by a word, on your first entrance, and the noble animal watches his master's eye, which he obeys in his freedom throughout all the wild bounds of the forest-chase. A napkin is taken out of an old worm-eaten chest, and spread over a strangely carved table, that seems to have belonged once to a place of pride; and the hungry and thirsty stranger scarcely knows which most to admire, the broad bannocks of barley-meal, and the huge roll of butter, or the giant bottle, whose mouth exhales the strong savour of conquering Glenlivet. The board is spread, why not fall to and eat? First be thanks given to the great God of the wilderness. The blind man holds up his hand and prays in a low chaunting voice, and then breaks bread for the lips of the stranger. On such an occasion is felt the sanctity of the meal shared by human beings brought accidentally together—the salt is sacred—and the hearth an altar.

No great travellers are we, yet have we seen something of this habitable globe. The Highlands of Scotland is but a small region, nor is its interior by any means so remote as the interior of Africa. Yet is the life of man here far indeed remote from the life of almost any man who subscribes to this Magazine. The life of that very blind veteran might, in better hands than ours, make an interesting history. In his youth he had been a shepherd—a herdsman—a hunter—something even of a poet. For thirty years he had been a soldier—in many climates, and many conflicts. Since first he bloodied his bayonet, how many thousands on thousands of his commilitones had been buried in heaps! Flung into trenches dug on the field of battle! How many famous captains had shone in the blaze of their fame—faded into the light of common day—died in obscurity, and been utterly forgotten! What fierce passions must have agitated the frame of that now calm old man! On what dreadful scenes of plunder, rape, and murder, when forts and towns were taken by storm, must those eyes, now withered into nothing, have glared with all the fury of a victorious soldier, raging in the lust of

blood! Now peace is with him for evermore. Nothing to speak of the din of battle, but his own pipes wailing or raging among the hollow of the mountains. In relation to his campaigning career, his present life is as the life of another state. The pageantry of war has all rolled off and away for ever; all its actions but phantoms now of a dimly-remembered dream. He thinks of his former self, as sergeant in the Black-watch, and almost thinks he beholds another man. In his long—long blindness, he has created another world to himself out of new voices—the voices of new generations, and of torrents thundering all year-long round about his hut. Almost all the savage has been tamed within him, and an awful religion falls deeper and deeper upon him, as he knows how he is nearing the grave. Often his whole mind is dim, for he is exceedingly old, and then he sees only fragments of his youthful life—the last forty years are as if they had never been—and he hears shouts and huzzas, that half a century ago rent the air with victory. He can still chaunt, in a hoarse broken voice, battle-hymns and dirges; and thus strangely forgetful, and strangely tenacious of the past, linked to this life by ties that only the mountaineer can know, and yet feeling himself on the brink of the next, Old Blind Donald Roy, the giant of the hut of the Three Torrents, will not scruple to quaff the "strong waters," till his mind is awakened—brightened—dimmed—darkened—and seemingly extinguished in drunkenness like death, till the sunrise again smites him, as he lies in a heap among the heather; and then he lifts up, unashamed and remorseless, that head, which with its long silvery hairs, a painter might choose for the image of a saint about to become a martyr.

Were the supposition not somewhat odious, gentle reader, we should for a moment suppose you to be a cockney. No doubt you have been at Epping Hunt; and a good hunt it is, when Tims is Nimrod. Come hither, then, with us, to the forest that surrounds the hut of the Three Torrents. Let us leave old Donald asleep after a debauch, and go with his son-in-law, Lewis of the lightfoot, and Maida the stag-hound, surnamed the Throttler,

> "Where the hunter of deer and the warrior trod
> To his hills that encircle the sea."

We have been ascending mountain-range after mountain-range, before sunrise; and lo! night is gone, and nature rejoices in the day through all her solitudes! Still as death, yet as life cheerful—and unspeakable grandeur in the sudden revelation. Where is the wild-deer herd?—where, ask the keen eyes of Maida, is the forest of antlers? —Lewis of the light-foot bounds before, with his long gun pointing towards the mists now gathered up to the summits of Benevis. Not a word is heard, only our own panting breath.

But here let us call in to our aid a poem written by one who knows the Highlands well,—and will not grudge, we hope, to see his poetry among our prose; we mean Professor Wilson.

ADDRESS TO A WILD DEER.*

Magnificent creature! so stately and bright!
In the pride of thy spirit pursuing thy flight;
For what hath the child of the desert to dread,
Wafting up his own mountains that far-beaming head;
Or borne like a whirlwind down on the vale!—
Hail! king of the wild and the beautiful!—hail!
Hail! idol divine! whom nature hath borne
O'er a hundred hill-tops since the mists of the morn,
Whom the pilgrim lone wandering on mountain and moor,
As the vision glides by him, may blameless adore;
For the joy of the happy, the strength of the free,
Are spread in a garment of glory o'er thee.

Up! up to yon cliff! like a king to his throne!
O'er the black silent forest piled lofty and lone—
A throne which the eagle is glad to resign
Unto footsteps so fleet and so fearless as thine.
There the bright heather springs up in love of thy breast—
Lo! the clouds in the depth of the sky are at rest;
And the race of the wild winds is o'er on the hill!
In the hush of the mountains, ye antlers, lie still—
Though your branches now toss in the storm of delight,
Like the arms of the pine on yon shelterless height.
One moment—thou bright apparition!—delay!
Then melt o'er the crags, like the sun from the day.

* Poems, by John Wilson, vol. ii. p. 31.

Aloft on the weather-gleam, scorning the earth,
The wild spirit hung in majestical mirth:
In dalliance with danger, he bounded in bliss,
O'er the fathomless gloom of each moaning abyss;
O'er the grim rocks careering with prosperous motion,
Like a ship by herself in full sail o'er the ocean!
Then proudly he turn'd ere he sank to the dell,
And shook from his forehead a haughty farewell,
While his horns in a crescent of radiance shone,
Like a flag burning bright when the vessel is gone.

The ship of the desert hath pass'd on the wind,
And left the dark ocean of mountains behind!
But my spirit will travel wherever she flee,
And behold her in pomp o'er the rim of the sea—
Her voyage pursue—till her anchor be cast
In some cliff-girdled haven of beauty at last.

What lonely magnificence stretches around!
Each sight how sublime! and how awful each sound!
All hush'd and serene, as a region of dreams,
The mountains repose 'mid the roar of the streams,
Their glens of black umbrage by cataracts riven,
But calm their blue tops in the beauty of heaven.
Here the glory of nature hath nothing to fear—
Ay! Time the destroyer in power hath been here;
And the forest that hung on yon mountain so high,
Like a black thunder cloud on the arch of the sky,
Hath gone, like that cloud, when the tempest came by.
Deep sunk in the black moor, all worn and decay'd,
Where the floods have been raging, the limbs are display'd
Of the pine-tree and oak sleeping vast in the gloom,
The kings of the forest disturb'd in their tomb.

E'en now, in the pomp of their prime, I behold
O'erhanging the desert the forests of old!
So gorgeous their verdure, so solemn their shade,
Like the heavens above them, they never may fade.
The sunlight is on them—in silence they sleep—
A glimmering glow, like the breast of the deep,
When the billows scarce heave in the calmness of morn.
Down the pass of Glen-Etive the tempest is borne,
And the hill-side is swinging, and roars with a sound
In the heart of the forest embosom'd profound.
Till all in a moment the tumult is o'er,
And the mountain of thunder is still as the shore,
When the sea is at ebb; not a leaf nor a breath
To disturb the wild solitude, steadfast as death.

From his eyrie the eagle hath soar'd with a scream,
And I wake on the edge of the cliff from my dream;—
Where now is the light of thy far-beaming brow?
Fleet son of the wilderness! where art thou now?
Again o'er yon crag thou return'st to my sight,
Like the horns of the moon from a cloud of the night!
Serene in thy travel—as soul in a dream—
Thou needest no bridge o'er the rush of the stream.
With thy presence the pine-grove is fill'd, as with light,
And the caves, as thou passest, one moment are bright.
Through the arch of the rainbow that lies on the rock
'Mid the mist stealing up from the cataract's shock,
Thou fling'st thy bold beauty, exulting and free,
O'er a pit of grim blackness, that roars like the sea.

His voyage is o'er!—As if struck by a spell,
He motionless stands in the hush of the dell,
There softly and slowly sinks down on his breast,
In the midst of his pastime enamour'd of rest.
A stream in a clear pool that ended its race—
A dancing ray chain'd to one sunshiny place—
A cloud by the winds to calm solitude driven—
A hurricane dead in the silence of heaven!

Fit couch of repose for a pilgrim like thee!
Magnificent prison enclosing the free!
With rock-wall encircled—with precipice crown'd,
Which, awoke by the sun, thou can'st clear at a bound.
'Mid the fern and the heather kind nature doth keep
One bright spot of green for her favourite's sleep;
And close to that covert, as clear as the skies
When their blue depths are cloudless, a little lake lies,
Where the creature at rest can his image behold
Looking up through the radiance, as bright and as bold!
How lonesome! how wild! yet the wildness is rife
With the stir of enjoyment—the spirit of life.
The glad fish leaps up in the heart of the lake,
Whose depths, at the sullen plunge, sullenly quake!
Elate on the fern-branch the grasshopper sings,
And away in the midst of his roundelay springs;
'Mid the flowers of the heath, not more bright than himself,
The wild-bee is busy, a musical elf—
Then starts from his labour, unwearied and gay,
And, circling the antlers, booms far, far away.
While high up the mountains, in silence remote,
The cuckoo unseen is repeating his note,
And mellowing echo, on watch in the skies,
Like a voice from some loftier climate replies.

With wide-branching antlers a guard to his breast,
There lies the wild creature, even stately in rest!
'Mid the grandeur of nature, composed and serene,
And proud in his heart of the mountainous scene,
He lifts his calm eye to the eagle and raven,
At noon sinking down on smooth wings to their haven,
As if in his soul the bold animal smiled
To his friends of the sky, the joint-heirs of the wild.

Yes! fierce looks thy nature, even hush'd in repose—
In the depth of the desert regardless of foes.
Thy bold antlers call on the hunter afar
With a haughty defiance to come to the war!
No outrage is war to a creature like thee!
The bugle-horn fills thy wild spirit with glee,
As thou bearest thy neck on the wings of the wind,
And the laggardly gaze-hound is toiling behind.
In the beams of thy forehead that glitter with death,
In feet that draw power from the touch of the heath,—
In the wide-raging torrent that lends thee its roar,—
In the cliff that once trod must be trodden no more,—
Thy trust—'mid the dangers that threaten thy reign!
But what if the stag on the mountain be slain?
On the brink of the rock—lo! he standeth at bay
Like a victor that falls at the close of the day—
While hunter and hound in their terror retreat
From the death that is spurn'd from his furious feet:
And his last cry of anger comes back from the skies,
As nature's fierce son in the wilderness dies.
High life of a hunter! he meets on the hill
The new waken'd daylight, so bright and so still;
And feels, as the clouds of the morning unroll,
The silence, the splendour, ennoble his soul.
'Tis his o'er the mountains to stalk like a ghost,
Enshrouded with mist, in which nature is lost,
Till he lifts up his eyes, and flood, valley, and height,
In one moment all swim in an ocean of light;
While the sun, like a glorious banner unfurl'd,
Seems to wave o'er a new, more magnificent world.
'Tis his—by the mouth of some cavern his seat—
The lightning of heaven to hold at his feet,
While the thunder below him that growls from the cloud,
To him comes on echo more awfully loud.
When the clear depth of noontide, with glittering motion,
O'erflows the lone glens—an aerial ocean—
When the earth and the heavens, in union profound,
Lie blended in beauty that knows not a sound—

As his eyes in the sunshiny solitude close
'Neath a rock of the desert in dreaming repose,
He sees, in his slumbers, such visions of old
As his wild Gaelic songs to his infancy told;
O'er the mountains a thousand plumed hunters are borne,
And he starts from his dreams at the blast of the horn.

Yes! child of the desert! fit quarry wert thou
For the hunter that came with a crown on his brow,—
By princes attended with arrow and spear,
In their white-tented camp, for the warfare of deer.
In splendour the tents on the green summit stood,
And brightly they shone from the glade in the wood,
And, silently built by a magical spell,
The pyramid rose in the depth of the dell.
All mute was the palace of Lochy that day,
When the king and his nobles—a gallant array—
To Gleno or Glen-Etive came forth in their pride,
And a hundred fierce stags in their solitude died.
Not lonely and single they pass'd o'er the height—
But thousands swept by in their hurricane-flight;
And bow'd to the dust in their trampling tread
Was the plumage on many a warrior's head.
"Fall down on your faces!—the herd is at hand!"
And onwards they came like the sea o'er the sand;
Like the snow from the mountain when loosen'd by rain,
And rolling along with a crash to the plain;
Like a thunder-split oak-tree, that falls in one shock
With his hundred wide arms from the top of the rock,
Like the voice of the sky, when the black cloud is near,
So sudden, so loud, came the tempest of deer.

Wild mirth of the desert! fit pastime for kings!
Which still the rude bard in his solitude sings.
Oh reign of magnificence! vanish'd for ever!
Like music dried up in the bed of a river,
Whose course hath been changed! yet my soul can survey
The clear cloudless morn of that glorious day,
Yes! the wide silent forest is loud as of yore,
And the far-ebbed grandeur rolls back to the shore.

I wake from my trance! lo! the sun is declining!
And the Black-mount afar in his lustre is shining,—
One soft golden gleam ere the twilight prevail!
Then down let me sink to the cot in the dale,
Where sings the fair maid to the viol so sweet,
Or the floor is alive with her white twinkling feet.
Down, down like a bird to the depth of the dell!
Vanish'd creature! I bid thy fair image farewell!

Nightfall—and we are once more at the Hut of the Three Torrents. Small Amy is grown familiar now, and almost without being asked, sings us the choicest of her Gaelic airs—a few too of Lowland melody—all merry, yet all sad—if in smiles begun, ending in a shower—or at least a tender mist of tears. O thou constant attender at Drury Lane, Covent Garden, or the Adelphi! O critic to Clark or Colburn, armed with the open-sesame of a free ticket! Heard'st thou ever such a siren as this Celtic child? Did we not always tell you that fairies were indeed realities of the twilight or moonlight world? And she is their Queen. Hark! What thunders of applause! The waterfall at the head of the great Corrie thunders encore with a hundred echoes. O Lord, cockney, what think you now of an oyster-shop in the Strand?—But the songs are over, and the small singer gone to her heather-bed. There is a Highland moon! The shield of an unfallen archangel. There are not many stars—but these two—ay, that one is sufficient to sustain the glory of the night. Be not alarmed at that low, wide, solemn, and melancholy sound. Runlets, torrents, rivers, lochs, and seas—reeds, heather, forests caves, and cliffs—all are sound, sounding together a choral anthem.

Gracious heavens! what mistakes have people fallen into when writing about solitude! A man leaves a town for a few months, and goes with his wife and family, and a travelling library, into some solitary glen. Friends are perpetually visiting him from afar, or the neighbouring gentry leaving their cards, while his servant boy rides daily to the post-village for his letters and newspapers. And call you that solitude? The whole world is with you morning, noon, and night. But go by yourself, without book or friend, and live a month in this hut at the head of Glenevis. Go at dawn among the cliffs of yonder pine-forest, and wait there till night hangs her moon-lamp in heaven. Commune with your own soul, and be still. Let the images of departed years rise, phantom-like, of their own awful accord, from the darkness of your memory, and pass away into the wood-gloom, or the mountain-mist—will conscience dread such spectres? Will you quake before them, and bow down your head on the mossy root of some

old oak, and sob in the stern silence of the haunted place? Thoughts, feelings, passions, spectral deeds will come rushing around your lair, as with the sound of the wings of innumerous birds—ay, many of them like birds of prey, to gnaw your very heart. How many sacred duties undischarged! How many glorious opportunities neglected! How many base pleasures devoured! How many sins hugged! How many wickednesses perpetrated! The desert looks more grim—the heaven lowers—and the sun, like God's own eye, stares in upon your most secret spirit!

But this is not the solitude of that beautiful young shepherdess-girl of the Hut of the Three Torrents. Her soul is as clear, as calm as the pool, pictured at times by the floating clouds that let fall their shadows through among the overhanging birch-trees. What harm could she ever do? What harm could she ever think? She may have wept, for there is sorrow without sin; may have wept even at her prayers, for there is penitence free from all guilt, and innocence itself often kneels in contrition. Down the long glen she accompanies the stream to the house of God,—sings her psalms,—and returns wearied to her heather-bed. She is, indeed, a solitary child; the eagle and the raven, and the red deer, see that she is so,—and echo knows it when, from her airy cliff, she repeats the happy creature's song. Her world is within this one glen,—for all beyond has a dim character of imagination. In this glen she may live all her days,—here be wooed, won, wedded, buried. Buried—said I? Oh, why think of burial, when gazing on that resplendent head, that shakes joy and beauty far and wide over the desert? Interminable tracts of the shining day await her, the lonely darling of nature; nor dare time ever to eclipse the lustre of those wild-beaming eyes! Her beauty shall be immortal, like that of her country's fairies! So, flower of the wilderness, I wave towards thee a joyful,—though an everlasting farewell.

We have been rather happy in our description of a Highland hut; if you think not, attempt a better, and its miserable inferiority to the above of ours, will at once be obvious to the author. It is difficult to say wherein lies

the difficulty of description. Most people are fond of rural sights and rural sounds; and yet most people, when they take a pen into their hand, make sad work of it. We suspect that the delight they feel is of a vague and general kind; and that when they come to describe in words, either their feelings, or the objects which have excited them, they experience an unexpected and painful surprise, that that should be so difficult which they had unthinkingly imagined must be so very easy. Now, to describe feelings is never easy to a mind of ordinary habits, for such minds have seldom analyzed their feelings in thoughts. That is a rare practice. To describe external objects, one by one, is no doubt easy; and accordingly it is often done very well. But to produce a picture in words, there must be a principle of selection, and that principle cannot be comprehended without much reflection on the mode in which external objects operate on the mind. Sometimes a happy genius, and sometimes a strong passion, vivifies a whole scene in a single line. But the observer of nature, who has neither genius, nor passion, nor metaphysics, can do little or nothing, but enumerate. That he may do with great accuracy, for he may be a noticing and sharp-sighted person. Not a feature of a landscape shall escape him—each sentence of his description shall contain a natural and true image, and ordinary people like himself will think it admirable. Yet shall it be altogether worthless, while one stanza of Burns wafts you into the very heart of paradise.

From the eye of a poetical lover of nature, in process of time, every thing unimpressive falls of itself away, and is really not visible. All the component parts of every new scene range themselves before his fancy, according to a scale of natural subordination. He scarcely can look at a scene amiss; its character is revealed to his gifted—or rather say his practised eye; and he reads the physiognomy of the earth as rapidly and unerringly as, in the intercourse of life, the intelligent read the characters of men's minds in their countenances. Poor describers are so, often, from faintness of conception; but not always so. A man may have a strong and vivid conception, and yet be unable so to select qualities, as to bring the object they compose before the eyes of others. This is the commonest case;

for people of weak or dim conception, feel no inclination to become either poets or painters. They are your prosers.

But without intensity of emotion accompanying the perception of the objects of external nature, no very popular picture in poetry can be painted. It will not do merely to feel a certain calm, equable pleasure, in looking upon them, and to transfuse a portion of that spirit into your descriptions; for the transfused spirit will be necessarily fainter than the faint original emotion. You must either feel, or have felt, transportedly; and under the power of feeling, all objects will be in glitter or gloom. Even in the calmest and most subdued tone of the true poet there is passion. However near the earth, he is still on the wing. This is remarkably the case with Wordsworth. In his very simplest poems—and some of them are too simple perhaps—there are always touches, traits, glimpses of genuine feeling—a feeling of fondness, or affection, or joy, or beauty. If you do not enjoy his descriptions, depend upon it, that nine times out of ten the fault is your own, and that your power of emotion is inadequate. In most cases familiarity breeds contempt, but not if the creation be the subject. Wordsworth cannot bring himself to dislike a nettle—or a dock—or a mushroom; and we bet you a set, that he will make a better poem on a gooseberry-bush, than you will do on the great Persian sycamore, which is about seventy feet in circumference.

Now the delight—the emotion of which we have been prosing away, presupposes knowledge. Knowledge of what? Knowledge of this beautiful round green earth. Do you suppose that Wordsworth is not a good naturalist, entomologist, botanist, agriculturist, and shepherd? That he is, to a dead certainty. Now that keeps him from talking nonsense. There is not one mistake—one blunder, about any natural object, in all his poetry. What could have given him power to gather up all that rich and deep knowledge of insensate things? The love of beauty—wonder—and admiration—and the adoring soul of poetry. His thoughts are "never unstable nor desert him quite," because the objects to which they cleave are lasting as the laws of external nature—immortal as the soul of man.

When the Lyrical Ballads are obsolete, it will be about time for this world to shut up shop.

Look sharply into the writings of clever men, who have failed to delight, although they may have given pleasure. They were in general ignoramuses, at least on the subjects in which they had but this partial success. How many thousands and tens of thousands have written pastorals? Humble life, in Britain, has been written about, within these fifty years, in one form or another, by as many persons as are now in Edinburgh, Leith, and suburbs—about 150,000. Now, perhaps not above a dozen of all these have written any thing that will live. Goldsmith, Cowper, Crabbe, Wordsworth, Scott, Burns, Ramsay, Hogg, Cunninghame, Bloomfield, Clare, and the author of Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life,—all these writers, either by their birth or habits of life, knew intimately their subject, from "turret to foundation-stone." Hence one and all of them, according to the measure of his power, has turned his knowledge to account, and enlarged, it may be said, the nation's knowledge of its own character. We shall write a leading article on each of them, considered solely as painters of the poor.

Without trenching on the subject of these future leading articles, we may here observe, that it is curious to remark the difference between the effect on a mind of genius, of absolute personal experience, and of that kind of experience which is merely intimate, constant and extended observation, under favourable circumstances. Burns, Hogg, Cunninghame, and Clare, were absolute peasants, or shepherds, or masons—and in all their works there is, independently of their higher or lower genius, of which we do not now speak, *a something*, that he who does not feel it as perpetually as one hears an accent, must be a blockhead. Only by men so born such works could have been so conceived and executed. Most of the others were "in a manner born" among the same objects; but only "in a manner;" and the consequence is, that there is an ideal spirit in all their creations, often very beautiful, but sometimes leading away from truth; and we desiderate that intense reality which we behold with our own eyes in life.

Accordingly, whatever rank such writings may hold in the literature of a country, we doubt if they ever will be domesticated by the firesides of that peasantry, whose character and occupation it is their ambition to describe.

If this article be getting tedious, (and if it had not been doing so, we should not have shoved it away to the other side of the table for these last two hours, while we discussed twin-tumblers,) any reader of common sense knows how to make it short enough. Shut the magazine,—stretch out your pretty little feet, my dear,—lean back your head,—don't mind though the comb fall out, and let your auburn tresses salute the floor behind the sofa,—shut your eyes, and your mouth also, and may you dream of your lover! Mayhap he is not far off, but come gliding into the room, and breathes a faint fond kiss over thy forehead. He blesses this long, sleepy leading article; and, at every unawakening kiss, means to become a subscriber,—yea, a contributor.

Meanwhile, we are off to Westmoreland to speak of cottages. Often and often have we determined to accept Mr. Blackwood's very gentlemanly offer of five hundred for a Guide to the Lakes. Gray the poet touched some of the scenes there with a pencil of light; but his are but sketches, and few in number. Old West was not a little of an enthusiast, and something more of an antiquary. But we suspect he was shortsighted, and wore spectacles. He had a fancy too that there were only a few points, or stations, from which a country could be satisfactorily looked at; and during all the intervening distances, the worthy priest whistled as he went for want of thought. His style, like a beetle, wheels its drowsy flight, and each paragraph reads like a bit of a sermon. Besides, the whole character of the country is greatly changed,—and that for the better,—since his time, notwithstanding the disappearance of some old familiar faces. The captain who "rambled for a fortnight," was a half-pay coxcomb, and ought never to have had his name printed any where but in the army list. He would fain be thought too a man of gallantry, and confabulates with every shepherdess he meets, as if she had been a Manchester spinning-jenny. It was lucky for him

that some Rowland Long did not kick him out of the county. Then came poor Green,—a man of taste, feeling, and genius,—but as ignorant of the art of bookmaking, as if he had lived before the invention of printing. But his work is a mine, and out of it a Grub Street journeyman might manufacture a guide without leaving the sound of Bow-bell. He was followed by Mr. Wordsworth, who, instead of a guide, presented the world with a treatise on the picturesque, the sublime, and the beautiful. It is needless to say, that his treatise overflows with fine and true thoughts and observations; nor does any man living better understand, or more deeply feel, the characteristic qualities of the scenery of Westmoreland. Yet it is somewhat heavy, even as a philosophical essay. For a guide, Mr. Wordsworth takes up a formidable position,—namely, on a cloud floating midway between the Great Gable and Scawfell. As maps are not uncommon, bird's-eye views of this kind are unnecessary; and when we write our guide, we shall stick to terra firma.

We have qualifications for such a task, which neither Green nor Wordsworth possessed. We are non-residents —absentees. Had we lived twenty long years on the banks of Windermere, or Grassmere, or Keswick, or Ullswater, an impartial and reasonable work could no more have been expected from us, than it has been produced by either of the aforesaid gentlemen. Stationary inhabitants get insensibly embued with all manner of prejudices, and forget entirely the general sympathies of the circulating population. They are apt to think that nobody can understand their scenery but themselves; and laugh in your face should you happen to deliver a heterodox opinion about a crag or a coppice, a flood or a fell. You must walk the valleys in leading-strings—lift up your eyes only when ordered—and not venture even an exclamation till privileged by your guide's ejaculatory "glorious!" Birds of passage, like us, wish to enjoy unfettered the few months we can pass in that climate; and absurd as it may seem to these very imperative ornithologists, we wing our way at our own sweet will, over hill and dale, and perch at night wherever we find a pleasant shelter, in

grove or single tree. This we have done for many summers, and frequently following, and as frequently deviating from, the sage advice of Messrs. Wordsworth and Southey, Professor Wilson, Mr. De Quincey the celebrated opium-eater, Mr. Hartley Coleridge, the gifted son of a gifted father, mild and mineralogical, Mr. Maltby, and our hospitable and intelligent friend, Robert Partridge, Esq., of Covey Cottage,—why, we have made ourselves as thoroughly acquainted with that county as any mother's son of them all; while, having no private pique, prejudice, or partiality whatever to gratify in regard to any mountain, lake, tarn, force, gill, or bowder-stone, we hold ourselves as the whole world must do, far better qualified than any one of those gentlemen to be the Historian of the Lakes.

A Westmoreland cottage has scarcely any resemblance to a Scotch one. A Scotch cottage (in the Lowlands) has rarely any picturesque beauty in itself—a narrow oblong, with steep thatched-roof, and an ear-like chimney at each of the two gable-ends. Many of the Westmoreland cottages would seem, to an ignorant observer, to have been originally built on a model conceived by the finest poetical genius. In the first place, they are almost always built precisely where they ought to be, had the builder's prime object been to beautify the dale; at least, so we have often felt in moods, when perhaps our emotions were unconsciously soothed into complacency by the spirit of the scene. Where the sedgy brink of the lake or tarn circles into a lone bay, with a low hill of coppice-wood on one side, and a few tall pines on the other, no—it is a grove of sycamores,—there, about a hundred yards from the water, and about ten above its ordinary level, peeps out from its cheerful seclusion, that prettiest of all hamlets—Braithwaite-Fold. The hill behind is scarcely sylvan—yet it has many hazels—a few bushes—here and there a holly—and why or wherefore, who can now tell, a grove of enormous yews. There is sweet pasturage among the rocks, and as you may suppose it a spring-day, mild without much sunshine, there is a bleating of lambs, a twitter of small birds, and the deep coo of the stock-dove. A

wreath of smoke is always a feature of such a scene in description; but here there is now none, for probably the whole household are at work in the open air, and the fire, since fuel is not to be wasted, has been wisely suffered to expire on the hearth. No. There is a volume of smoke, as if the chimney were in flame—a tumultuous cloud pours aloft, straggling and broken, through the broad slate stones that defend the mouth of the vomitory from every blast. The matron within is doubtless about to prepare dinner, and last year's rotten pea-sticks have soon heated the capacious gridiron. Let the smoke-wreath melt away at its leisure, and do you admire along with me, the infinite variety of all those little shelving and sloping roofs. Dear—dear is the thatch to the eyes of a son of Caledonia, for he remembers the house in which he was born; but what thatch was ever so beautiful as that slate from the quarry of the white moss? Each one—no—not each one—but almost each one of these little overhanging roofs seems to have been slated, or repaired at least, in its own separate season, so various is the lustre of lichens that bathes the whole, as richly as ever rock was bathed fronting the sun on the mountain's brow. Here and there is seen some small window, before unobserved, curtained perhaps—for the statesman, and the statesman's wife, and the statesman's daughters, have a taste—a taste inspired by domestic happiness, which, seeking simply comfort, unconsciously creates beauty, and whatever its homely hand touches, that it adorns. There would seem to be many fireplaces in Braithwaite-Fold, from such a number of chimney-pillars, each rising up to a different altitude from a different base, round as the bole of a tree—and elegant, as if shaped by Vitruvius. To us, we confess there is nothing offensive in the most glaring white roughcast, that ever changed a cottage into a patch of sunny snow. Yet here that grayish tempered unobtrusive hue does certainly blend to perfection with roof, rock, and sky. Every instrument is in tune. Not even in sylvan glade, nor among the mountain rocks, did wanderer's eye ever behold a porch of meeting tree-stems, or reclining cliffs, more gracefully festooned, than the porch from which now issued the fairest

of Westmeria's daughters. With one arm crossed before her eyes in a sudden burst of sunshine, with the other Ellinor Inman waves to her little brother and sisters among the bark-peelers in the Rydal woods. The graceful signal is repeated till seen, and in a few minutes a boat steals twinkling from the opposite side of the lake, each tug of the youthful rowers distinctly heard through the hollow of the vale. A singing voice is heard—but it ceases—as if the singer were watching the echo—and is not now the picture complete? So too is our article.

A MIDSUMMER-DAY'S DREAM.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1828.)

We have no idea of what is thought of us in the fashionable world. Most probably we are looked on as a pretty considerable quiz. Our external, or personal appearance, is, we cheerfully confess, somewhat odd, both face and figure. It is not easy for you to pass us by on the streets without a stare at our singularity, or to help turning round, as soon as you think you are out of reach of our crutch, which, by the by, we sometimes use as a missile, and can throw almost as far as that celebrated gymnast of the Six Foot Club can swing the thirteen pound sledgehammer; while, with a placid smile of well-pleased surprise, you wonder if that can indeed be the veritable and venerable Christopher North.

Such is our natural and acquired modesty, that so far from being flattered by these proofs of public esteem and popular favour, they fret and annoy us more than we care to express. The truth is, we can seldom, on such occasions, help feeling as if there were a hole in our black silk stocking, the white peeping through like a patch of snow—a shoe minus a silver buckle—a button off some part of our dress—the back part of our hat in front—the half-expanded white rose-bud-tie of our neckcloth, of which we are alike proud and particular, dissolved into two long slips, which more than any thing else appertaining to a man's habiliments, give your person the impress of a weaver expert at the treddle and fly-shuttle—or, to us who keep a regular barber on the chin establishment, with a salary of £80, worst suspicion of all, and if verified to the touch, death to that day, a beard! A beard!

fair reader, as rough as the brush—naughty little mermaid—with which you keep combing your glossy locks in that mirror—no, you do not think it flatters—both before you "lie down in your loveliness," and after you rise up in it,—alarmed by the unexpected and apparently endless ringing of the breakfast bell.

Yet, we are not so very much of a quiz, after all; and considering how the storms of many seasons have beat against us, it is astonishing how well we wear, both in root, branch, and stem. We cannot help—in our pride—Heaven forgive and pity us!—sometimes likening ourselves to an old ash beside a church. There stands the tree, with bark thick as cork, and hard as iron—hoary arms overshadowing with a pleasant glimmer—for his leaves are beautiful as those of some little plant, come late and go early, and are never so umbrageous as to exclude the blue sky—overshadowing with a pleasant glimmer a whole family of tombstones,—a stem with difficulty circled by the united arm-lengths of some half-dozen schoolboys, never for a day satisfied, without, during a pause of their play, once more measuring the giant,—roots, many of them visible like cables along the gravel-walk leading from the kirkyard-gate, where on Sabbath stands the elder beside the plate, and each Christian passing by droppeth in the tinkling charity, from rich man's gold to widow's mite—and many of them hidden, and then reappearing far off from among the graves—while the tap-root, that feeds and upholds all the visible glory, hath for ages struck through the very rock-foundation of that humble house of the Most High! Solemn image! and never to be by us remembered, but through a haze of tears! How kindred the nature of mirth and melancholy! What resemblance seemeth that tree now to have to a poor, world-wearied, and almost life-sick old man! For in a few short years more, we shall have passed away like a shadow, and shall no more be any where found; but thou, many and many a midsummer, while centuries run their course, wilt hang thy pensive, "thy dim religious light"—over other and other generations, while at that mystic and awful table, whiter than the unstained mountain snow, sit almost in the open

air, for the heavens are seen in their beauty through the open roof of that living temple, the children of the hamlet and the hall, partaking of the sacrament,—or, ere that holiest rite be solemnised in simplicity, all listening to the eloquence of some gray-headed man inspired by his great goodness, and with the Bible open before him, making, feeble as he seemed an hour ago before he walked up into the tent, the hearts of the whole congregation to burn within them, and the very circle of the green hills to ring with joy!

What a blessed order of Nature it is, that the footsteps of Time are "inaudible and noiseless," and that the seasons of life are like those of the year, so indistinguishably brought on, in gentle progress, and imperceptibly blended the one with the other, that the human being scarcely knows, except from a faint and not unpleasant feeling, that he is growing old! The boy looks on the youth, the youth on the man, the man in his prime on the gray-headed sire, each on the other, as on a separate existence in a separate world. It seems sometimes as if they had no sympathies, no thoughts in common, that each smiled and wept on account of things for which the other cared not, and that such smiles and tears were all foolish, idle, and most vain; but as the hours, days, weeks, months and years go by, how changes the one into the other, till, without any violence, lo! as if close together at last, the cradle and the grave! In this how Nature and man agree, pacing on and on to the completion of a year—of a life! The spring how soft and tender indeed, with its buds and blossoms, and the blessedness of the light of heaven so fresh, young, and new, a blessedness to feel, to hear, to see, and to breathe! Yet the spring is often touched by frost—as if it had its own winter, and is felt to urge and be urged on upon that summer, of which the green earth, as it murmurs, seems to have some secret forethought. The summer, as it lies on the broad blooming bosom of the earth, is yet faintly conscious of the coming-on of autumn with "sere and yellow leaf,"—the sunshine owns the presence of the shade —and there is at times a pause as of melancholy amid the transitory mirth! Autumn comes with its full or

decaying ripeness, and its colours grave or gorgeous—the noise of song and sickle—of the wheels of wains—and all the busy toils of prophetic man gathering up against the bare cold winter, provision for the body and for the soul! Winter! and cold and bare as fancy pictured—yet not without beauty and joy of its own, while something belonging to the other seasons that are fled, some gleamings as of spring-light, and flowers fair as of spring among the snow—meridians bright as summer morns, and woods bearing the magnificent hues of autumn on into the Christmas frost—clothe the old year with beauty and with glory, not his own—and just so with old age, the winter, the last season of man's ever-varying, yet never wholly changed life!

Then blessings on the sages and the bards who, in the strength of the trust that was within them, have feared not to crown old age with a diadem of flowers and light! Shame on the satirists, who, in their vain regret, and worse ingratitude, have sought to strip it of all "impulses of soul and sense," and leave it a sorry and shivering sight, almost too degraded for pity's tears! True, that to outward things the eye may be dim, the ear deaf, and the touch dull; but there are lights that die not away with the dying sunbeams—there are sounds that cease not when the singing of birds is silent—there are motions that still stir the soul, delightful as the thrill of a daughter's hand pressing her father's knee in prayer; and therefore, how calm, how happy, how reverend, beneath unoffended Heaven, is the head of old age! Walk on the mountain, wander down the valley, enter the humble hut,—the scarcely less humble kirk,—and you will know how sacred a thing is the hoary hair that lies on the temples of him who, during his long journey, forgot not his Maker, and feels that his old age shall be renewed into immortal youth!

"That strain I heard was of a higher mood!"

But now we must wake a lowlier measure;—and, gentle reader! thou wilt not refuse to go with us, who, in comparison with thee are old, for thou art in thy prime—and

be not, we implore thee, a prodigal of its blessings—into the little humming room, whose open window looks over the lilacs and laburnums now in all their glory almost painful to look on, so dazzling are they in their blue and yellow burnished array—and while away an hour with—start not at the name—the very living flesh-and-blood Christopher North, whose voice has often been with thee, as the voice of a solemn or sportive spirit, when rivers and seas rolled and flowed between, he lying under the birch-tree's, and thou, perhaps, under the Banana's shade! Let us both be silent. Look at those faces on the wall—how mild! how meek! how magnificent! You know them, by an instinct for beauty and grandeur, to be the shadows of the spirits whose works have sanctified your sleeping and your waking dreams. The great poets!—Ay, you may gaze till twilight on that bust! Blind Melesigines!—But hark! the front-door bell is ringing—then tap, tap, tap, tap—and lo! a bevy of beauty, matrons, and maids, who have all been a-Maying, and come to lay their wreaths and garlands at the old man's feet! Is our age deserted and forsaken—childless, wifeless though it be—for the whole world knows that we are a bachelor—when subjected, in the benignity of Providence, to such visionary visitations as these? Visionary call them not—though lovelier than poet's dreams beside the Castalian fountain—for these are living locks of auburn braided over a living brow of snow—these tresses, black in their glossy richness as the raven's wing, are no work of glamoury—no shadow she with the light-blue laughing eyes—she, whose dark orbs are filled with the divine melancholy of genius,

> "Like Lady of the Mere,
> Sole-sitting by the shores of old Romance,"

bears, in her soul-fraught beauty, a soft, sweet, familiar Christian name—but, lo! like fair sea-birds, they all gather together, floating around the lord of the mansion—and is not Buchanan-Lodge the happiest, the pleasantest of dwellings, and old Christopher North the happiest and the pleasantest of men?

Perhaps, to see and hear us in another character of our

perfection, you should mistake the gateway of the Lodge for that of some other sylvan abode, and come upon us as we are sitting under the blossom-fall of a laburnum; or lying carelessly diffused in a small circle of flower-fringed green-sward, like Love among the roses. Our face, then, has no expression but that of mildness—you see a man who would not hurt even a wasp—our intellectual is merged, not lost, in our moral being—and if you have read Tacitus, you feel the full meaning of his beautiful sentence about Agricola,—"Bonum virum facile crederes, magnum libenter."

Awaking sufficiently to see that some one is present before us, we motion the light or shadow to lie down, and begin conversing so benignly and so wisely, that the stanger feels at home as if in his birthplace, even as a son returned from afar to his father. The cheerful stillness of the retirement, for there is no stir but of birds and bees,—the sea-murmur is not heard to-day, and the city bells are silent,—is felt to be accordant with the spirit of our green old age, and as the various philosophy of human life overflows the garden, our visiter regards us now as the indolent and indulgent Epicurus—now as the severe and searching Stagyrite—now as the poet-sage, on whose lips in infancy fell that shower of bees, the divine Plato—now Pythagoras, the silent and the silencing—now "that old man eloquent," Socrates, the loving and beloved; and unconsciously at the close of some strain of our discourse he recites to himself that fine line of Byron,

> "Well hast thou said, Athena's wisest son!"

Or, were you to fall in with us as we were angling our way down the Tweed, on some half-spring half-summer day, some day so made up of cloud and sunshine that you know not whether it be light or dark,—

> "That beautiful uncertain weather,
> When gloom and glory meet together,"

some day, when at this hour the air is alive with dancing insects, and at that very gauzy and gaudy winglet hushed

—some day on which you could wander wild as a red deer over the high mountains and by the shores of the long-winding loch, or sit fixed as the cushat in the grove, and eye the ruins of an old castle;—were you to fall in with us on such a forenoon, by the pool below Nidpath, or the meadow-mound of sweet Cardrona-mains, or the ford of Traquair, near the lively Inverleithen, or the sylvan dens of Dryburgh, or the rocky rushings of the Trows, or—but sit down beneath the umbrage of that sycamore—heavens! what a tree!—and be thou Charles Cotton and we Isaac Walton, and let both of us experience that high and humane delight which youth and age do mutually communicate, when kindness is repaid with gratitude, and love with reverence.

Yet even as we hobble along the city street—the street of Princes—with one or two filial youngsters at our side—for old men are our aversion, so nut-deaf are they, so sand-blind, so perverse, and so cell-bound are their souls—our company and our converse is not undelightful, pitched as the latter then is, on a low but lively key, like the twitter of a bird, even of a sparrow, who, let the world say what it will, chirps a pleasant song as he frisks along the eaves, and both in love and war—though there, alas! the parallel between us falls to the ground—yields to no brother of his size in the whole aviary of nature. Or if sparrow please you not, why then we are even as the swallow, lover too of the abodes of men—a true household bird—and seeming, as he wheels in the sunshine, to be ever at his pastime, yet all the while gathering sustenance for the nest he loves, and never so happy as when sitting in his "auld clay biggin," breast to breast—but there again, wo is us! fails the similitude—breast to breast, with his white-throated mate, whom in another month, he will accompany, along with their full-fledged family, over the wide wide seas, and, their voyage ended, renew their loves beneath the eaves of other human dwellings, afar off and in foreign lands, for all their life is love, and still they make

> "Their annual visit round the globe,
> Companions of the spring."

Nay, you would be pleased to sit beside, or before, or behind us, in pit or box of our theatre, and list our genial eulogiums on Murray, and Mackay, and Mason, and Stanley, and Pritchard; or him from London town, the inimitable, for the name of the actor is lost in that of Long Tom. No critics, it is well known, are we; but, when a true son or daughter of nature, "some well-graced actor decks the stage," the best of our remarks might grace the Journal. Yea, the very beauty of the Siddons herself becomes more starlike—for, mind ye, a star is ever gentle in its brightest glow,—as if kindling before your eyes in the fine enthusiasm of our praise. Or, if Pasta, or Paton—Eliza the modest and the musical—hush the room, it is pleasant to see old Christopher North sitting almost ghost-like amid the pathos! In his younger days, the harp was the instrument on which he loved to play, but now he seldom touches a string; yet when beauty with a smile hints the wish to hear some ancient melody, the old man is not unwilling, in a rare hour, to try his trembling hand, repaid at the close of the Broom o' the Cowdenknows, or the Flowers o' the Forest—nor has his voice been silent—repaid, oh, soft-eyed daughter of the son of the dead brother of our youth, a thousand times repaid by one single tear!

Or seek you the saloon, "Grandeur's most magnificent saloon," and mingle, mingle, mingle, with the restless and glittering flow of fashionable life, a sea of tossing plumes! Why even there, you may perchance see Christopher sitting all by himself in a nook—silent but not sad—grave but not gloomy—critical but not censorious—in love with the few, in liking with the many—in good-will with all. His gracious eye is not averted even from the flying waltz; for, "Honi soit qui mal y pense," and if yours be the heart of a man, what evil thought can be inspired into it by the breath of innocence! Youth is the season of love and joy, and inhale therefore into thy inmost soul the bliss of that balmy breath, and hug to thy inmost soul the ideal embrace, so faint—so very faint—of that young virgin, whose waist now thine arm is privileged blamelessly to encircle; for where virtue glides in all her blushing beauty, the touch even of passion's self shall be reverential, and

that bright girl and bright boy shall part as they met, as pure in thought as two doves, that happen to intersect each other's flight, and after a few airy evolutions in the sunshine, flee away, each to its own place of pleasure or rest.

Or, need we allude to ourselves sitting by the ingle-cheek, so crouse and canty, at the sober—yea, the sober orgies of our Noctes Ambrosianæ? We are no cameleons—we neither feed on air, nor change our colour. Of much of the Glenlivet we gulp, the parent barley is yet unborn—the only ether we imbibe is the ether of the imagination—opium, in drop or pill, touches not our lips, but in the feast of fancy; though one choice spirit doth occasionally sit and shine among us, to whom that drug is dear—and the oyster-beds along the sounding shores of the mighty sea, have reason to bless their stars that the accounts they have from the fishermen, of the innumerous barrels so unmercifully emptied in Picardy, are apocryphal. See there is our outstretched arm, and on the point of that little finger—not unfrequently turned up so—lies untrembling the drop of the mountain-dew! So steady is every sinew of sobriety—who often rises with the sun, and often sits up for him too—the sun, who, washed and dressed almost in a moment, takes a stage by steam before breakfast, and whom you see dining on a dessert of fruits of all glorious sorts and sizes about midday, right over your head, sitting beneath the Deas, in the blue chamber, ceiling'd and fretted by the sky! Not brighter is that blue chamber of the sun, than the parlour where we hold our Parliament—North in the chair, and unlike that solemn silence in St. Stephens, a speaker indeed! No rat or radical from rotten borough here—each of us member for a county, Lowland or Highland,—the Representatives of Scotland—ay, of England, too,—for lo! "England sends her men, of men the chief"—Seward of Christchurch, and Buller of Brazennose;—and as for Ireland, the green and glorious,—lo! the bold, the dauntless O'Doherty,—the adjutant good-at-need,—the ensign, with whom no hope is forlorn,—the standard-bearer, who plants the staff of joy in the centre of our table, in a hole bored by the gleg gimlet of his nation's wit, so that the genial board is

overshadowed by its bright emblazonry, and at every rustle in its folds, Tickler seems to rise in stature, Macrabin to become more and more the grave Covenanter, Mullion's mirth to grow broader as the crump farl on the gridiron, and our shepherd to shine like a rowan-tree in autumn, brightening the greensward where lie his sheep-like lambs. Invincibles all! It is indeed a bright, a benign, a beautiful little circular world, inhabited but by a few choicest spirits—some of them—oh! may we dare to hope it—even on earth immortal! The winged words—some like bees and some like birds—keep working and lurking, stinging and singing, wherever they alight—yet no pernicious pain in the wound, no cruel enchantment in the strain. The winged words—bee or bird-like—are still murmuring among flowers,—

> "Flowers, worthy of Paradise, which not nice art
> In beds and curious knots, but nature boon
> Pour'd forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain,
> Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
> The open field, and where the unpierced shade
> Imbrown'd the noontide bowers!"

Some faint echo of the sounds that then circle round the inner shrine, not unheard by the outward world, makes its heart to beat or burn within it, its nerves to tingle, or haply even brings the dim haze across its eye. The mean and malignant are cowed like poultry by the crowing of a far-off game-cock, on his airy walk on a pleasant hill-farm. The son of genius pining in the shade—Oh! why should genius ever pine beneath the sun, moon, and stars?—feels encouragement breathed into his spirit, and knows that one day or other he shall emerge from the gloom in glory, cheered by the cordial strain of us kindred spirits, who, one and all, will take him by the hand, the mirthful as well as the melancholy, for their likings and loves are the same, and place him among the Ὁμοτιμοι, the equal-honoured, the sacred band, brothers all, who, to the sound of flutes and soft recorders, in firmest phalanx move on in music to everlasting fame.

We were some half hour ago speaking of the fashionable world—were we not—of Edinburgh? Why, in Edin-

burgh, there is par-excellence no fashionable world. We are—as the King—God bless him—once very well observed, when all we Sawnies happened to be dressed in our Sunday's best—a nation of gentlemen;—and in a nation of gentlemen, you have no notion how difficult, or rather how impossible, it is to make a fashionable world. We are all so vastly pleasant and polite—low-breeding among us is so like high-breeding in any other less distinguished district of the globe,—that persons who desire to be conspicuous for the especial elegance of their manners, or the especial splendour of their blow-outs, know not how to set about it,—and let the highest among them be as fashionable as they will, they will hear an army of chairmen "gurgling Gaelic half-way down their throats," as they keep depositing dowager after dowager, matron after matron, mawsey after mawsey, virgin after virgin, all with feathers "swailing in their bonnets," and every father's daughter among them more fashionable than another, in the gas-lighted hall of a palace in Moray Place, inhabited by a most fashionable Doubleyou Ess—about a dozen of whose offspring of various sizes and sexes, at each new arrival, keep glowering and guffawing through the bannisters on the nursery story, the most fashionable little dirty red-headed dears that ever squalled in a scrubbing-tub on the Plotter's Saturday Night,—while ever and anon fashionable servant maids, some in female curiosity—proof of an enlightened mind—and others, of whom it appears, "the house-affairs do call them hence," keep tripping to and fro, one with a child's night-cap in her hand, and another with something else equally essential to its comfort before getting into bed—while it inspires you with a fine dash of melancholy, to behold on such a night of fashionable festivities, here and there among the many men apparently butlers, footmen, valets, waiters, and so forth—many of them fashionably powdered with oat and barley meal of the finest quality—some in and some out of livery, blue breeches and red, black breeches and gray—you are inspired, we say, with a fine spirit of melancholy, to discern, among "these liveried angels lackeying you," the faces of Sawlies, well known at fashionable funerals, and who smile upon you as you move from room to room, as

if to recall to your remembrance the last time you had the satisfaction of being preceded by them into that place of fashionable resort—the Gray Friars' Churchyard—

> "Those funeral-baked mates
> Do coldly furnish up the supper tables."

Another consequence of our being a nation of gentlemen is, that in all broad Scotland there is no such thing as—a man of ton. An occasional puppy—a not unfrequent prig—is to be met with, in persons ambitious of being distinguished among a nation of gentlemen, each by the possession of his own peculiarity, in itself perhaps more becoming a cur than a Christian, a barber's block than a head with tongue and brains. But a man of ton, we repeat, is, in such a nation, an impossible production ; and we appeal to our readers, if they ever beheld that phenomenon in Edinburgh,—or even in Glasgow, where, on the given principle, a few might reasonably enough be expected to be found in winter quarters about the Gorbals, or summer ones, down at the Auld-kirk,—(so, in the west, do they pronounce Innerkip,)—or the Largs.

There is another general consequence of our being a nation of gentlemen, which deserves notice in this patriotic periodical. Here no man is permitted to pride himself on his superior skill and excellence in the broad, open-day violation of all the bonds and duties of life. This of itself prevents the appearance in a century of a single man of ton. We do not mean to say, that there is no wickedness among us in this pleasant place,—no vice,—no licentiousness,—no dishonour. But they hide their heads in the dark. Here the adultress does not show her face—brazen or blushing with paint. Were she to do so, there are no men of ton to caper by her side, on horseback, along street, or round square, or lead her, at concert, assembly, or play, up the fair lane of stainless matrons, and virgins pure, whose ears abhor the meretricious rustle of the wanton's flaunting habiliments. This is not fashionable among the nation of gentlemen, fashionable as we are. The lady who should act thus, would soon find herself in a nunnery, and the gentleman would pay a visit to the great seat of the riband trade.

The Queen of the North is of an excellent size; and we hope that, during our day, she will not greatly expand her dimensions. There ought always to be a bright embroidered belt of villas, a mile broad at least, between her and the sea; and surely she will not tread upon the feet of the old Pentlands. We could heave the pensive sigh—almost drop the pensive tear—to remember the hundreds of sweet, snug, sheltered, cozy cottages—not thatched, but slated—with lattice-windows, and haply Venetian-blinds—front-trelliced—and with gable-end rich in its jargonelle, "all wede away" by the irresistible "march of stone and lime," charging in close street, and then taking up position in hollow square, on every knoll and brae in the neighbourhood. How many pretty little blossoming gardens does the spring now in vain desiderate! Are there any such things now-a-days, we wonder, as retired citizens? Old, decent, venerable husband and wife, living about a mile, or two miles even, out of town, always to be found at home when you stroll out to see how the worthy pair are getting on, either sitting each on an opposite arm-chair, with a bit sma' lassie, grandchild perhaps, or perhaps only an orphan servant girl, treated as if she were a grandchild, between them on a stool, and who was evidently reading the Bible as you entered; or the two, not far from one another in the garden—he pruning, it may be, the fruit-trees, for he is a great gardener, and rejoices in the golden pippin—she busy with the flowers, among which we offer you a pound for every weed, so exquisitely fine the care that tends those gorgeous beds of anemones and polyanthuses, or pinks, and carnations, on which every dewy morning Flora descends from heaven to brighten the glory with her smiles! But we are relapsing into the pathetic, so let us remark that a capital should always be proportioned to a country—and verily, Scotland carries hers, like a head with a fine phrenological developement, on a broad back and shoulders, and looks stately among the nations. And never—never—this is our morning and evening prayer—never may she need to hang down that head in shame, but may she lift it up, crested with glory, till the blue skies them-

selves shall be no more—till cease the ebbing and the flowing of that sun-bright sea!

But never in all her annals were found together Shame and Scotland. Sir William Wallace has not left Shame one single dark cavern wherein to hide her head. Be thou bold, free, patriotic, as of old, gathered up in thyself within thy native mountains, yet hospitable to the high-souled Southron, as thou wert ever wont to be even in the days of Bannockburn and Flodden!—To thine eye, as of old, be dear each slip of blue sky, glimpsing through the storm—each cloud-cleaving hill-top, Bennevis, Cairngorm, Cruachan—Rannoch's black, bright, purple heather-sea—Gowrie's Carse, beloved of Ceres—and Clydesdale, to Pomona dear—spire pointing to heaven through the dense city-cloud, or from the solitary brae—baronial hall or castle sternly dilapidating in slow decay—humble hut, that sinks an unregarded ruin, like some traditionless cairn—or shieling, that, like the nest of the small brown moorland bird, is renewed every spring, lasting but one summer in its remotest glen! To thine ears, as of old, be

> "Dear the wild music of the mountain wave,
> Breaking along the shores of liberty!"

Dear the thunder of the cataract heard, when the sky is without a cloud, and the rain is over and gone—heard by the deer-stalker, standing like a shadow, leagues off, or moving for hours slow as a shadow, guided by the antlers. Dear be the yell of the unseen eagle in the sky, and dear, where "no falcon is abroad for prey," the happy moaning of the cushat in the grove—the lilting of the lintwhite among broom and brier—the rustle of the wing of the lonesome robin-red-breast in the summer woods—his sweet pipe on the barn or byre-riggin' in autumn, through all winter long his peck at the casement, and his dark-eyed hopping round the hearth! Be thine ever a native, not an alien spirit, and ever on thy lips, sweet Scotia! may there hang the music of thy own Doric tongue.

Nor vain the hope, for it is in heaven! A high philosophy has gone out from the sages of thy cities into the loneliest recesses of the hills. The student sits by the

ingle of his father's straw-roofed shed, or lies in leisure, released from labour, among the broomy banks and braes of the wimpling burn, and pores and meditates over the pages of Reid, and Furgusson, and Stewart, and Brown, —wise benefactors of the race. Each vale " sings aloud old songs, the music of the heart,"—the poetry of Burns the deathless shall brighten for ever the cottar's hearth—Campbell is by all beloved—and the high harp of Scott shall sound for ever in all thy halls. And more solemn, more sacred, all over the land are heard,—

> " Those strains that once did sweet in Sion glide,"

the songs, mournful in their majesty, of the wo-denouncing, sin-dooming prophets of old, of which the meanings are still profound to the ear of nations that listen to them aright—for there is a taint at the core of all their hearts, and not one single land on the face of the whole earth, strong as it may be in its simplicity, that hath not reason to dread that one day or other may be its own—the doom of the mighty Babylon!

But lo! a soft sweet smile of showery sunshine—and our hearts are touched by a sudden mirth.

> " Then said I, Master, pleasant is this place."

A pleasanter city is nowhere to be seen—neither sea-shore nor inland, but between the two, and uniting the restlessness of the one situation with the quietness of the other—there green waves leaping like furies, here green hills fixed like fate,—there white sails gliding, here white tents pitched,—there—you can hardly see it even with a telescopic eye—the far-off Bass, from whose cliffs, perhaps at this very moment, the flashing fowling-piece has scared a yelling cloud of sea-birds,—there the near Castle-Rock thundering a royal salute, for it is the anniversary of the birthday of our most gracious and glorious king,—there masts unnumbered, here roofs multitudinous,—there Neptune, here Apollo,—together, sea, sun, and heaven, all in one—a perfect poem!

Verily it is a pleasant place, and pleasant are the people who inhabit it, through all their grades. The students at

the University are pleasant—so are the professors. The shopkeepers are pleasant—so are the citizens in general, especially such of them as are Tories—though for thy sake, dear friend,—now at far-off Cacra-bank—we could almost become a little Whiggish—pleasant are the advocates—pleasant every W. S.—are not the ministers of the city pleasant as they are pious—and were not those pleasant polemicals all, about the Apocrypha? Pleasant are the country gentlemen who come hither to educate their sons and daughters, forgetful of corn bills—and pleasant, O, Edina! are the strangers within thy gates! Up and down, down and up the various steps of thy society do we delight to crutch it; nor can we complain of a cold reception from the palace in Moray Place to the box at Newington. Yea, verily, Edinburgh is a pleasant place, and pleasant are its inhabitants.

We are too much a nation of gentlemen to talk long about ourselves, and this city of ours, with its Castle-Rock,—its Arthur's Seat,—its Calton Hill,—and its Parthenon of Seven Pillars, standing unemployed like the seven young men of yore, in the now poor, dear, dead Scots Magazine, but unlike them—unfinished! There will the poor Pillars be,—in summer's heat and winter's cold—without a roof to cover them, nor, after the scaffolding shall have been removed, so much as a timber skeleton to stand between them and the easterly harr, seeming to say to every stranger as he ascends the hill,—"Oh, master, we are Seven!"

So let us off to London for an hour or two, not by that unhappy mail-coach, which is not once suffered to cool its axle-tree all the way from this to York Minster—(that is an edifice we must ere long be describing,)—and in which we have committed no crime of sufficient atrocity to deserve imprisonment. Neither have we any desire to die of indigestion, and constipation and inflammation of the bowels, mortification, and gangrene. That is the death of a bag-man. No—ours be the stiff, breeze-loving smack, with her bowsprit right in the wind's eye, and eating out of it, as the helmsman luffs up to catch every capful, all such craft as custom-house cutters, and be hanged to them, —even the king's ones,—gun-brigs cruizing on the station,

—Southampton schooners of the Yacht Club,—or crack-collier from Newcastle, trying it on in ballast, whose captain served last with old Collingwood, and, in youth, with

"Gallant Admiral Howe, sung out, Yo! heave O!"—

Or gallant steamer, that, never gunwale in, but ever upright as the stately swan, cleaves blast and breaker as they both come right ahead,—the one blackening, and the other whitening,—while Bain's trumpet is heard in the mingled roar, and under his intrepid skill all the hundreds on board feel as safe as in their own beds, though it is near nightfall, and we are now among the shores and shallows of the Swin, where ships untold have gone to pieces. —See, there, a wreck!

As for London, it is long since we have sported our figure in Bond Street or the Park. We have had no box at the Opera for a good many years. We have never condescended to put our nose into St. Stephen's Chapel since we accepted the Chilterns—the House of Lords has long been the object of our most distant respect—and, generally speaking, at the West End, we verily believe we are about as well known as Captain Parry, or any other British officer, will ever be at the North Pole.

Yet once we knew London well—both by day when it was broad awake, and by night "when all that mighty heart was lying still." We remember, now, as yesterday, the eve on which we first—all alone and on foot, reached Hyde-Park Corner. All alone! Yes—thousands and hundreds of thousands were on foot then, as well as ourselves, and on horses and in chariots. But still we were alone. Not in misanthropy—no—no—no—for then, as now, and with more intense, more burning passion, with stronger-winged and farther-flighted imagination did we love our kind, for our thoughts were merry as nightingales, untamed as eagles, and tender as doves. But we were young—and we were in a manner foreigners—and few friends had we but the sunbeams and the shadows of our own restless soul. From the solemn and sacred inclosure of thy bell-chiming and cloistered haunts—Rhedicyna! did we come, —the tomes of the old world's treasures closed for a sea-

son—Homer, and Pindar, and Eschylus, and Plato, and the Stagyrite, and Demosthenes, and Thucydides, left for awhile asleep on the shelves of the Gothic-windowed library, where so many musing days had cloudlike floated by, nor failed to leave behind them an immortal inspiration, pure and high as that breathed from the beauty and the grandeur of the regions of setting suns,—and all at once, from the companionship of the dead did we plunge into that of the living!

From the companionship of the dead! For having bade farewell to our sweet native Scotland, and kissed, ere we parted, the grass and the flowers with a shower of filial tears—having bade farewell to all her glens, now a-glimmer in the blended light of imagination and memory—with their cairns and kirks, their low-chimneyed huts and their high turreted halls—their free-flowing rivers, and lochs dashing like seas—we were all at once buried, not in the cimmerian gloom, but the cerulean glitter, of Oxford's ancient academic groves. The genius of the place fell upon us—yes! we hear now, in the renewed delight of the awe of our youthful spirit, the pealing organ in that chapel called the Beautiful—we see the saints on the stained windows—at the altar the picture of one up Calvary meekly bearing the cross! It seemed, then, that our hearts had no need even of the kindness of kindred—of the country where we were born, and that had received the continued blessings of our enlarging love! Yet away went, even then, sometimes our thoughts to Scotland, like carrier-pigeons wafting love-messages beneath their unwearied wings! They went and they returned, and still their going and coming was blest. But ambition touched us, as with the wand of a magician from a vanished world and a vanished time. The Greek tongue—multitudinous as the sea—kept like the sea sounding in our ears, through the stillness of that world of towers and temples. Lo! Zeno, with his arguments hard and high, beneath the Porch! Plato divinely discoursing in grove and garden! The Stagyrite searching for truth in the profounder gloom! The sweet voice of the smiling Socrates, cheering the cloister's shade and the court's sunshine! And when the thunders of Demosthenes ceased, we heard the harping of the old

blind, glorious mendicant, whom, for the loss of eyes, Apollo rewarded with the gift of immortal song! And that was our companionship of the dead!

But the voice—the loud and near voice of the living world came upon us—and starting up, like a man wakened from the world of sleep and dreams, we flew to meet it on the wind—onwards and onwards to its source humming louder and louder as we approached, a magnificent hum as from a city with a thousand gates of everlasting ingress and egress to all the nations of the earth!

Not till then had we known any thing of our own being. Before, all had been dream and vision, through which we had sunk, and kept sink sinking, like flowers surcharged with liquid radiance, down to the palaces of naiads, and mermaids, and fairy folk, inhabiting the emerald caves, and walking through the pearl-leaved forests and asphodel meadows of an unreal and unsubstantial world! For a cloudy curtain had still seemed to hang between us and the old world—darkening even the fields of Marathon and Platæa, whose heroes were but as shadows. Now we were in the eddies—the vortices—the whirlpools of the great roaring sea of life! and away we were carried, not afraid, yet somewhat trembling in the awe of our new delight, into the heart of the habitations of all this world's most imperial, most servile—most tyrannous and most slavish passions! All that was most elevating and most degrading—most startling and most subduing too—most trying by temptation of pleasure, and by repulsion of pain—into the heart of all joy and all grief—all calm and all storm—all dangerous trouble, and more dangerous rest—all rapture and all agony—crime, guilt, misery, madness and despair. A thousand voices, each with a different tone, cried us on—yet over them all one voice, with which the rest were still in unison—the voice of the hidden wickedness that is in the soul of every man who is born of a woman, and that sometimes as if it were of guardian angel, and sometimes of familiar demon, now lured, persuaded, urged, drove us on—on, on, in amongst shoals and shallows of that dim heaving sea, where many wrecks were visible, sheer hulks heaved up on the dark dry—or mast-heads but a foot out of the foam—here what seemed

a beacon, and there a lighthouse, but on we bore, all sail set, to the very sky-scrapers, with flags flying, and all the ship of life manned by a crew of rebellious passions—and Prudence, that old Palinurus, at the helm fast asleep, and then, as if in his own doom prophetic of ours, overboard amongst breakers!

For a moment, we thought of the great cataracts of Scotland—Corra-Linn—Foyers—thousands of nameless torrents tumbling over mountains to the sea—her murmuring forests and caves a-moaning for ever to the winds and waves round the cliff-bound coast of Cape Wrath! But that was the voice of nature—dead in her thunders, even as in the silence of the grave. This was the voice of life—subliner far—and smiting the soul with a sublimer sympathy. Now, our whole being was indeed broad awake—hitherto, in its deepest stirrings, it had been as asleep. All those beautiful and delightful reveries vanished away, as something too airy and indolent for the spirit—passive no more—but rejoicing in its strength, like a full-fledged young eagle, leaping from the edge of its eyry, fearlessly and at once, over the cliff, and away off into the bosom of the storm!

Whither shall we look? Whither shall we fly? Denizens of a new world—a new universe—chartered libertines, as yet unblamed by conscience, who took part with the passions, knowing not that even her own sacred light might be obscured by the flapping of their demon-wings! And why should conscience, even in that danger, have been afraid? It is not one of her duties to start at shadows. God-given to the human breast, she suffers not her state to be troubled by crowds of vain apprehensions, or she would fall in her fear. Even then, virtue had her sacred allies in our heart. The love of that Nature on whose bosom we had been bred—a sleeping spark of something like poetry in our souls unextinguishable, and preservative of the innocence it enlightened—reverence of the primitive simplicity of beloved Scotland's faith—the memory of the old, holy, and heroic songs—the unforgotten blessing of a mother's living lips, of a father's dying eyes—the ambition, neither low nor ignoble, of youth's aspiring hopes, for, not altogether uncrowned had been our temples, even

with the Muses' wreath—a whisper of Hope, faint, far-off, and uncertain, and haply even now unrealized its promise—and far down buried, but instinct with spirit, beneath them all, a life-deep love for her, that orphan-maid—so human, yet so visionary—afar-off in the beauty of her heaven-protected innocence, beneath the shadow of that old castle, where by day the starlings looked down on her loveliness, sole-sitting among the ruins, and for her the wood-lark, Scotia's nightingale, did sing all night long—a life-deep love, call it passion, pity, friendship, brotherly affection, all united together by smiles, sighs, and tears—songs sung as by an angel in the moonlight glen—prayers in that oratory among the cliffs—the bliss of meetings and of partings among the glimmering woods, sanctified by her presence—of that long, last, eternal farewell!

Therefore, our spirit bore a charmed life into that world of danger and death. That face to us was holy, though then all alive in its loveliness—and, oh! that it should ever have been dead—holy as the face of some figure—some marble figure of a saint lying on a tomb. Its smile was with us even when our eyes knew it not—its voice as the dying close of music, when our ear was given to other sounds less pensive and divine.

With all its senses in a transport our soul was now in the mighty London! Every single street-musician seemed to us as an Orpheus. Each band of female singers, some harping as they sung, and others, with light guitar riband-bound to their graceful shoulders, to us were as the Muses—each airy group very goddesses,

> "Knit with the Graces and the Loves in dance,"

and leading on the hours along the illuminated atmosphere, where each lamp was a star! The whole world seemed houses, palaces, domes, theatres, and temples—and London the universal name! Yet there was often a shudder as the stream of terrible enjoyment went roaring by—and the faces of all those lost creatures—those daughters of sin and sorrow—with fair but wan faces, hollow bright eyes—and shrieks of laughter, appalled the heart that wondered at their beauty, and then started to hear afar

off, and as in a whisper, the word "innocence," as if it were the name of something sacred in another life and another world; for here guilt was in its glory and its grief, women angels of light no more, but fiends of darkness, hunting and hunted to despair and death!

Fear cannot live in youth's bosom; and gay and glad we penetrated, like a young bird that loves the sunshine of the open sky, yet dreads not to drop down, or dart into the black forest gloom—into the haunts where the old gray grim Iniquity had, from time immemorial, established his strongholds. The ruffian's scowl fell off our face, like darkness from a new-trimmed lamp, of which the oil failed not—our eye, which neither grief nor guilt had clouded, made that of the robber, the burglar, and the murderer to quail—convicts even then to conscience, and doomed to die on the scaffold—curses and execrations passed by our heads like blasts by the top of the strong young trees. And will law, bloody penal law, quell crimes in such hearts as these, or strike their hands with palsy? Shall the hangman terrify, when conscience is a bugbear? Other ministers must disarm the murderers. Another light than the torch in the iron grasp of criminal justice discovering and dragging the felon from his haunt, must penetrate and dispel the darkness, till it is as broad as day, and therein wickedness can hatch and hide no more—the light of mercy, and the jurisprudence of the New Testament. But on reascending from the dolorous region into the blessed day, there was the dome of St Paul's in heaven, or there the holy Abbey, where sleep England's holiest dead, and the Thames, with all his floating glories, moored or adrifting with the tide down to the sea, like giants rejoicing to run a race to the uttermost parts of the earth!

How dreamlike the flowings of the Isis by Godstow's ivied ruin, where blossomed, bloomed, and perished in an hour, Rosamunda—flower of the world! How cheerful, as if waked from a dream, glides on the famous stream by Christ Church Cathedral grove! How sweet by Iffley's Saxon tower! By Nuncham's lime-tree shade how serene as peace! But here thou hast changed thy name and thy nature into the sea-seeking Thames, alive and loud with the tide that murmurs of the ocean-foam, and bridged mag-

nificently as becomes the river that makes glad the City of the Kings who are the umpires of the whole world's wars! Down sailed our spirit, along with the floating standard of England, to the Nore. There her Fleet lay moored, like a thunder-cloud whose lightning rules the sea—

> "Her march is o'er the mountain-wave,
> Her home is on the deep!"

Wo to all the isle, when the sons of ocean walk their decks in mutiny! Wo to France and Spain and all the banded naval powers of the world, when, calm as clouds, the fleet bears down in white-winged line of battle, and the foeman's crescent breaks into fragments, and melts away, with all its struck flags, into fatal overthrow! And what, O London! were the Tyre and Sidon, whose merchants were princes—what were Tyre and Sidon to thee! Even now the sun is rising, and the sun is setting, on thy countless sails. We almost cease now to feel

> "Of the old sea some reverential fear!"

The ocean obeys "the meteor-flag of England," even as its ebbing and flowing obeys the planet.

But it is night, and lo! the crowded theatre is ablaze with beauty; and as Tragedy, "with solemn stole, comes sweeping by," the piled-up multitude is all as hush as death. Then first the "buried majesty of Denmark"—though mimic all the scene—was awful and full of dread to our young imagination, as if indeed "revisiting the glimpses of the moon," on the old battlements of Elsineur—the fine, pensive, high philosophy of the melancholy, world-distracted Hamlet, flowed as if from his own very princely lips—the fair Ophelia, as she went singing and scattering her flowers, was to us a new image of a purer innocence, a more woful sorrow, than we knew before to have ever had its birth or burial-place on this earth. There we saw the shadow of the mightiest Julius standing—imperial still—before his beloved Brutus in the tent; and as he waved a majestic upbraiding, threatening, and warning, from the hand that had subdued the world, we heard the Cæsar say, "We will meet again at Philippi." There

we, too, as well as the Thane, heard a voice cry to all the house, "sleep no more—Glammis hath murdered sleep—and therefore Cawdor shall sleep no more!" and in glided, with stone eyes and bloodless face, sleep-walking remorse, in the form of a stately lady wringing her hands, and groaning, "Out, damned spot," while the haunted felt in her dream, that "not all the perfumes of Arabia could sweeten that little hand!"

Then there was eloquence in the world, that is in London, in those days; or did the soul then half-create the thunders she heard pealing from the lips of Burke, and Pitt, and Fox, the great orators of England, and startle at the flash of her own lightning? But the old pillars of the social edifice then seemed to rock as to an earthquake, and the lips of common men, in the general inspiration, were often touched with fire. Even now we see their flashing eyes, their knit brows, their clenched hand, their outstretched arms—their "face inflamed"—even now we hear their voices, flowing like majestic streams, or loud as the headlong cataract—of those whom the world consents to call great. We thought as we looked and listened, of him who

> "Wielded at will that fierce democracy,
> Shook the arsenal, and fulmined over Greece—
> From Macedon to Artaxerxes' throne;"

nor felt that the son of Chatam was less than "the thunderer," as he stood proudly denouncing vengeance against the legions of the tricolor, and prophesying the triumph of the glorious Isle, "whose shores beat back the ocean's foamy feet," and whose sons have ever been the true children of Liberty.

The spirit of the world was then awakened by dreadful outcries from too long a sleep—and the alarum-bell that then kept tolling far and wide over the sky, though now its iron tongue is at rest, or but trembling in that "hollow," so soon and so easy made to give forth its sullen music, hangs still over the nations, who, under even the silence of its shadow, shall sink no more into disgraceful slumbers. The ears of kings, and princes, and nobles, were astounded; and all Europe groaned or gloried with the

Bourbon's in-vain-anointed head, was with the few fatal words held up dissevered, "Behold the head of a tyrant!" and the axe, that made no respect of persons, bit the fair neck of Marie Antoinette, nathless all those glorious tresses whose beauty had dazzled the world. Life was then struck, over all its surface and all its depths, with a stormy sunshine—dread alternations of brightness and blackness, that made the soul to quake alike in its hopes and in its fears. Who wished, then, to escape the contagion?—Not even the gentlest, the most fervent, the most devoted lovers of domestic peace. They, too, joined the hymn of thanksgiving—and one Pæan seemed to stun the sky. But the very clouds ere long began to drop blood, and then good men paused even to obey the stern voice of Justice, in fear that the dewy voice of Mercy should never more be heard on earth. Call it not a reaction—for that is a paltry word—but thankful to the great God did men become, when at last, standing silent on the desolate shore, they saw the first ebb of that fiercely-flowing tide, and knew that the sea was to return to its former limits, and sweep away no more the peasant's hut and the prince's palace.

That was a time indeed, for men to speak, to whom heaven had granted the gift of eloquence. And London then held many eloquent, who, when the storm was hushed, relapsed into men of common speech.

But poor, vain, and empty all, is the glory of great orators, compared with that of poets and sages, or conquerors. The poet and sage walk hand in hand together through the moral and intellectual empire of mind—nor, in the world's admiration, is the triumphal car of victory unworthy of being placed near the Muses' bower. What mighty ones have breathed the air of that great city—have walked in inspiration along the banks of England's metropolitan-river—have been inhumed in her burial-places, humble or high, frequented by common and care-less feet, or by footsteps treading reverentially, while the visiter's eyes are fixed on marble image or monument, sacred to virtue, to valour, or to genius, the memory of the prime men of the earth! These, London, are thy guardian spirits—these thy tutelary gods. When the hor-

rid howl of night—the howl of all those distracted passions is hushed—and the soul, relieved from the sorrow in which it thinks of sin, when an eye or ear-witness to its unhallowed orgies, lifts up its eyes to the stars so bright and beautiful, so silent and so serene—then remembereth she the names, the endowments, the achievements, of the immortal dead. There—largest and most lustrous—that star that "dwells apart"—is the image of Milton! That other, soft-burning, dewy, and almost twinkling star—now seeming to shine out into intenser beauty, and now almost dim, from no obscuring cloud or mist, but as if some internal spirit shaded the light for a moment, even as an angel may veil his countenance with his wings—that is the star of Spenser! And of all the bright people of the skies, to fancy's gaze, thou, most lovely planet, art the very Fairy-Queen!

Therefore, to us, enthusiasts then in poetry—and may that enthusiasm survive even the season "of brightness in the grass and glory in the flower," which has almost now passed away—to us, who thought of poets as beings set apart from the world which their lays illumined—how solemn—how sacred—how sublime a delight—deaf and blind to all the sights and sounds of the common day—to look on the very house in which some great poet had been born—lived—or died! Were the house itself gone, and some ordinary pile erected in its stead, still we saw down into the old consecrated foundation! Had the very street been swept away—its name and its dust—still the air was holy—and more beautiful overhead the blue gleam of the sky!

And in the midst of all that noisy world of the present, that noisy and miserable world—in the midst of it and pervading it—might not even our youthful eye see the spirit of religion? And feel, even when most astounded with sights and sounds of wickedness, that in life there was still a *mens divinior*—

"Mens agitat molem et magno se corpore miscet."

Christianity spoke in Sabbath-bells, not "swinging slow with sullen roar," like the curfew of old extinguishing the

household fires on all hearths; but, high up in the clearer air, the belfry of tower and spire sent a sweet summons, each over its own region, to families to repair again to the house of God, where the fires of faith, hope, and charity, might be rekindled on the altar of the religion of peace. The sweet solemn faces of old men—of husbands and fathers, and sons and brothers—the fair faces of matrons and virgins—the gladsome faces of children—

"For piety is sweet to infant minds"—

were seen passing along the sobered streets, whose stones, but a few hours ago, clanked to the mad rushing to and fro of unhallowed feet, while the air, now so still, or murmuring but with happy voices, attuned to the spirit of the day, was lately all astir with rage, riot, and blasphemy!

"Such ebb and flow must ever be,
Then wherefore should we mourn!"

Sweet is the triumph of religion on the Sabbath-day, in some solitary glen, to which come trooping from a hundred braes, all the rural dwellers, disappearing, one small family party after another, into the hushed kirk—now, as the congregation has collected, exhaling to heaven, as a flower-bank exhales its fragrance, the voice of psalms! But there piety has only deepened peace! Here—though yet the voice of the great city will not be hushed—and there is heard ever a suppressed murmur—a sound—a noise—a growl—dissatisfied with the Sabbath—here, the power that descends from the sky upon men's hearts stilling them against their wills into a sanctity so alien to their usual life, is felt to have even a more sublime consecration! "The still small voice" speaks, in the midst of all that unrepressed stir, the more distinctly, because so unlike the other sounds, with which it mingles not; that there is another life, "not of this noisy world, but silent and divine," is felt from the very disturbances that will not lie at rest; and though hundreds of thousands heed it not, the tolling of that great bell from the cathedral strikes of death and judgment. Yes, England! with all thy sins,

thou holdest, with fast devotion, to the faith, for which so many of thy sainted sons did perish in the fires of persecution. The smoke of those fierce faggots is dead—but, as that inspired man prophesied, while he held up his withered hand in the scorching flame—such a fire has been kindled as lights all the land—centuries after his martyred ashes were given to the heedless winds,—and the names of Cranmer and Ridley are reverenced for evermore!

High ministrations—solemn services of religion!—in which the Church of England, in its reverential awe, delights—from the first hour in which we participated in the holy rites, they breathed into our being the full, deep, divine spirit of devotion, sanctifying, at burst or close of the organ-peal, the chapel's pillared shade!—How sweetly rose our souls to heaven on the hymn of the young white-robed choristers!—How sunk they and swelled, rejoiced and saddened, and when the thought of some of our own peculiar sorrows also touched us, how they even wept, over the worship of that beautiful liturgy, composed so scripturally by pious men, to whom the language of the Bible had been familiar almost as their mother tongue! Of the great old English divines, so laden with heavenly erudition, and who had brought all human wisdom and human science to establish and to illustrate the religion of the lowly Jesus, remembrance often crossed us like a shadow, at each wide-murmured response. Apostles of a later time, inspired by their own faith! Yet true still were our hearts to the memory of that simpler service, nor less divine—for blessed ever are all modes of worship in which the human being seeks in sincerity to draw near to God—that simpler service, so well suited to a simpler land, in which we had from infancy been instructed, and which, to preserve in its purity, had our own forefathers bled. In the high cathedral,

> "Where through the long-drawn isle and fretted vault,
> The pealing anthem swells the note of praise,"

we call to mind the low kirk and its psalms. The kirk near the modest manse, in which our boyhood flew away

—with its decent pews, little loft, and unambitious pulpit—the friendly faces of the rural congregation—the grave elders sitting in their place of honour—the pious preacher, who to us had been a father!—Oh! many-toned are the voices on the Sabbath, all praising and worshipping God! List—list, in the hush of thy spirit, and all Christian lands are sounding with one various hymn!

And then London, ere long, became to us—in all its vastness—even as our very home! For all undisturbed amidst the din, and murmuring internally, each with its own peculiar character of domestic joys, with laughter and with song—how many dwellings for us did open their hospitable doors, and welcome us in, with blessings, beneath their social roofs! Our presence brought a brighter expression into their partial eyes; our mirth never seemed otherwise than well-timed to them, nor yet did our melancholy—nor failed either to awaken congenial feelings in the breasts of those to whom we were too undeservedly dear—smiles went round the hearth or table circle to our quaint ditty and tale of glee—and the tears have fallen, when in the "parlour twilight" we sang

"One of those Scottish tunes so sad and slow,"

or told some one of those old, pathetic, traditionary stories, that still, cloud-like, keep floating over all the hills of Scotland! Oh! the great pleasure of friendships formed in youth! where chance awakens sympathy, accident kindles affection—and fortune, blind and restless on her revolving wheel, favours, as if she were some serene-eyed and steadfast divinity, the purest passions of the soul! As one friendship was added to another—and base creed it is—most shallow and fantastic—that would confine amity, even in its dearest meaning—for how different is friendship from love—to communicate but with some single chosen one, excluding all our other brethren from approach to the heart—although true it is, that some one, in our greatest bale and our greatest bliss, will be more tenderly, more profoundly, more gratefully embraced than all the rest—as friendship was added to friendship, as family after family, household after household, became each a new

part of our enlarged being, how delightful, almost every successive day, to feel ou knowledge growing wider and warmer of the virtues of the character of England! Perhaps some unconscious nationality had been brought with us from our native braes—narrowing our range of feeling, and inclining sometimes to unjust judgments and unkindly thoughts. But all that was poor or bad in that prejudice, soon melted away before the light of bold English eyes, before the music of bold English speech. Sons and daughters of the free! As brothers and as sisters we loved you soon—without suspicion, without reserve, without jealousy, without envy of your many superior and surpassing endowments of nature, and accomplishments of art! For, with all deduction on the score of inevitable human fault and frailty, how high the morals of England, her manners how becoming the children of such a birth!

The friends, too, whom in those sacred hours, we had taken to our hearts, linked, along with other more human ties, by the love of literature and poetry—and with whom we had striven to enter

"The cave obscure of old Philosophy,"

and when starry midnight shone serenely over Oxford's towers and temples, sighed—vainly sighed—with unsatisfied longings and aspirations, that would not let us rest, to "unsphere the spirit of Plato"—they, too, were often with us in the wide metropolis, where, wide as it is, dear friends cannot almost be for a single day, but by some happy fortune they meet! How grasped—clasped were then our hands and our hearts! How all college recollections—cheerful and full of glee—or high and of a solemn shade—came over us from the silence of those still retreats, in the noise of the restless London! Magdalen, Mertoun, Oriel, Christ-Church, Trinity—how pleasant were your names!

Hundreds of morning, meridian, evening, midnight meetings! Each with its own—nor let us fear to declare it beneath those sunny skies—with its blameless, at least not sinful, charm. Now carried on a stream of endless, various, fluctuating converse, with a friend, more earnest, more enthusiastic, more impassioned than ourselves—and

nature filled not our veins with frozen blood—along streets and squares, all dimly seen or unseen, and the faces and figures of the crowds that went thronging by, like the faces and figures in some regardless dream! Now walking in, on a sudden, and as if by some divine impulse, into that cathedral—or that abbey—ask not their names—and there, apart and silent, standing with fixed eyes before statue or tomb! Now glide gliding in light canoe with wind and tide adown the great river, in indolent yet imaginative reverie, while masts and sails, and trees and towers, as they all went floating through the air, seemed scarcely to belong to any world—or proud of the skuller's skill, and emulous of the strength of the broad-breasted watermen whom Father Thames sustains, striving, stripped, against the waves a-ripple and a-foam with the rapid ebb, impatient to return to the sea! Now a-foot along pleasant pathways, for a time leading through retired and sylvan places, and then suddenly past a cluster of cottages, or into a pretty village, almost a town, and purposely withholding our eyes from the prospect, till we had reached one well remembered eminence—and then the glorious vision seen from Richmond Hill! Where, where, on the face of all the earth, can the roaming eye rest in more delighted repose than on the "pleasant villages and farms" that far and wide compose that surburban world, so rich in trees alone, that were there no other beauty, the poet could even find a paradise both for week-day and Sabbath hours, in the bright neighbourhood of London! Endless profusion and prodigality of art, coping almost successfully with nature! Wealth is a glorious thing in such creations. Riches are the wands of magicians. Poverty bleakens the earth—in her region grandeur is bare—and we sigh for something that is not among the naked rocks. But here from the buried gold, groves rise with such loads of verdure, that but for their giant boughs and branches, their heads would be bowed down to the lawns and gardens, gorgeous all with their flushing flowers, naturalized in the all-bearing soil of England, from all climes, from the occident to the orient!

But where cease the suburban charms of the Queen of Cities? Mansion after mansion—each more beautifully

embowered than another—or more beautifully seated on some gently undulating height, above the far-sweeping windings of the silver Thames, is still seen by the roamer's eye, not without some touch of vain envy at his heart of those fortunate ones, for whom life thus lavishes all its elegance and all its ease—Oh, vain envy indeed! for who knows not that all happiness is seated alone in the heart! —till, ere he remembers that far-off London has vanished quite away, he looks up, and lo! the towers of Windsor—the palace of old England's kings.

Nor are those "sylvan scenes" unworthily inhabited. Travel city-crowded continents, sail in some circumnavigating ship to far and fair isles, that seem dropt from heaven into the sea, yet shall your eyes behold no lovelier living visions than the daughters of England. Lovelier never visited poet's slumbers nightly—not even when before him in youth

> "Hope, enchanted, smiled, and waved her golden hair!"

And of England's "*interrita pubes*," let speak the shore of every sea—

> "A race in faith unstain'd, invincible in arms."

Wafted away, we knew not, cared not whither, on the wings of wonder and admiration,—when, during the long summer silence, the towers of Oxford kept chiming to deserted courts and cloisters,—all England, its downs, its wolds, its meadows, its plains, its vales, its hills, its mountains, minsters, abbeys, cathedrals, castles, palaces, villages, towns, and cities, all became tributary to our imagination, gazing upon her glories with a thousand eyes. Now we breathed the fragrance of Devonia's myrtle bowers—now from St. Michael's Mount "looked to Bayona and the Giant's Hold," now wept and worshipped at the grave of Shakspeare, or down the yellow Avon thought we saw sailing her own sweet stately swan! Now gazed in dread astonishment on Portsmouth's naval arsenal, and all that machinery—sublime, because of the power that sets it a-going, and far more, because of the

power that it sends abroad, winged and surcharged with thunder, all over the main—ships without masts, sheer-hulks, majestic and magnificent even in that bare black magnitude, looming through the morning or evening gloaming—and lo! a first-rater, deck above deck, tier above tier of guns, sending up, as she sails in sunshine, her clouds into the sky; and as the Ocean Queen bears up in the blast, how grand her stern—and what a height above the waves tumbling a-foam in her wake! Now seated on the highest knoll of all the bright Malvern Hills in breathless delight, slowly turning round our head in obedience to the beauty and grandeur of that panorama—matchless on earth—we surveyed at one moment county upon county, of rich, merry, sylvan England, mansioned, abbeyed, towered, spired, castled; and at another, different, and yet not discordant, say, rather, most harmonious with that other level scene, the innumerous mountains of Wales, cloud-crested, or clearly cutting with outlines free, flowing or fantastic, here the deep blue, there the dark purple, and yonder the bright crimson sky! Wales, glorious, even were she without other glory, with Plinlimmon, Cader-Idris, Snowdon,

> "Vocal no more since Cambria's fatal day,
> To high-born Hoel's harp, or soft Llewellyn's lay."

Now borne as on angel's wing, and in the "very waist and middle of the night," we sat down a solitary on Derwent Water's shore,

> "While the cataract of Lodore
> Peal'd to our orisons!"

Now while Luna and her nymphs delighted to behold their own beauty on its breathless bosom, we hung in a little skiff, like a water-lily moored in moonshine, in the fairest of all fair scenes in nature, and the brightest of all the bright—how sweet the music of her name, as it falls from our lips with a blessing—Windermere—Windermere!

And thus we robbed all England of her beauty and her sublimity, her grandeur and her magnificence, and bore it all off and away treasured in our heart of hearts. Thus,

the towers and temples of Oxford were haunted with new visions—thus in London we were assailed by sounds and sights from the far-off solitude of rocks, and cliffs, and woods, and mountains, on whose summits hung setting suns, or rose up in spiritual beauty the young crescent moon, or crowded unnumbered planets, or shone alone in its lustre,

> "The star of Jove, so beautiful and large,"

as if the other eyes of heaven were afraid to sustain the serenity of that one orb divine!

But still as the few soul-brightening, soul-strengthening suns of youth rolled on,—those untamed years, of which every day, it might seem indeed every hour, brought the consciousness of some new knowledge, some new feeling, that made the present greater than the past, and was giving perpetual promise of a still greater future,—promise that was the divine manna of hope—while the world of nature continued to our eyes, our hearts, and our imaginations, dearer and more dear, saddened or sublimed by associations clothing with green gladness the growth of the young, with hoary sadness, the decay of the old trees,

> "Moulding to beauty many a mouldering tower;"

and in storm or sunshine, investing with a more awful or a more peaceful character the aspect of the many-shipped sea,—even then, when the world of the senses was in its prime, and light and music did most prodigally abound in the air and the water, in the heavens and on the earth, we rejoiced with yet a far exceeding joy, we longed with yet a far exceeding desire, we burned with yet a far exceeding passion, for all that was growing momently brighter and more bright, darker and more dark, vaster and more vast, within the self-discovered region of mind and spirit! There swept along each passion, like a great wind—there the sudden thought

> "Shot from the zenith like a falling star!"

We wished not to "have lightened the burden of the mystery of all that unintelligible world!" It was the mystery

which, trembling, we loved—awaking suddenly to the quaking of our own hearts, at solitary midnight from the divine communion of dreams, that like spirits for ever haunted our sleep.

> " 'Tis mind alone—bear witness heaven and earth!—
> 'Tis mind alone that in itself contains
> The beauteous or sublime!"

Where are the blasts born that bring the clouds across the stars? Where are the thoughts born that bring clouds across our souls? The study of physics is sublime, for the student feels as if mounting the lower steps of the ladder leading up to God in the skies. But the metaphysics of our own moral, our own intellectual being, sublimer far! when reason is her own object, and conscience, by her own light, sees into her own essence!

And where shall such studies be best pursued? Not alone in the sacred silence of the academic grove—although there should be their glimmering beginnings, and there their glorified but still obscurest end. But through the dim, doubting, and often sorely disturbed intermediate time, when man is commanded by the being within him to mingle with man, when smiles, and sighs, and tears, are most irresistible, and when the look of an eye can startle the soul into a passion of love or hate, then it is that human nature must be studied—or it will remain unknown and hidden for ever—must be studied by every human being for himself, in the poetry and philosophy of life! As that life lies spread before us like a sea! At first, like delighted, wondering, and fearful children, who keep gazing on the waves that are racing like living creatures from some far-off region to these their own lovely and beloved shores,—or still with unabated admiration, at morning, see the level sands yellowing far away, with bands of beautiful birds walking in the sun, or, having trimmed their snowy plumage, wheeling in their pastime, with many wild-mingled cries, in the glittering air,—with here—there—yonder some vessel seemingly stranded, and fallen helpless on her side, but waiting only for the tide to waken her from her rest, and again to waft her, on her re-expanded wings,

away into the main! Then, as the growing boy becomes more familiar with the ebb and the flow—with all the smiles and frowns on the aspect—all the low and sweet, all the loud and sullen, tones of the voice of the sea—in his doubled delight he loses half his dread, launches his own skiff, paddles with his own oar, hoists his own little sail—and, ere long, impatient of the passion that devours him, the passion for the wonders and dangers that dwell on the great deep, on some day disappears from his birth-place and his parents' eyes, and, years afterwards, returns a thoughtful man from his voyaging round the globe!

Therefore, to know ourselves, we sought to penetrate into the souls of other men—to be with them, in the very interior of their conscience, when they thought no eye was upon them but the eye of God. 'Twas no seclusion of the spirit within itself to take cognizance of its own acts and movements; but we were led over the fortunes and works of human beings wherever their minds have acted or their steps have trod. All sorrow and all joy, the calamities which have shaken empires, the crimes which have hurried single souls into perdition, the grounds of stability, just order, and power, in the great societies of men—the peace and happiness that have blossomed in the bosom of innocent life, the loves that have interwoven joy with grief, the hopes that no misery can overwhelm, the fears that no pleasure can assuage, the gnawing of the worm that never dies, the bliss of conscience, the bale of remorse, the virtue of the moral, and the piety of the religious spirit,—all these, and every thing that human life, in its inexhaustible variety, could disclose, became the subjects of inquiry, emotion, thought, to our intellect seeking knowledge of human nature, to us a student desirous, in restless and aspiring youth, to understand something of his own soul—of that common being in which he lives and breathes, and of which, from no other source, and no other aid, can he ever have any uninspired revelation.

Is it wonderful then that we, like other youths with a soul within them, mingled ourselves and our very being with the dark, bright, roaring, hushed, vast, beautiful, magnificent, guilty and glorious London!

Coleridge, that rich-freighted argosie, tilting in sunshine over imagination's seas, feared not—why should he have feared?—in a poem of his youth—to declare to all men,

> "To me hath Heaven, with bounteous hand, assign'd
> Energic reason and a shaping mind."

That boast may not pass our lips! Yet what forbids us even now exultingly to say, that nature had not withheld from us the power of genial delight in all the creations of genius; and that she shrouded, as with a gorgeous canopy, our youth, with the beauty and magnificence of a million dreams? Lovely to our eyes was all the loveliness that emanated from more gifted spirits, and in the love with which we embraced it, it became our very own! We caught the shadows of high thoughts as they passed along the wall, reflected from the great minds meditating in the hallowed shade! And thenceforth they peopled our being! Nor haply did our own minds not originate some intellectual forms and combinations, in their newness fair, or august—recognised as the product of our own more elevated moods, although unarrayed, it might be, in words, or passing away with their symbols into oblivion, nor leaving a trace behind—only a sense of their transitory presence, consolatory and sublime! Even then, in thy loud streets, O London! as the remembrance of Scotland's silent valleys came suddenly and softly upon our hearts, a wish, a hope, a belief arose that the day might come, when even our voice might not be altogether unlistened to by the happy dwellers there,—haply faint, low, and irregular, like the song of some bird—one of the many linnets—in its happiness half-afraid to tune its melodies, amidst the minstrelsy of Merle and Mavis, with which the whole forest rings!

Often do we vainly dream that time works changes only by ages—by centuries! But who can tell what even an hour may bring forth! Decay and destruction have "ample room and verge enough," in such a city; and in one year they can do the work of many generations. This century is but young—scarcely hath it reached its prime. But since its first year rolled round the sun, how many towers and temples have in ever-changeful Lon-

don "gone to the earth!" How many risen up whose "statures reach the sky!" Dead is the old king in his darkness, whom all England loved and reverenced. Princes have died, and some of them left not a name—mighty men of war have sunk, with all their victories and all their trophies, vainly deemed immortal, into oblivion! —Mute is the eloquence of Pitt's and of Canning's voice! In that Abbey, the thought of whose sacred silence did often touch his high heart, when all his fleet was moored in peace, or bearing down in line of battle, now Nelson sleeps!—And thousands, unknown and unhonoured, as wise, or brave, in themselves as good and as great as those whose temples fame hath crowned with everlasting halo, have dropt the body, and gone to God. How many thousand fairest faces, brightest eyes, have been extinguished and faded quite away! Fairer and brighter far to him whose youth they charmed and illumined, than any eyes that shall ever more gaze on the flowers of earth, or the stars of heaven!

Methinks the western sun shines cooler in the garden —that the shades are somewhat deepened—that the birds are not hopping round our head, as they did some hour ago—that in their afternoon siesta they are mute. Another set of insects are in the air. The flowers, that erewhile were broad and bright awake, with slumbering eyne are now hanging down their heads; and those that erewhile seemed to slumber, have awoke from their day-dreams, and look almost as if they were going to speak. Have you a language of your own—dear creatures—for we know that ye have loves? But, hark, the gong—the gong! in the hand of John, smiting it like the slave of some Malay-chief. In our paradise there is "fear that dinner cool," mortal man must eat—and thus endeth

"OUR MIDSUMMER-DAY'S DREAM."

AN ESSAY ON THE THEORY AND THE WRITINGS OF WORDSWORTH.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1829.)

PART I.

It appears to me that the poetry of Wordsworth, always estimated too rapturously, or too virulently depreciated, has never been placed on its proper level. "Then, of course," cries the critic, "you imagine yourself competent to fix it in its appropriate station." If I were to say no, you would not believe me; and if I say yes, I go beyond the truth. A man, when he professes to treat of a subject, is always supposed, by courtesy, to be master of that subject. He is obliged to place himself in the situation of a teacher, and to regard those whom he addresses as his pupils, although he may be conscious that his powers are below those of some who grant him their attention. This compelled tone of superiority, this involuntary dictatorship, must, more especially, be admitted as an excuse for laying down the law in matters of taste. Subjects of science, indeed, may be handled with precision; and any one, after going through a certain course of study and experiment may, without arrogance, assert, "These things are so." Moral and sacred subjects again may appeal to a fixed standard. But subjects that relate to taste and feeling, admit not of such exactness. In these every man is a law unto himself, and he who sets himself up for a lecturer on taste can, after all, only give his own opinion, and leave others to adopt it or not, according to their several notions of right and wrong, beauty and deformity. One qualification, at least, I possess for the task I have undertaken. I have read, as I believe, every line that Wordsworth ever published. Critic, canst thou say as much?

My first endeavour will be to show that Wordsworth's genius is overrated by his partisans; my second, that it is underrated by his detractors.

Although Wordsworth has never been a popular poet, in the extended sense of the word, yet what he has lacked in the number of his admirers, has been made up to him by the intensity of adoration which his few worshippers have displayed. A true disciple of his school said to me, "I call the poetry of Wordsworth an actual revelation;" and I have heard others assert that his writings were able to work a moral change in any zealous peruser of them. This may seem strange to those who only know Wordsworth's poetry through the medium of passages quoted from the Lyrical Ballads, or perhaps by the imitation of his style in the Rejected Addresses—an imitation which does not possess one true characteristic of his manner. It is the mixture of philosophy with low and humble subjects which is the real peculiarity of Wordsworth's poetry—not, as some persons imagine, a mere childishness both of thought and meaning. It is on Wordsworth's faith, as viewed in connexion with its poetical practice, that his admirers found his claim to great and original excellence, and they thence derive their prediction, that by the side of Milton his station will be awarded him by posterity. Unlike other poets who leave their principles of composition to be deduced from their works, Wordsworth lays down certain principles, of which he professes his poetry to be an illustration. He is a theorist, as well as a poet, and may be considered as much the founder of a sect as Plato or Pythagoras. This connexion between his peculiar notions and his verse obliges me to consider how far his theory is original, how far it is just, and with what success he has illustrated it in his compositions. I must, however, premise, that the very idea of fabricating poetry according to a set theory, is an unhappy one. That a thing, which should both proceed from, and address itself to, the feelings —which ought to be an inspiration and a divine madness —should mete itself out by rule and measure, "regulate its composition by principles," and carefully adapt its language of passion to a code of speech, involves an essential contradiction. Where was Shakspeare's theory when he read

the open book of Nature, and transcribed her pages upon his own? Where was Milton's theory when he was rapt above the empyrean, and smote his mighty harp in answer to the sounding spheres? Where was the theory of Burns when he lived, loved, suffered, and wrote? And where, may I ask, is Wordsworth's theory when he writes well? That he has written well, even gloriously, I allow. That he has written well in consequence of his theory, I deny.

But let us inquire what his theory is. Our author tells us that his first volume of poems was published "as an experiment, how far by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure, and that quantity of pleasure, might be imparted, which a poet may rationally endeavour to impart." If these words be taken in their literal sense, it appears to me that the experiment was scarcely worth the making; for the desired fact might have been ascertained by merely considering, that those parts of Shakspeare which convey the most general pleasure, are the real language of men under the agency of some strong passion. The touching expression of Macduff, "He has no children;" the thrilling exclamation of Othello over the body of Desdemona, "My wife!—What wife?—I have no wife!" are sufficient to show that the simplest language of men, when strongly moved, may give pleasure of the most exquisite kind. I say pleasure, for though the words themselves produce a mournful impression, yet the predominating feeling is pleasure to see Nature's language so truly imitated. Ballads also without end, in which the real language of men is still more metrically arranged, would have decided the same question, for compositions of this sort, from Chevy Chase to Black-eyed Susan and Auld Robin Gray, have ever been, like the simple and original melodies which are ground about the streets on every hand-organ, the darlings of mankind, in every class. But if, by the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, Wordsworth meant the complaints of a child in despair at seeing her cloak caught in a chaise-wheel, or the agonies and ecstasies of a foolish poor woman who sent her idiot son for a doctor on a moonlight night, he might have convinced himself that no pleasing result would ensue, by

merely inquiring whether the gustatory ejaculations of a society of aldermen over a bowl of turtle, would give pleasure if reduced to metre. For these are also unquestionably "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation."

Wordsworth, however, seems to have considered that this experiment succeeded rather beyond his expectations; and having "pleased a greater number than he ventured to hope he should please," he is encouraged to proceed in the same path, and to explain the object which he proposed to himself more particularly. Disentangling the chrysalis from the golden threads which his genius has spun around it, I will briefly give the principal points of his system. He chooses "incidents and situations," always from "common," and generally from "low and rustic life." He desires to elucidate the "primary laws," "the great and simple affections of our nature." He intends that each of his poems "should carry along with it a *purpose*," and "that the feeling therein developed should give importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling;" and lastly, he professes to reject "what is usually called poetic diction," and to "cut himself off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech, which, from father to son, have long been regarded as the common inheritance of poets."

I own that I can see nothing very original in these objects proposed—little that has not been done before, and by others. The chief originality seems to consist in the formal declaration of the poet's intentions, and in his restricting himself to one department of his province. As I remarked before, "incidents and situations in common life" have generally pleased, as coming home to every man's business and bosom. No tragedy is received with more tears, or with more applause than the Gamester. To go a step farther,—Burns, in carolling the joys, and sorrows, and simple loves of rustic life, has found an echo in every heart. The songs of Dibdin are on every lip. Shenstone's Schoolmistress is allowedly his best poem. Crabbe extracts humour and pathos from the most trite and homely adventures. As to Wordsworth's declaration, that each of his poems has a worthy purpose, he himself asserts,

that this will be found to be the case in "*all* poems to which any value can be attached; therefore, in this respect, he only places himself in the rank of a *good*, not an original writer. As to the circumstance, which he tells us distinguishes his poems from the popular poetry of the day, viz. that the feeling dignifies the subject, and not the subject the feeling, I shall consider, by and by, whether it be not calculated to produce originality of a vicious kind, and whether there should not rather be a mutual proportion between the subject and the passion connected with it. Our author's renunciation of such phrases and figures of speech as have long been the common poetical stock in trade, seems again only to place him in a higher rank than the mere schoolboy poet, who pilfers his English Gradus for flowers of rhetoric. Every poet that rises above mediocrity, knows that he damns himself by the use of worn-out tropes and metaphors. Pope, who introduced a peculiar language into poetry, a set mode of expressing certain things, was original as the first founder of a vicious school, and in his case the severe good sense of his meaning atoned for the tinkling of his rhyme. Darwin was original from the very profusion with which he heaped these commonplaces together; but their imitators have never risen to eminence; and originality of expression seems to be expected from a writer of any pretensions. But Wordsworth has spoken too vaguely on this head. The term poetic diction, seems to infer a diction common to poets; but the language of metrical composition may be elevated beyond that of prose by modes as various as the authors who use it. The poetic diction of Milton is not, in a certain sense, that of Gray, nor is that of Collins in its external forms similar to that of Cowper.

I am the more explicit on this point, because one of Wordsworth's principal claims to originality seems to lie in his having formed a diction of his own, and in having run counter to the taste of the age in so doing. He magnifies his own boldness by asserting that an author is supposed, "by the act of writing in verse, to make a formal engagement to gratify certain known habits of association, and thus to apprise his reader not only that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that

others will be carefully excluded." I reply to this, that the love of novelty is stronger in man than habit itself, and that there would be nothing to gratify this inherent thirst, if we met with nothing but the same classes of ideas and expressions. Wordsworth grants that the tacit promise which a poet is supposed to make his reader, has in different eras of literature excited very different expectations, as in the various ages of Shakspeare, of Cowley, and of Pope. I ask, what made the ages of Shakspeare, Cowley, and Pope? Their own genius. It is the era that conforms to the poet, not the poet to the age. And even at one and the same period there have been, and may be, as many different styles of writing, as there are great and original writers. Spenser was contemporary with Shakspeare, and in our own day more especially we see almost as many schools of poetry as there are poets. Byron, Scott, Southey, Moore, Campbell, and Crabbe, have not only each asserted his own freedom, but have easily induced the world to affix its sign manual to their charter. I should rather affirm, then, that a poet is supposed "to make a formal engagement" to produce something new,—to be a creator indeed,—or his title to the appellation will scarcely be allowed. It follows, then, that Wordsworth's writings may be original, in as far as they differ from the productions of the present day, but not *because* they differ from such productions. His renouncing the common poetic diction is not an original part of his *theory*, however it may produce originality in his practice.

Having now attempted to show that what is good in Wordsworth's theory is not new, I will endeavour to prove that what is new is not good.

Wordsworth tells us that, in his choice of situations and incidents, "low and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language." I answer, that they do so or not according to the powers of him who is their interpreter. I urge, that a true poet finds the same passions in every sphere of life, and makes them speak a plain and emphatic language by his own art. Love and hatred, hope and

fear, joy and sorrow, lay bare the human heart, beneath the ermined robe, not less than beneath the shepherd's frock, and strong emotion breaks the fetters of restraint as easily as one would snap asunder a silken thread. "One touch of nature makes the whole world kin." Naked we all came into the world, naked we must all go out of it, and naked we all appear, in a mental sense, when nature's strong hand is upon us. Accordingly, Shakspeare makes his Cleopatra scold like any scullion wench, when the messenger tells her of Antony's marriage with Octavia; nor does she confine her rage to words, but expounds it more intelligibly still by striking the unlucky herald, and "haling him up and down." * The great interpreter of nature contrives to "keep his reader in the company of flesh and blood, while he leads him through every sphere of existence." Wordsworth also chose rural life, "because in that condition, the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature." I fear that more of the poet than the philosopher is apparent in this sentiment: or, if Wordsworth will have it that poet and philosopher are nearly synonymous terms, I fear that he has given his own individual feelings as representatives of those belonging to man as a species.

The philosophic poet should take care to support his theory upon facts established by observation, or (as Wordsworth himself elsewhere says) should possess "the ability to observe with accuracy, think as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer:" but Wordsworth, though, doubtless, conversant with humble life, has thrown the lines of his own mind over its whole sphere; otherwise he never could assert that the passions of men in that condition are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. "The necessary charac-

* Cleopatra herself says, on being addressed by her handmaid Iras, as "Royal Egypt's Empress,"

"Peace, peace, Iras,
No more but a mere woman, and commanded
By such poor passion as the maid that milks,
And does the meanest chares."

ter of rural occupations" seems rather to have a tendency to blunt the mind's sensibility to external nature, than to sharpen its perceptions of grace and beauty. "Our elementary feelings," indeed, may be said to co-exist in a state of greater simplicity in humble life—if by "elementary feelings" the poet means such feelings as are connected with the care of our subsistence. To support life is the great object of the poor, and this object absorbs their powers, blunts their sensibilities, and confines their ideas to one track of association. The rustic holding his plough looks at the furrow which he traces, and not at the mountain which soars above his head. The shepherd watches his dog and his sheep, but not the clouds that shift their hues and forms in the western sky—or if he regards them, it is only as prognostics of such and such weather. I have conversed much with those in rustic life, and amongst them have scarcely ever met with one who manifested any sympathy with external nature. There may be exceptions to the general insensibility of the poor, but Wordsworth has mistaken the exceptions for illustrations of the rule itself. If any class of men, in a low station, betoken that the beautiful objects of nature are incorporated with their passions, we must look for them not amongst the tillers of the earth, but amongst those who occupy their business in the great waters. Sailors have leisure to admit the wonders of nature through the eye into the mind. The stagnation of a calm, or the steady movement of their vessel, often leaves them unoccupied, and throws their attention outward. The natural craving of the mind after employment makes them seize whatever offers itself to fill up vacuity of thought, and nature becomes less their chosen pleasure than their last resource. Accordingly, I have often remarked that more unconscious poetry drops from the lips of sailors, than from men in any other low station of life. Again, the affections of the heart become deadened in the poor, or rather change their character altogether. Life, which is so hardly sustained by them, is not in their eyes the precious thing which it is in ours; death, which they only view as a rest from toil or pain, is not looked upon by them with the same emotion with which we regard it. Whether "to be, or not to be," is a question which they decide by

balance of utility. A poor woman once said to me, "If he Lord pleases to take either me or my husband from our dear children, I hope my husband will go first; for I think I could do better for them than he could;" and I am sure she gave the true reason for wishing to survive her partner, and was not influenced in her wish by any selfish love of life. Here the essential passions of the heart (of which love between the sexes may be considered the very strongest) had given place to factitious feelings generated by a peculiar condition of life, and, this being the case, those feelings were no longer elementary, or such as are common to all mankind. In fact there seems to be no surer way of preventing oneself from seeing man as he is, than to confine one's view to any, even the most apparently natural condition of life. Man must be weighed in the gross, before he can be estimated in the abstract.

Wordsworth, moreover, informs us, that he has adopted the very language of men in low and rustic life, "because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because from their rank in society, and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions." I have before attempted to show that the "hourly communications" of these men are with their implements of husbandry, and that, like oil and water, they and the beautiful forms of nature may be in perpetual contact, without becoming incorporated. That they are less under the influence of social vanity I doubt, and for the very same reason that Wordsworth believes it, viz. from the narrow circle of their intercourse; for the fewer opportunities men have of comparing themselves with numbers, the less do they know their own deficiencies,—and I doubt not but that the vanity of an alehouse politician is as great as, and infinitely more besotted than, the vanity of a member of parliament. I have also little doubt, but that the contempt with which a ploughman would look down upon me for not knowing oats from barley, would transcend that of an astronomer at my not being able to distinguish between Cassiopea and Ursa Major. However we human beings may differ in

other respects,—in station, in language, temper, and disposition—here at least we are all alike. Pour into separate vessels the blood of various men, analyze it, distil it, till all factitious differences evaporate and disappear, and I will answer for it that there will be found a large residuum of vanity at the bottom of each alembic.

Wordsworth gives as a reason for his deducing strong feelings from low and unimportant subjects, that "the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants;" and that "one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability." There appears to be a mixture of truth and falsehood in this sentiment. The mind that demands the violent excitement of "frantic novels" or the gross nutriment of "sickly and stupid German tragedies," is, I grant, indeed in a diseased state; but that the mind is in a sane state *in proportion as* it recedes from this diseased torpor, I deny. For it may recede until it shall have crossed the boundary line which separates the height of what is good, from its declension into evil of an opposite kind. A person who, by improper abstinence, shall have brought himself into such a state that he is intoxicated by milk and water, is not less an invalid than he who, by perpetual intemperance, has blunted his senses, until he calls for brandy in his wine. In the same manner, the mind may be too excitable, as well as too dead to gentle and healthful excitement. If one being be indeed elevated above another *in proportion* as his mind is capable of being excited without a violent stimulus, then is the man who goes into ecstasies at the sight of a sparrow's egg the first of his species. But perhaps this was precisely what our author wished to prove. After all, may not a violent stimulus be of a salutary nature, and in some cases necessary to bring back a healthful state of feeling? A strong medicine can alone master a strong disease; and if (as Wordsworth imagines) the minds of the present generation are "in a state of almost savage torpor," can they be aroused by the mere prick of a pin—if they thirst so wildly "after the outrageous stimulation," will they pass at once from mulligatawney soup to mutton broth? If it be true, as Cowper says, that

> "A kick which scarce would move a horse,
> May kill a sound divine,"

our kicks must be proportioned to the animal on which they are inflicted. A gentle shove will never do.

In order to justify himself for adopting (as he thinks he has) "the very language of men," Wordsworth asserts a most untenable proposition, viz. "that there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." He thinks "it would be a most easy task to prove this, by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself;" but he confines himself to quoting the following sonnet of Gray, in order "to illustrate the subject in a general manner?

> "In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
> And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire:
> The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
> Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
> These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
> *A different object do these eyes require;*
> *My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,*
> *And in my breast th' imperfect joys expire.*
> Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
> And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
> The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
> To warn their little loves the birds complain.
> *I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,*
> *And weep the more because I weep in vain.*"

He observes upon this: "It will easily be perceived that the only part of this sonnet which is of any value, is the lines printed in italics; it is equally obvious that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word "fruitless," for fruitlessly (which is so far a defect,) the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose."—"It will easily be perceived."—By whom? By Mr. Wordsworth. "It is equally obvious." To whom? To Mr. Wordsworth. Thus apt we are unconciously to substitute our own ipse dixits for the general consent of mankind. So far from easily perceiving the five lines in italics the only ones of any value in the sonnet, I seem to perceive that they are worthless and unintelligible without the other nine. "A

different object do these eyes require."—Different from what? From the "smiling mornings," and the sun's "golden fire!" "My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine."—In contrast to what? To the birds who "join their amorous descant." "I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear, and weep the more because I weep in vain." How unaffecting is this complaint disjoined from that which aggravates the written sorrow—the general joy of nature previously described!

Having shown how *easily* the truth of Wordsworth's first assertion may be perceived, I grant that it is *equally* obvious that the language of the lines in italics does in no respect differ from that of prose. There can be no question, but that if any one were about to express in prose that he had no one to share his joy or sorrow, he would talk of "lonely anguish," and "imperfect joys." But the fact is, that no man would dream of expressing such thoughts in prose *at all;* which leads me to assert that poetry does differ from prose in two essential points, viz. in the cast of the thoughts, and the nature of the language. By the act of writing in metre, we place ourselves in communion with the best part of our species, and we enjoy a license to speak of the higher feelings of our nature without the fear of ridicule. Poetry is a language accorded to beings of greater sensibility than the rest of mankind, as a vent to thoughts, the suppression of which would be too painful to be endured. Our ideas, therefore, in poetry, run in a purer, a more imaginative, a more impassioned vein, than in prose; and as to write poetry presupposes the presence of some emotion, there is in poetry an abruptness of transition caused by excitement, which is not to be found in prose. The language of poetry partakes of the same character as its thoughts. Since the poet's eyes "bodies forth the shape of things unknown, and gives to airy nothing a local habitation and a name," the words of poetry are images. She speaks in pictures. Take any speech of Shakspeare, and observe how almost every word touches upon a train of associated ideas. In poetry, language is but the echo of something more than meets the ear: it is a spell to *suggest* trains of thoughts as well as to express them. If poetry and prose be so identica that we cannot "find bonds of connexion sufficiently strict

to typify the affinity between them,"—if the language of poetry differ not from that of good prose, it follows that all good prose is poetry. But surely the prose in which an historian narrates his facts may be *good*, and yet no one would allow it to be the language of poetry. Unfortunately, too, such prose as most resembles poetry is *not* good. Although Wordsworth says, that "lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable," yet the prose, which contains such *disjecti membra poetæ*, is generally considered vicious. There is a swell and cadence in the periods of prose, essentially different from the rhythm of poetry. Therefore, when a poet writes in prose, his thoughts are too passionate, his style generally too concise, too abrupt, and at the same time in too measured a cadence; and on the contrary, when a good prose writer, attempts to compose poetry, his thoughts are of too cold a complexion, his language too stiff from unusual restraint, his words too uncoloured by imagination, too exact and literal in their signification. The full mantle of Cicero's eloquence flowed but ungracefully when confined by the hand of poetry. Why is it, if prose and poetry speak the same language, that so many great prose writers have vainly tried to snatch the poet's wreath? Let any one take a well-expressed idea in prose. Would it be well expressed in poetry? Try to turn it into poetry. You must recast it, and change the whole method of expression. You must even endeavour to forget the words in which it was clothed, and having to melt it into a pure idea, to run it into a new mould of expression.

But "I will go further" still, (as Wordsworth says.) "I do not doubt that it may be safely affirmed," (as Wordsworth also says,) that the mere language of poetry, exclusive of the thoughts which it may convey, is a sufficient distinction between poetry and prose (as Wordsworth does not say.)

Let me not be mistaken; I speak not of such a distinction as is produced by rhyme, or even metre. I speak not of "those ordinary devices to elevate the style," which Wordsworth abjures, such as "the personification of abstract ideas;" the invocation, whether to Goddess,

Nymph, or Muse—the use of glittering and prescriptive epithets, "the family language" of (bad) poets—I speak of the imaginative use of language as the distinguishing mark betwixt poetry and prose. To exemplify my meaning, I will bring forward two passages—the one from Shakspeare, in which common thoughts become poetry, by the mode of expressing them; the other from Gibbon, in which a poetical thought becomes prose by the mere language wherein it is couched. Coriolanus speaks—

> "I'll know no further:
> Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,
> Vagabond exile, fleaing, pent to linger
> But with a grain a-day, I would not buy
> Their mercy at the price of one fair word,
> Nor check my courage for what they can give,
> To have't with saying, Good-morrow."

The thoughts here are not such as can be called poetical—nor is there any thing in the mere words (if each be taken separately) which is at all different from prose. It is in the mode of using the words that the language becomes poetry. In prose, Coriolanus would have said,—I'll know no more. Let them condemn me to die by the Tarpeian rock, to banishment, to be flead alive, to a lingering death by hunger, &c.; but in poetry he says "I'll know no *further*. Let them *pronounce the steep Tarpeian death*, *vagabond* exile," &c. Here even the very use of the common word *further* is poetical, as closing up the sense to the mind more perfectly than the word *more*, and substituting an adverb for an accusative noun, in the vehemence with which passion wrests language to her own purposes. "Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death," is an instance of the mode in which passion, acting upon imagination, condenses many ideas, and conveys them all to the hearer's mind at once. To give every word in this line its proper meaning in prose, we must say, "Let them condemn me to die, by being cast down the steep Tarpeian rock;" but in the rapidity of passion, not only *judgment* is pronounced but *death*—that death is not slowly produced by the fall from the steep Tarpeian rock, but is itself *steep;* and although a *steep death* is an unintelligible expression, yet by the

divine clearness with which imagination, in her lofty moods, sees every thing at a glance, she succeeds in stamping her whole meaning upon the mind of another, by the general structure of the sentence.—We will now proceed to the passage from Gibbon's Decline of the Roman Empire: "The apparent magnitude of an object is enlarged by an unequal comparison, as the ruins of Palmyra derive a casual splendour from the nakedness of the surrounding desert." Here the thought is poetical, and the words in which it is dressed are far longer, and more sounding, than the words of the passage just quoted from Shakspeare, (which indeed almost consists of monosyllables,) yet, from not being used in an imaginative manner, they produce but a cold effect upon the mind: the reason is gratified, but the heart remains untouched by them. We feel that this is not poetry; we see that every word is chosen with scientific precision, that each has its natural and downright signification, that nothing more is suggested than what is actually expressed; we know that the writer very calmly elaborated both the idea and the language in his own warm study, and at his own comfortable desk—and we feel that this is not poetry. Yet who can doubt but that the same thought, under Shakspeare's touch, would have started into Promethean life and energy? Thus it appears that Poetry has a language of her own. To identify her with Prose, is a degradation of her lofty lineage. Hers is a higher mode of speech, and for higher purposes. Poetry can speak what Prose hath no voice to utter. She is (as Wordsworth himself elsewhere most beautifully says) "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge—the impassioned expression, which is in the countenance of all science." Is it not a contradiction thus to describe her, yet deny that she speaks a language accordant with her more subtle essence, and more impassioned energy? By stripping her of all essential characteristics, Wordsworth would leave her nothing but the jingling of her bells, whereby she might be distinguished from Prose.

And this, so far from being the least distinction, is no distinction at all. If neither the cast of the thoughts nor the structure of the language be poetical, in a composition,

it is not metrical arrangement which will constitute poetry. Are the following lines, written by Wordsworth, (for instance) to be called poetry because they are printed in ten syllables?

> "'Tis nothing more
> Than the rude embryo of a little dome,
> Or pleasure-house, once destined to be built
> Among the birch-trees of this rocky isle.
> But, as it chanced, Sir William having learn'd
> That from the shore a full-grown man might wade,
> And make himself a freeman of this spot
> At any hour he chose; the knight forthwith
> Desisted, and the quarry and the mound
> Are monuments of his unfinish'd task."

Of this we may indeed say, with rather more truth than of Gray's sonnet, that "it will easily be perceived" "the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose," whether of *good* prose I leave it to the reader's judgment to decide. The only poetical mode of expression to be found in them is, "made himself a freeman of the spot," which again exemplifies what I said above respecting the imaginative use of language. I would conclude this part of my subject, by asking Mr. Wordsworth how it is (if the language of prose and poetry be the same) that the language of his own prose and of his own poetry are so very different? how it happens that, professing to speak the real language of men in the latter, he speaks the language (it may be) of gods in the former? For example, "Religion—whose element is infinitude, and whose ultimate trust is the supreme of things, submitting herself to circumscription, and reconciled to substitutions; and Poetry, ethereal and transcendent, yet incapable to sustain her existence without sensuous incarnation!" To sum up all; it appears to me that Wordsworth has confounded poetic diction as it is called, with poetic diction as it really is. He has attacked a poetic diction founded on a mechanical abuse of language. I wish to uphold a poetic diction founded on the imaginative use of language —a poetic diction that depends not on the shifting taste of different eras, or on trifling varieties of costume, but which is immovably fixed on the one grand and unaltera-

ble basis—a poetic diction, which is the country's language of all true poets, (including Wordsworth himself, when he forgets his theory,) however their different provinces may produce varieties of dialect. Thus, in spite of Wordsworth's declaration to the contrary, I assert (and are not my assertions as good as those of any other man?) that poetry is a good and sound antithesis to prose.

By maintaining that poetry should speak the same language with prose, Wordsworth is driven to assert another paradox, very lowering to the divine powers of the former. He says: "Whatever portion of the faculty (namely, of embodying the passions of man, and of expressing what he thinks and feels) we may suppose even the greatest poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt but that the language which it will suggest to him, must, in liveliness and truth, fall far short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the poet thus produces, or feels to be produced, in himself." To this I answer, that, if poetry be "the finer spirit of all knowledge," it is, more emphatically, the finer spirit of all passion; for, while knowledge is only the light of poetry, passion is her life and vital air. A true poet can, by his verses, convey to the mind the general effect of a battle with greater force and fidelity than an actual agent in the combat by a prose narration. The latter can only place certain facts before us: the former can hurry us into the midst of the smoke and carnage—make us see the bayonets gleaming through the dust of trampling thousands—and make us hear the dying groan—the shout of victory! The one convinces us that he himself was present at the scene; the other persuades us into a conviction that we ourselves are present there. The poet's description is actually more true than that of the soldier, because it is more graphical, and produces on the mind a greater sense of reality; besides that the eye-witness mixes up too much of his own personal feeling—too much of the confusion of a mind in action—to convey truth in the abstract to the mind of another. But poetry is the very abstract of truth. Many travellers have described, as eye-witnesses, the burning of Hindoo widows;

yet, in some book of Eastern travels, I have seen Southey's poetical account of that revolting ceremony extracted from the Curse of Kehama, as conveying the best idea of its horrors. In the same manner the language which a true poet gives to any human passion, is actually a more faithful transcript of that passion than the language of him who is under its actual pressure. In the first place the great passions

> " ——are liken'd best to floods and streams:
> The shallow murmur, but the deep are dumb."

They have no language but looks and tears. Therefore the poet's language is not a transcription of what men say when they are strongly moved, but an interpretation of what they *feel*. And the poet has this advantage over nature herself; namely, that he can at once depict her internal promptings, and her external indications of passion. He can bring looks and tears before the eye. In his verses, men both weep and speak. In the next place, if great passions speak at all, they usually belie themselves by an inadequacy of utterance. The language of the poet is actually more genuine nature than that of the sufferer himself, because the former is the language of the heart, which the latter is not. How frequently, when a man has lost his wife or daughter, his condoling friends hear him repeat, " She was a good creature! No one knows what a loss I have had! No one can tell what I suffer!" And this is all he can say, for the anarchy of his thoughts is like a guard upon his lips. But the poet *does* know, and *can* tell what he suffers, and not only produces " certain shadows" of his feelings, but the reality itself. And why? Because the poet is himself a man, and because, like other men, the poet has relations and friends who are subject to death, and he also has his causes of joy and sorrow; and if (as Wordsworth grants) a poet " is a man endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness," than others; if he also possess " a greater knowledge of human nature," why (even painting from himself) may he not give a more tender and enthusiastic language to joy or sorrow, a deeper insight into the core

of the human heart, than other men who are mere sufferers? The poet is a man in real life, and a poet beside; and therefore he can feel not only as a man, but can, as a poet, give a more faithful utterance to what he feels. Who knows but that Shakspeare, in painting the jealousy of Othello, or the paternal anguish of Lear, was but giving a keener and more imaginative colouring to some passages of his own life? Who can tell but that Eve was only a sublimated Mrs. Milton? For herein, also the poet's more lively sensibility aids his delineation of strong passion, in that he feels small things more acutely than men of dull and sluggish imagination feel great ones, and that the very shadows of his mind are stronger than the realities of others. It is granted, that men, as they grow older, are less and less moved by any event or accident, and even the loss of a favourite grandson may less move the blunted sensibilities of a nonagenarian, than the loss of a pointer would have excited them when he was fifteen. Shall we say, then, that the language of such a man, under the pressure of any passion, is equal in energy to that which is uttered by a man in the prime of life, and under a similar pressure? But there is not a greater distance between the passions of the nonagenarian and those of the youth of fifteen, than there is between the poet's capacity of feeling and expression, and that of men, on whose hearts a natural want of susceptibility has anticipated the slow work of time. I would recommend to my readers the perusal of a poem but little known, written by John Scott on the death of his son, as an illustration of what I have advanced. He will see in it an instance of the poetical temperament acted upon by suffering, and speaking with more force and truth than the language of suffering alone could exhibit. Again, if the language of the poet fall short of that which is uttered by men in real life under the pressure of passion, the short-hand writer, who takes down trials, and gives us verbatim the prison dialogues and last dying speeches of convicts, must bid fair to be a greater dramatist than Shakspeare or Ford. Away, then, with such timid restrictions of the poet's power! What boundary shall we place to it? It may be answered—Nature! But Nature is boundless; and though, indeed, the poet feels

that "there is no necessity to trick out or elevate" her infinite wonders; yet, with a soul as boundless as herself, he does not despair to depict them faithfully—ay, or even to transcend what he beholds—by the divine faculty with which he pierces things invisible. His muse, indeed, sheds "natural and human tears;" but what forbids that she should not *also* drop tears "such as angels weep?"

Holding such opinions as these, which I have endeavoured to controvert, Wordsworth seems to surmise, that persons may think it a little strange that he should take the trouble to write in verse; and he proceeds to give a most extraordinary reason for so doing. His meaning when extracted from a heap of words is, that metre, being "something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods," has "great efficacy" in mitigating any excitement of too strong a kind, which an affecting subject might produce. One should have thought, that with all the precautions which Wordsworth has taken to keep his writings clear of all "gross and violent stimulus," with his choice of "low and rustic" subjects, and adherence to "the real language of men," there could be *no* "danger that the excitement should be carried beyond its proper bounds." However, he is determined to make all sure, and to lull his reader's mind by sweet metrical sounds as well as by the gentle flow of his ideas.

If Wordsworth bounded himself to the assertion, that a tinkling ballad rhyme deducts from the horror of a tragical tale, and that a murder sung about the streets—as how a young woman poisoned her father and mother all for love of a young man—is a very different thing to a real substantial newspaper detail of the same, he might be pronounced in the right; but when he asserts that "Shakspeare's writings never act upon us, as pathetic, beyond the bounds of pleasure," and attributes this mainly to "impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement," he appears to go rather beyond the mark. Is it true, that Shakspeare's writings *never* act upon us, as pathetic, beyond the bounds of pleasure! The hysterical shrieks of women, and the wry faces of men trying to swallow their tears at a theatrical representation of one of Shakspeare's tragedies, will prove the contrary. Does the

circumstance of the performance being spoken in blank verse at all mitigate its exciting effect upon the mind? Is any auditor conscious that it is in blank verse at all? But perhaps Wordsworth will say that he is only speaking of a perusal of Shakspeare. If so, I allow that Shakspeare's writings when read seldom act upon us, as pathetic, beyond the bounds of pleasure; but this overbalance of pleasure, I conceive, is common to all good works of fiction, whether in prose or verse—simply because they are works of fiction, and because the mind delights in seeing nature skilfully imitated or ennobled, whether by the poetic art of Shakspeare, or the imaginative pencil of Raphael. To see a kettle (except on the hob ready for tea) imparts no pleasure; to see a ghost would give us any thing but delight; yet when we behold a kettle so well painted as to mock reality, or when we look at one of Fuseli's spectres, we are pleased, in the one case, to see the perfection of imitative art, in the other, the triumph of imagination. Wordsworth appeals to his "reader's own experience" as to whether "the distressful parts of Clarissa Harlowe" do not give more pain than the most pathetic scenes of Shakspeare. The reader's experience may not always tally with Mr. Wordsworth's. I for one confess, that the self-murder of Othello, uncheered by one ray of comfort here, or hope hereafter, (notwithstanding the metre,) is more painful to my feelings than the deathbed of the injured Clarissa, sinned against but not sinning, and half in heaven before she has quitted earth; and to the "reperusal" of this, I can safely say, that I never came "with reluctance." But so far from metre having a general tendency to "temper and restrain" our feelings—so far from the mind having been accustomed to it "in a less excited state," I conceive that the very sound of verse is connected in most minds with the idea of something moving or elevating. I remember once, when I had taken shelter in a poor woman's cottage from a pelting and persevering storm, I began to read aloud to a companion who was with me, from a pocket volume of Hudibras. To my surprise, I was shortly interrupted by the sobs of the old lady, who had buried her face in her apron. I asked her what was the matter. "Oh, sir," she replied, "them

verses do sound so affecting!" Moreover, are not poets allowed to possess a greater necromancy in raising human passions than authors in any other kind; and do not poets usually write in metre of some sort?

PART II.

Having now considered how far Wordsworth's theory is new, and how far it is correct, I propose to inquire with what success he has illustrated it.

And first, we may not unfairly surmise that there is something faulty in his manner of executing his purposes —something "rotten in the state of Wordsworth"—from the consideration of this plain fact, that writing *of* men, and *to* men, he has never become a popular author. It is all very well that he should exclaim, "Away with the senseless iteration of the word popular!" and appeal from popularity as a test of excellence, because it is *his interest* that popularity should *not* be a literary touchstone. But we, who have no personal feeling in the question, may observe that, however it may be admitted that poems on abstract or abstruse subjects may be admirable without being popular, still, poems professedly founded on the grand basis of human nature, and depicting her "great and simple affections," must grow popular before they can be pronounced successful. For the people they are written; by the people must they be judged. If they speak the "real language of men," they must be appreciated wherever that language is known. So far from coming before his readers at a disadvantage, Wordsworth (I maintain) approaches them under peculiarly favourable circumstances. He prejudices us in his favour at the very outset, by professing to "keep us in the company of flesh and blood." He appeals to all our strongest prepossessions; he awakens all our most interesting associations, by affirming that he will choose his incidents and situations from ordinary life. At the time when he first published his Lyrical Ballads, more especially, such a declaration was calculated to excite the warmest expectations. The poetry-reading

multitude began to sicken from an overdose of rich and stimulating nutriment, and not a few were already asking —"Pray, who would get *twice* drunk upon Noyau!" When a man steps forward with this spirit-stirring motto— "Homo sum. Nihil humanum a me alienum puto." Surely that man must have taken some pains to undo the prepossessions naturally excited in his favour; surely he must have "kept the word of promise to the ear" only, "and broken it to the hope," if he failed to secure general sympathy and approbation! In *his* case, if in the case of no other poet whatsoever, men ought to have "run after his productions as if urged by an appetite, or constrained by a spell." It is in vain for Wordsworth to reply, that "every author, as far as he is great, and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed." Granting for a time that Wordsworth, according to his own intimation, is great and original, I, in the first place, cannot allow that a taste for *any* great and original style of writing can possibly be *created;* it can only be *called forth*, where it exists. Scarce one person in a thousand has a real feeling for real poetry, as disjoined from extrinsic stimulants of interest, such as arise from an agitating story, the display of private feelings and circumstances, or from the caprice of fashion. The single person feels, and decides, and sets a value upon any production of a high stamp, and the accumulating testimony of these individuals at length (perhaps not until many generations have past away) influences the many, and they conspire to read and to praise what they neither understand nor value, simply because the poet's worth has been acknowledged by a body of enlightened men, and they dare not dissent from the verdict, lest they should be supposed to want taste and feeling. The author has taken his station amongst those of an established rank, and the crowd throw incense on the altar of his fame, without snatching a spark of its fire. Wordsworth grounds much of his argument upon the facts, that in Dryden's time "two of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher were acted for one of Shakspeare," and that Milton's Paradise Lost was coldly received, and rose slowly into fame. I believe that Shakspeare, Milton, or any other esteemed

writer, is not more enjoyed now than he was when his works first appeared, but that the greater publicity of his name places him within the reach of a greater number of readers capable of appreciating him. Those who never would have appreciated him, are not raised by his works to a keener faculty of discernment. Those who can appreciate him have only to open his book, at once to leap into his meaning, and to partake his passion. He is but conventionally admired by the many, while he is truly relished by the few.

But, in the second place, Wordsworth's pretensions to greatness and originality are founded upon the natural and human character of his subjects and language. Now, if the taste by which we relish any production is not (as I endeavoured to prove) *created*, but *called forth*, the taste by which Wordsworth's writings are to be enjoyed should be called forth in almost every human breast; because, how far soever the taste may have strayed from the primary affections of humanity, still the return to nature is always comparatively easy—and it is back to nature that Wordsworth purposes to lead us. That which relates to men may surely be understood and enjoyed by men, at all times and in all seasons. A relish for every-day food demands not that education of the palate, which we must undergo before we can eat olives with any enjoyment; and where there is so much nausea to overcome, it may be doubted whether the subsequent pleasure is worth the previous pain. I was told, that if I could but once swallow one of that unnatural fruit, I should like the whole tribe ever after. I swallowed three, and hate them still. But how can Wordsworth reconcile his assertion, that every great and original author *creates* the taste by which he is enjoyed, with another explicit declaration of his, which runs thus?—"The poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving *immediate* pleasure to a human being, possessed of that information which may be expected of him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a man;" and he goes on to say, "Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an

acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe—an acknowledgment the more sincere, because it is not formal, but indirect." This being the case, surely the poet of nature more especially must be under the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to those who share the feelings of men? And facts will bear me out in the assertion, that he actually does impart that immediate pleasure to a far wider circle of readers than the poet who has chosen lofty and abstracted themes of argument. As I once before observed, the simplest ballads, detailing the commonest incidents, have been most inwoven with the hearts of men, and have been laid up in the memories of all, while Milton has been quietly laid on the shelf. And why? Because neither science nor learning, nor even high poetical feeling, is required for the comprehension of them. To be a human being is the sole qualification. The very lowest of the vulgar are not bad judges of what is true to nature. I have observed, that the galleries in a theatre know how to mark, by discriminating applause, the finest natural touches of Shakspeare's genius. Moliere constituted an old woman his judge, and her laughter or tears his criticism. Why did Cowper, by means of his "Task," and Burns, through his ballads, find an immediate echo in every human bosom? They wrote of things pertaining to humanity in a human manner. If Wordsworth has failed in producing a similar effect, it may lead us to surmise that, although purporting to write of human things, he has *not* generally written in a human or natural manner. The popularity of some of his smaller and simpler poems, such as "We are Seven," "Susan Gray," and the "Pet Lamb," strengthens the conjecture, and forms an additional proof, that to write naturally on common subjects rather insures, than forbids, a numerous audience.

Why, then, should Wordsworth tell us, that he "was well aware" that his poems, by those who should dislike them, would be read with more than common dislike? Why did he not "venture to hope" that he should generally please?

I answer, because he had a lurking consciousness that he had not fulfilled the terms of his own covenant, the conditions imposed by his own theory. He had always sung,

"Familiar matter of to-day,
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again,"

in simple and natural language, he might have been secure of imparting more than common pleasure to all who had hearts to feel or minds to think. As it is, he has frequently failed in his object by not faithfully adhering to the best parts of his theory; and, by embodying the worst parts of it, he has rendered himself liable to the charge of glaring inconsistency. These two points I purpose to make clear by quotations from his own works.

First, he has not adhered to the best parts of his theory. That "a selection of the real language of men, in a state of vivid sensation," may produce a most happy effect, when transferred to the poet's page, I have before proved by a reference to Shakspeare's frequent practice in his most impassioned dialogues.—But, 1st, The language of Wordsworth's characters scarcely ever *is* the real language of men; and, 2d, When it is so, cannot be called a fortunate *selection* of human speech. 1st, Notwithstanding our author's inveighing so bitterly against poetic diction, it is actually by a mixture of poetic diction with humble phraseology, and by the use of what are called poetic licenses, conjointly with common modes of expression, that he has produced a patched and piebald dialect, infinitely more monstrous than either "the gaudy and inane phraseology" of which he complains in one place, or "the triviality and meanness, both of thought and language," which elsewhere he acknowledges to be "more dishonourable to the writer's own character, than false refinement or arbitrary innovation."

They who solely use poetic diction, on the one hand, and they who confine themselves to trivial language, on the other, shall each produce a work which, at least, is all of a piece—it may be, indeed, all of tinsel, or all of canvass—but is not this preferable to embroidery upon packthread? There is in Wordsworth a natural grandiloquence of style always struggling through the false restraints which he has imposed upon himself. Even a wagon must

be dignified with the epithet of "stately;" and, in a soliloquy of mild Benjamin, the wagonner, we find—

> "My jolly team, he finds that ye
> Will work for nobody but me!
> *Good proof* of this the country gain'd
> One day, when ye were vex'd and strain'd—
> Entrusted to another's care,
> And *forced unworthy stripes to bear.*
> Here was it—on this rugged spot,
> Which now, contented with our lot,
> We climb—that, *piteously abused,*
> Ye plunged *in anger, and confused:*
> As chance would have it, passing by,
> I saw you in your jeopardy:
> A word from me was like a charm—
> The ranks were *taken with one mind;*
> And your *huge burthen*, safe from harm,
> *Moved like a vessel in the wind!*"

The words which are printed in italics are as much poetic diction, though of a different kind, as that of the lines of Gray, which Wordsworth stigmatized as such, without one of its advantages.—"Good proof of this," with the article omitted, is a poetic license; and the whole speech, as proceeding from the mouth of a wagonner, is a tissue of incongruity. Again, in the Idiot Boy, Betty, conjecturing the probable fate of her stray darling, thus expresses herself—

> "Or him that wicked pony's carried
> To the dark cave, the goblin's hall;
> Or in the castle, he's pursuing,
> Among the ghosts, his own undoing;
> Or playing with the waterfall."

Thus also she apostrophizes the absent pony—

> "Oh dear, dear pony, my sweet joy,
> Oh carry back my idiot boy,
> And we will *ne'er o'erload* thee more!"

And thus she bewails her own sad case—

> "Oh cruel! I'm almost three-score,
> *Such night as this was ne'er before!*"

Here are poetical contractions, and that very modern vice of diction, the omission of the article before a noun, in conjunction with what might be the lack-a-daisical exclamations of an old Irish woman. Peter Bell, storming at an ass, which will not get up, says—

> "You little mulish dog,
> I'll fling your carcass, like a log,
> Head-foremost down the river!"

Here the words are so evidently arranged for the sake of rhyme, as to destroy all feeling of reality, and as a version of "Get up, you obstinate brute, or I'll chuck you into the water," they have this great fault, namely, that they are not coarse enough for nature, or pleasing enough for art. They are neither fish, fowl, flesh, nor good red herring. If this be the real language of human beings in a state of vivid sensation, or in any state of sensation, the poet must have conversed with a singular race of mortals. There is, to my mind, a want of skill in the writer, who thus, even while using common language, fails to work in the reader's mind a conviction that such words were really uttered under such circumstances. Little imbued as the foregoing extracts are with that imaginative spirit, which ought to beautify the most revolting themes of a true poet, they yet are farther from real life than the most fanciful expressions which Shakspeare puts into the mouths of his characters. By the assimilating power of his mighty mind, that wondrous dramatist subdues all his materials to his own purposes. He scatters the gems of imagination, the treasures of philosophy, from the mouths of clowns and buffoons. His characters have all an individual stamp upon them: their words seem appropriate to themselves, and flow with ease from nature's living fountain—yet the poet speaks in all. Although we never met with beings who so speak, yet we feel convinced that such beings could not have spoken otherwise. Wordsworth uses more of the real language of men, and produces a less real effect. Surely there is want of skill or power in this. I must observe, to prevent misapprehension, that I should not do Wordsworth the injustice to name him in the same page with Shakspeare, did not Wordsworth's admirers claim

for him a niche beside that matchless bard—and did not Wordsworth himself seem to provoke a comparison which had best have slumbered. After remarking, "of the human and dramatic *imagination*, the works of Shakspeare are an inexhaustible source," Wordsworth says, "And if, bearing in mind the many poets distinguished by this prime quality, whose names I omit to mention, yet, justified by a recollection of the insults which the ignorant, the incapable, and the presumptuous have heaped upon these and my other writings, I may be permitted to anticipate the judgment of posterity upon myself; I shall declare (censurable, I grant, if the notoriety of the fact above stated does not justify me) that I have given, in those unfavourable times, evidence of exertion of this faculty, upon its worthiest objects, the external universe, the moral and religious sentiments of man, his natural affections, and his acquired passions, which have the same ennobling tendency as the productions of men, in this kind, worthy to be held in undying remembrance" (See Preface to vol. i.)

It may be doubted whether the ill-conduct of others can justify weakness in oneself, or whether the assertion of one man, and that man the party nearest concerned, is at all better than the assertion of another; but, at any rate, I hope that, however "ignorant, incapable, and presumptuous," I may be esteemed, *I* am justified in having instituted a sort of parallel between Shakspeare and Wordsworth.

Not only when he speaks in character, but in his own person also, when he relates or describes, Wordsworth professes to use "*throughout*, as far as is possible, a selection of language really used by men." I could quote boundlessly from his works, to prove that neither in relating nor describing has Wordsworth attained his object; but, as in a multitude of quotations, there is weariness, I will confine myself to two or three extracts. First, take, as a general specimen, an adventure with some gipsies.

"Twelve hours, twelve bounteous hours, are gone, while I
Have been a traveller under open sky,
Much witnessing of change and cheer,
Yet, as I left, I find them here!

[Unheard-of circumstance!]

The weary sun betook himself to rest—
Then issued vesper from the fulgent west,
Outshining, like a visible God,
The glorious path in which he trode.
And now, ascending, after one dark hour,
And one night's diminution of her power,
Behold the mighty moon! This way
She looks as if at them!!—but they
Regard not her!!! Oh better wrong and strife
(By nature transient) than such torpid life!
The silent heavens have *goings-on:*
The stars have tasks—but these have none!
Yet, witness all that stirs in heaven and earth!
In scorn I speak not; they are what their birth
And breeding suffers them to be;
Wild outcasts of society!"

"O lame and impotent conclusion!" Surely the man who criticises the following stanza from Cowper's Alexander Selkirk,

"Religion! what treasure untold,
Resides in that heavenly word!
More precious than silver and gold,
Or all that this earth can afford!"

in the following severe terms—"These four lines are poorly expressed; some critics would call the language prosaic; the fact is, it would be bad prose, so bad, that it is scarcely worse in metre!"—Surely that critic, when he turns poet, should give us something a little better expressed than the last four lines of the foregoing extract—I dare say that, all the time, these said gipsies had their *goings-on* as well as the stars. They might, during the "twelve bounteous hours," have had a little walk as well as the poet, and had time to rob his own hen-roost and be back again, and be so busy mending the pot and kettle, as to have no time to look at the moon. Hear a piece of description:

"She *had* a tall man's *height*, or more;
No bonnet screen'd her from the heat;
A long drab-colour'd cloak she wore,
A mantle reaching to her feet;
What other dress she had I could not know,
[How could he?]
Only she wore a cap that was as white as snow."

On reading this one may truly say,

> "A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
> That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along."

In the last line, the words "*that was*" are plainly redundant, and are used to complete the measure. To "*have* a tall man's height" is surely out of all common parlance—and "No bonnet screened her from the heat"—may not indeed be poetry, but—certainly is not ordinary prose. Listen again to the poet's mode of relation—

> "And Betty from the lane has fetch'd
> Her pony, that is mild and good,
> *Whether he be in joy, or pain*,
> Feeding at will along the lane,
> Or bringing fagots from the wood."

Or hearken, when the poet speaks in his own person—

> "I to the *Muses* have been bound
> These fourteen years, by strong indentures:
> *Oh, gentle Muses*, let me tell
> But half of what to him befell—
> He surely met with strange adventures,
> O, gentle Muses! is this kind?
> Why will ye thus my suit repel?
> Why of your further aid bereave me?
> And can ye thus unfriended leave me,
> Ye Muses, whom I love so well?"

The Muses certainly seem neither to have smiled upon this importunate invocation, nor to have dictated it; and yet, can we say that this is the real language of men—more especially of men "in low and rustic life?" But it may be answered, that Wordsworth only professes to use "the real language of men, as far as is *possible*," I answer, "what man has done, man may do; and some of our pathetic ballads demonstrate that it *is* possible to make use of the most real and simple language *throughout* a composition, and with the happiest effect. Witness the touching ballad of Auld Robin Gray.

> "He hadna been gane but a year and a day,
> When my faither broke his arm, and our cow was stolen away;

My mither she fell sick, and my Jamie at the sea,
And auld Robin Gray came courtin' to me.

"My faither urged me sair, my mither didna speak,
But she looked in my face till my heart was like to break;
So I gied him my hand, though my heart was at the sea,
And auld Robin Gray is gudeman to me."

Here there is not a *word* that is unusual either in itself or in the application of it; and the result is a general harmony and *keeping* in the composition. But Wordsworth, in exemplifying his theory, is too frequently neither simple nor majestic. He misses the grace of simplicity, and at the same time loses the advantages of a loftier diction. Who can prefer these lines on a sky-lark,

"Up with me, up with me into the clouds!
For thy song, lark, is strong;
Up with me, up with me into the clouds,
Singing, singing,
With all the heavens about thee ringing,"

to the following, by Gray, on the same subject,

"But chief the sky-lark pours on high
Her trembling, thrilling ecstasy,
And, lessening from the dazzled sight,
Melts into air and liquid light."

These last may, indeed, chiefly consist of that diction which Wordsworth brands by the epithet "poetic;" but, at any rate, they have the grace of congruity. Now, Wordsworth's lines are too eccentric to be natural—too much like the old nursery ditty of "Here we go up, up, up," to be sublime.

Wordsworth may well say, "If my conclusions are admitted, and carried as far as they must be carried—if admitted at all—our judgments concerning the works of the greatest poets, both ancient and modern, will be far different from what they are at present, both when we praise and when we censure; but it may be doubted whether (as he affirms) our "moral feelings, influencing, and influenced by these judgments, will be corrected and purified."

At any rate, our *tastes* will hardly be corrected and

purified, for, if we judge by the theory and its effects, we must bring in a verdict of "guilty" against Milton, on an indictment of having used poetic diction; and we must place the author of the "Lyrical Ballads" infinitely above that mighty "orb of song."

In the second place, where Wordsworth has made use of the *real* language of men, he has not been fortunate in the selection. His language of low life is not, as he tells us it is, "purified from what appears to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust." He does not, according to his profession, "by a selection made with true taste and feeling," entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life." Will he affirm that such expressions as these,

> "Let Betty Foy,
> With girth and stirrup, *fiddle, faddle,*"—
>
> "*Oh, me!* it is a merry meeting,"—
>
> "And Betty's in a sad *quandary,*"

are not "rational causes of dislike or disgust?" Will he maintain that such "selections" of language as the following,—

> "If thou art mad, my pretty lad,
> Then I must be for ever sad;"
>
> "Oh, mercy! to myself I cried,
> If Lucy should be dead!"
>
> "Oh, misery, oh, misery!
> Oh, wo is me, oh, misery!"

are "made with true taste and feeling," or that they "entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life?" Let it be observed, moreover, that in all the above extracts, the poet speaks in his own person, and cannot—as I at least should hope—plead in excuse for vulgarity of diction, that he has adapted the words to the character from whose mouth they proceed.

Amongst other causes of pleasure, when words are metrically arranged, Wordsworth mentions a "manly style," and yet descends to such babyisms as

"That way, look, my infant, lo!
What a pretty baby-show!"

"'Tis a pretty baby-treat,
Nor, I deem, for me, unmeet."

"Pull the primrose, sister Anne,
Pull as many as you can!"

"Eyes of some men travel far
For the finding of a star;
Up and down the heavens they go,
Men that keep a mighty rout!
I'm as great as they, I trow,
Since the day I found thee out,
Little flower!—I'll make a stir,
Like a great astronomer."

But, it may be urged, that the poems from which these extracts are made, have "*a worthy purpose*." It may be so. All I allege is, that of whatever "importance" their "subject" may be, "their style" is *not* "manly"—their selection of language is *not* "made with true taste and feeling." The mind of him who reads them may (as I contend) be "sound and vigorous," and "in a *healthful* state of association," (as Wordsworth calls it,) and yet fail to be "enlightened," or "ameliorated," by reason of the "*rational*" disgust, which, in its days of manhood, it feels to the pap which was the nutriment of its infancy. It hath put away childish things; it no longer speaks as a child, understands as a child, or thinks as a child. Why, then, in poems which are so far from being written professedly for children, that they are rather illustrations of a complicated theory addressed to the mature intellect, should the poet make use of language which, in the outset, carries with it childish associations? Wordsworth indeed, confesses that he is apprehensive that his language "may frequently suffer from arbitrary connexions of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases;" and he has "no doubt, that in some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous, may be given to his readers, by expressions which appeared to him tender and pathetic." —"That no man can *altogether* protect himself" from the effects of these associations, I allow; but that he may pro-

tect himself from them more than Wordsworth has done, I must believe.

The very measure of such verses as these—

> "The cock is crowing,
> The stream is flowing;
> The small birds twitter,
> The lake doth glitter;"

and,

> "Like an army defeated
> The snow hath retreated,
> And now doth fare ill
> On the top of the bare hill,"

brings the nursery before us, and almost prevents us from observing that the *thoughts* are really pleasing, and suggested by a personal observation of nature. Is not this rather like a daring of the very danger which he deprecates? I am far from calling Wordsworth a childish writer; but it must be owned that he sometimes writes childishly.

Having attempted to show that, in many instances, Wordsworth has *not* fulfilled the conditions of his own theory, I proceed to point out in what manner, by fulfilling them, he has been betrayed into absurdities.

The very root of Wordsworth's most offensive peculiarities seems to be the principle, into which, at the beginning of my observations, I promised to institute an inquiry at some future time. It is this, "that the feeling developed in his poems gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling." I proposed to consider whether this part of his theory were not likely to produce originality of a vicious kind, and whether there should not be a mutual proportion between the subject and the passion connected with it.

As we shall best judge of this principle when viewed in connexion with its results, let us examine in what manner it has operated on Wordsworth's poetry, and whether it have there produced originality of a good or a bad kind.

I shall endeavour to prove, that by carrying this principle into effect, Wordsworth has been betrayed into two

faults, which branch off into almost opposite ramifications, but which unite at last in producing one common result—incongruity.

The first is, that trusting to the importance of the feeling, which he purposes to illustrate, he does not scruple to consort it with weak and beggarly elements, which either degrade it or render it ridiculous, by the overpowering force of association.

The second is, that, investing the feeling with an importance which the action and situation do not warrant, he uses language and employs illustrations, as much above the occasion, as the language he sometimes uses is below it ; and thus produces in his poems as strange a mixture of homeliness and magnificence, as the brick floor and mirrored walls of a French bedroom.

Or, in more concise terms, he has, in the first case, derived low subjects from lofty feelings ; in the second, he has deduced lofty feelings from low subjects.

I will, in the first place, attempt to render the first error palpable.

In pursuance of his principal object, which is (the poet tells us) " further and above all, to make his incidents and situation (chosen from common life) interesting, by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature, chiefly as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement," (let me take breath !) or, (as he says in another place,) " speaking in language more appropriate, to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind, when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature," Wordsworth, amongst other poems, wrote the Idiöt Boy, wherein he " traces the maternal passion through many of its more subtle windings." It is really curious to contrast the pompous announcement of the poet's intentions, with the poverty of their execution. " Low *words* contending with his lofty will, till his mortality predominates." Here are high-sounding and philosophical sentences, incomprehensible enough to make the greatest fool I ever knew in my life exclaim,—" How delightful that is !—It is so metaphysical !" Any one would naturally imagine that the " fluxes and refluxes of the mind, when agitated by the *great* and

simple affections of our nature,"—" the maternal passion traced through many of its more subtle windings," must be illustrated by a poem, great in its scheme, simple in its execution, affecting in its incidents. We turn to the poem in question with raised expectations, when we experience the shock of a shower-bath in the perusal of a story, (very *simple*, in one sense of the word,) all about an old woman, one Betty Foy, whose neighbour, Susan Gale, " old Susan, she who dwells alone," is taken ill. Betty Foy, instead of going for the doctor herself, wisely sends her idiot boy Johnny on horseback on that errand, although (as she might have anticipated, had she possessed a grain of sense) she is obliged at last to leave Susan (her reluctance to do which caused her to send Johnny,) and to walk in *propriâ personâ* to the town, roaming the livelong night in quest of her idiotic darling. After a little attempt to keep the reader in suspense as to Johnny's fate, the poet cannot find in his heart to be too pathetic ; he therefore soon discovers Johnny quietly sitting on the pony, " who is mild and good," and comforts Betty's heart with so enchanting a sight.

> "She pats the pony, where or when
> She knows not—happy Betty Foy!
> The little pony glad may be,
> But he is milder far than she,
> You hardly can perceive *his* joy."

That is, the fluxes and the refluxes of the pony's feelings (apparently the wisest animal of the party) were less violent than those of Betty. Indeed hers seem to have gushed forth with great vehemence; for, when she first beholds Johnny,

> " She darts as with a torrent's force,
> She almost has o'erturn'd the horse."

But that nothing may be wanting to a happy denouement, old Susan Gale gets up, and finds that her complaint was wholly nervous, and produced by the want of something better to think of. She then posts to the wood, and finds her friends—

"Oh me! it is a merry meeting,
As ever was in Christendom."

They all go home; and the reader's heart, which had been so painfully agitated, is cheered by the following facetious conclusion:

"And thus to Betty's question he
Made answer like a traveller bold:
(*His very words I give to you.*)
'The cocks did crow tu-whoo—tu-whoo,
And the sun did shine so cold!'
Thus answer'd Johnny in his glory,
And that was all his travel's story."

But it may be objected that I have only given the story, which is the mere vehicle of the feeling. I will, therefore, more accurately trace the "fluxes and refluxes" of Betty's maternal passion. First we find her *anxiety* that Johnny should comport himself like a man of sense;

"And Betty's most especial charge
Was, Johnny! Johnny! mind that you
Come home again, nor stop at all,—
Come home again, whate'er befall,
My Johnny do, I pray you do."

Then comes a flux of *joy* at seeing Johnny make such a good figure on horseback—

"His heart it was so full of glee
That, till full fifty yards were gone,
He quite forgot his holly whip,
And all his skill in horsemanship—
Oh happy, happy, happy, John!"

"And Betty's standing at the door,
And Betty's face with joy o'erflows,
Proud of herself and proud of him,
She sees him in his travelling trim;
How quietly her Johnny goes!"

Then comes a sad reflux of apprehension, from Johnny's protracted absence, which shows itself, first in "a subtle

winding," which induces her to cast vile reflections on Johnny, and to call him "a little idle sauntering thing"—then in a tender regard for his safety—and, finally, in quitting "poor old Susan Gale," to look for her idiot boy. This time the tide of her feelings is quite at a spring-ebb, and she has serious thoughts of becoming a second Ophelia:

> "A green-grown pond she just has past,
> And from the brink she hurries fast,
> Lest she should drown herself therein."

For nothing can she see or hear; and the night is so still,

> "The grass you almost hear it growing—
> *You hear it now if e'er you can.*"

Then, with a sort of eddy in the reflux of her passions, she indulges in conjectures as to Johnny's fate, to which conjectures the bard adds a few of his own, as thus—

> "Perhaps with head and heels on fire,
> And like the very soul of evil,
> He's galloping away, away!
> And so he'll gallop on for aye,
> The bane of all that dread the devil!"

But,

> "Your pony's *worth his weight in gold;*
> Then calm your terrors, Betty Foy!
> She's coming from among the trees,
> And now all full in view she sees
> Him whom she loves, her idiot boy."

Then does the tide flow in again up to high-water mark, and Betty manifests her raptures, (as before mentioned,) by nearly upsetting the pony. No wonder that Wordsworth should write in metre, (and such metre!) lest the excitement produced by his pathetic histories should be carried beyond its proper bounds!

Wordsworth says, in speaking of his Lyrical Ballads, "They who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist

in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness. They will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title." Oh, Mr. Wordsworth! will they alone, who have been accustomed to gaudy and inane phraseology, struggle with feelings of strangeness in reading your Idiot Boy, and look round for poetry? May not the spirit, deeply imbued with Homer, Virgil, Shakspeare, Milton, feel somewhat strange at meeting with such lines as these—

> "Burr, burr! Now Johnny's lips they burr!
> As loud as any mill, or near it;
> Meek as a lamb the pony moves,
> And Johnny makes the noise he loves,
> And Betty listens, glad to hear it!"

And may it *not* look round, with somewhat of a blank amazement, for poetry?

Really, such compositions as these seem to be published as experiments to ascertain rather the quantum of mankind's credulity, than any important fact. It is said, that Wordsworth carefully corrects his poems; and he himself begs to be exempted from "the most dishonourable accusation which can be brought against an author, namely, that of an indolence, which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty, or, when his duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it." Yet I could almost fancy that such poems as the Idiot Boy were composed while the author was drawing on his boots in the morning, and then that, over his wine in the evening, he had exercised his ingenuity in fitting a theory to his verses. He very wrongly omits to point out the most important moral of the Idiot Boy, which decidedly is to be drawn from the pseudo-malady of Susan Gale, and its rapid departure, and which seems to be, that real misfortunes cure fanciful patients. But, to be serious, can any one assert that the maternal passion is not rather held up to ridicule than to admiration, by being found in company with such associates? So far from the feeling developed

in this poem being able to give importance to the action and situation, the poor feeling, like a baby overlaid by a fat mother, is smothered beneath the overpowering comicality of the action and situation. I would ask, what has Wordsworth gained by working in coarse materials, in order to illustrate the "primary laws and great affections of our nature?" He may have traced "*truly*," but certainly not "unostentatiously," (for the very attempt is ostentatious,) the workings of a silly woman's mind in losing her idiot boy; but what has this to do with the more noble, the more dignified, manifestations of the maternal passion? He ought to show that there is some great advantage in the introduction of vulgar characters, and in the use of trivial incidents, to counterbalance the defects naturally produced by such a descent from poetic dignity. Shakspeare's Lear is a king, and his daughters are princesses, and his history is founded on no less an event than the loss of a kingdom; yet the paternal feelings, with all their fluctuations, are, I should imagine, displayed as finely in his sufferings, as they could be, if he were a Johnny, and his daughters Betty Foys. To be odd is not to be original, in a good sense. Nature may be, when unadorned, adorned the most; but a cousin-Betty dress will spoil her form more than a velvet robe and sweeping train. A rose with all its leaves, has the beauty of proportion as well as of colour. Strip off the leaves, and the flower does but encumber the slim and naked stalk. Wordsworth, in his prologue to Peter Bell, represents the muse as tempting him to loftier themes, in the following really excellent lines:

"I know the secrets of a land
Where human foot did never stray;
Fair is the land as evening skies,
And cool—though in the depth it lies
Of burning Africa.

"Or we'll unto the realm of Faery,
Among the lovely shades of things;
The shadowy forms of mountains bare,
And streams, and bowers, and ladies fair,
The shades of palaces and kings!"

And the poet replies to these seductions,

"Long have I loved what I behold,
The night that calms, the day that cheers;
The common growth of mother earth
Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
Her humblest mirth and tears.

"The dragon's wing, the mystic ring,
I shall not covet for my dower,
If I along that lowly way
With sympathetic heart may stray,
And with a soul of power.

"These given, what more need I desire,
To stir, to soothe, to elevate?
What nobler marvels than the mind
May in life's daily prospect find,
May find, or these create?

"A potent wand doth sorrow wield;
What spell so strong as guilty fear?
Repentance is a tender sprite,
If aught on earth have heavenly might,
'Tis lodged within her silent tear."

Now this is beautiful, and had Wordsworth always, or often, written thus, and in strict accordance with the principles conveyed in the above exquisite lines, it would (as Johnson said of Gray) "have been vain to blame, and useless to praise him." But, when we drop from such chaste and classical poetry, at once, "a thousand fathoms down" to such a stanza as this,

"Here sit the vicar and his dame,
And there, my good friend Stephen Otter;
And, ere the light of evening fail,
To them I must relate the tale
Of Peter Bell the Potter."

When we read the tale itself, of Peter Bell, "who had a dozen wedded wives," and who is converted to a holy life, partly by a dead body which he sees in a river, and partly by a "*fervent* methodist," but chiefly, and in truth, by the ministry of a desolate donkey, which,

—"with motion dull,
Upon the pivot of his skull
Turn'd round his long left ear;"

and, moreover,

—"did lengthen out
More ruefully an endless shout,
The long dry see-saw of his horrible bray;"

when we are told,

—"that through prevailing grace
He, not unmoved, did notice now
The cross upon thy shoulders scored,
Meek beast! in memory of the Lord,
To whom all human-kind shall bow;"

and when we learn, that, in consequence of all this, the said Peter Bell

"Forsook his crimes, repressed his folly,
And after ten months' melancholy,

[Why *ten?*]

Became a good and honest man!"

how can we shake with any passion, but that of laughter? Repentance is, indeed, a tender sprite, and if she "do her spiriting gently," may melt into the heart; but she is, in truth, too tender for contact with such

"Alum styptics, whose contracting power
Shrinks her thin essence like a shrivell'd flower."

And this is the poem, of which Wordsworth says it could not be published in company with the "Wagonner," "without disadvantage," "from the higher tone of imagination, and the deeper touches of passion, aimed at" in it!!

But Wordsworth has not only contrived to place maternal affection and repentance in an equivocal light; he has even been very merry with his own darling power, imagination, of which he says, "the soul may fall away from

it, not being able to sustain its grandeur!" That he has fallen, overdazzled in the attempt to illustrate her divine energies, most persons will acknowledge, who read the tale of "Goody Blake and Harry Gill." He says that, in this poem, he "wished to draw attention to the truth, that the power of the human imagination is sufficient to produce such changes, even in our physical nature, as might almost appear miraculous." The story, in plain prose, of the criminal who was bled to death by imagination merely, who, by hearing his sinking state described, (a bandage having been placed over his eyes,) actually dropped lifeless at the words, "he dies," seems to me more forcibly to display the power of the human imagination, than the fact which Wordsworth has chosen to versify for that purpose. The fact, which Wordsworth calls "a valuable illustration," is as follows:—Goody Blake a very poor old woman, was detected by Harry Gill, a lusty drover, in pulling sticks out of his hedge. Now this is an offence which no farmer can pardon; so Harry Gill treated poor Goody Blake rather roughly, on which the vindictive woman prayed "to God, who is the judge of all, that he might never more be warm." And he never more *was* warm, in spite of three greatcoats and innumerable blankets. Surely this was rather more than poetical justice; for it is a sore trial to a farmer's temper to have his hedges spoiled, especially to a drover, whose cattle may be ten miles off before the morning, if his fences are broken over night. Now, I also know of a striking fact, exemplifying the power of the human imagination. It is as follows:—There is an echo in the garden of a nobleman in a southern county, which, if both the speaker and hearer be placed in proper situations, appears as a voice proceeding from among the tombs of a churchyard close by. A gentleman, ignorant of this circumstance, was walking in the garden, when a mischievous person, throwing his voice into the churchyard, said, "Thou shalt die before twelve this night;" and the gentleman (who was in a delicate state of health) actually *did* die that night, from the shock he received, even although the trick was afterwards explained to him. Now, although I consider this an important fact, as showing how prophecies work their own accomplishment, and how the

"*greatest change*" of all may be produced in our physical nature by the power of the imagination, I do not consider it a fit subject for poetry, any more than Prince Hohenlohe's curative miracles, or the magnetic wonders of Mainaduc; nor would I put it into verse, even though I should "have the satisfaction" (as Wordsworth tells us, with respect to Harry Gill) "of knowing that it had been communicated to many hundreds of people, who would never have heard of it, had it not been narrated as a ballad, and in a more impressive metre than is usual in ballads." What this *more impressive* metre is, we may learn by a reference to the poem itself:—

"Oh, what's the matter, what's the matter,
What is't that ails young Harry Gill,
That evermore his teeth they chatter,
Chatter, chatter, chatter still.

"Of waistcoats Harry has no lack,
Good duffle gray and flannel fine;
He has a blanket on his back,
And coats enough to smother nine!"

And this tale, Wordsworth tells us, he related in metre, amongst other reasons, because "we see that Pope, by the power of verse alone, has contrived to render the *plainest common sense* interesting!" It is a pity that Wordsworth will not allow us to take his ballads as mere levities, or pieces of humour. As such they might possess considerable merit; but as it is, we begin to laugh, and then the theory comes over us with a spasmodic chill. We prim up our mouths, with the reflection, that this apparently good fun is "a valuable illustration of an important fact." We should shake hands with Peter Bell, if he did not pretend to "a high tone of imagination." Were we to read even John Gilpin with such an awful impression, we should be as grave over it as over a sermon. But

"ridenti dicere verum
Quid vetat?"

The most important and melancholy convictions come to

us in a laugh—only they must come spontaneously, unsuggested, uninfluenced by a theory. The story must tell itself; the moral must shine through it like the sun; the motive must be transparent as the day. It is a clumsy mode of instruction that itself requires explanation; it is a dull joke that asks for analysis. Wisdom must be dropped like seed, not hammered in like a nail. The human mind (of which Wordsworth professes to know so much) sets itself against a formal attempt to instruct or improve it. Many persons may be the better for reading John Gilpin, if it were only for the cordial spirit of drollery, without a grain of malice, that runs through it; but if Cowper had prefixed a philosophical disquisition to the ballad, we could only have thought of the author's coxcombry. But some of Wordsworth's defenders may say the poet *meant* you to laugh sometimes. I ask, would he be well pleased if we laughed at Peter Bell's catastrophe?

I now proceed to point out the second error into which the principle under consideration has led our author. He has given a false importance to certain actions and situations, and has thereby been betrayed into language unsuitable to the occasion. As, in the first instance, he stripped the feeling naked, he has, in this, trimmed it up in furbelows and flounces. There seems to be the greater necessity for noticing this defect at large, inasmuch as the peculiarity mentioned is vaunted by Wordsworth's admirers as not only the distinguishing characteristic of his poetry, but the great source of its excellence. They say that, while other writers debase what is noble in itself by their method of conveying it to the mind, Wordsworth glorifies the meanest subject, and turns all he touches (even pots and kettles) into gold. As ancient fables are full of instruction, let us remember that King Midas, who had this enriching faculty, was as much approximated to the lower orders of creation by one other sad peculiarity, as he was to the angelic race by being a sort of living philosopher's stone. Is there not as much danger of the mean subject dragging the splendid illustration of it into the depths of bathos, as there is likelihood of the splendid illustration raising the mean subject to the skies? May not incongruity as much be shown in dignifying what is

base, as in debasing what is dignified? and may not truth be equally profaned by such process? Nay, is it not a greater hazard "to raise a mortal to the skies," than to "draw an angel down?" for the mortal may look very foolish in angelic company, but the angel will walk on his way unblenched amidst the sons of earth.

Wordsworth tells us, in his preface, that it has been his object, not only to choose incidents and situations from common life, but "at the same time to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way." That he has succeeded in presenting ordinary things to the mind in an *unusual* way, few persons will deny who read the following lines, taken from a sonnet on a Wild Duck's Nest; but whether the colouring be imagination's own, some may sceptically doubt:

"Th' imperial consort of the Fairy King
Owns not a sylvan bower; or gorgeous cell,
With emerald floor'd, and with purpureal shell
Ceiling'd and roof'd; that is so fair a thing
As this low structure," &c. &c. &c.

"*Words cannot paint* th' o'ershadowing yew-tree bough
And dimly-gleaming nest," &c.

"I gaze—and almost wish to lay aside
Humanity, weak slave of cumbrous pride!"

In other words, the poet is so enchanted at the sight of a duck's nest, that he longs to become a duck himself, and to creep into the creature's warm and cozy tenement.

One may deduce, from this specimen, one great cause of Wordworth's poetical errors. He feels intensely, and he gives an over-importance to his own particular feelings, partly from a vanity, which one is sorry to see in a truly great man; and partly from having met with admirers who deify his very faults, until he is irrevocably confirmed in them. A belief that what interests oneself must interest others, is indeed common to all human beings; but a man who comes before the public should cool down his mind, after the fervour of composition, to the plain sense ques-

tion—"Will what I have written strike others in the same light as myself?"

This question Wordsworth scarcely seems to ask himself; he *says*, indeed, "I am sensible that my associations must have sometimes been particular, instead of general, and that, consequently, giving to things a false importance, sometimes from diseased impulses, I may have written upon unworthy subjects." Why then tread by choice on such dangerous, such debateable ground? Why, if there be but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, annihilate that one? He will concede nothing to the perhaps honest prejudices of mankind, even in so trifling a matter as the choice of names; and such appellations as Betty Foy, Harry Gill, and Peter Bell, because they seem good to himself, must be accepted by his reader. Have these also a meaning "too deep for tears?" He does not go out of himself sufficiently to see things in their due proportion. It is remarkable, that in exemplifying the powers of mind requisite for the production of poetry by appropriate quotations, those quotations are generally selected from his own works. In speaking of imagination, it appears as if he did not so much wish to show what the faculty is, as to prove that he himself is possessed of it. He remarks upon the following couplet:

> "His voice was *buried* among trees,
> Yet to be *come at* by the breeze;"

"A metaphor expressing the love of seclusion by which this bird (the stock-dove) is marked, and characterizing its note as not partaking of the shrill and the piercing, and therefore more easily deadened by the intervening shade; yet a note so peculiar, and withal so pleasing, that the breeze, gifted with that love of the sound which the poet feels, penetrates the shade in which it is entombed, and conveys it to the ear of the listener." Now all this might be in the poet's mind when he wrote the couplet, but will it be in his reader's when he reads it? Again, he tells us: "In the series of poems placed under the head of Imagination, I have begun with one of the earliest pro-

cesses of nature in the developement of this faculty. Guided by one of *my own* primary consciousnesses, I have represented a commutation and transfer of internal feelings, co-operating with external accidents to plant for immortality images of sight and sound in the celestial soil of the imagination." We turn to the poem, and receive the following piece of intelligence:—

> "There was a boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
> And islands of Winander!"

This boy's favourite amusement was to hoot like an owl. The operation is thus described:

> "With fingers interwoven, both hands
> Press'd closely, palm to palm, and to his mouth
> Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
> Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
> That they might answer him."

Then comes the plantation for immortality:

> "When it chanced
> That pauses of deep silence mock'd his skill,
> Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
> Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
> Has carried far into his heart the voice
> Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
> Would enter unawares into his mind
> With all its solemn imagery," &c.

The boy dies, and this historian tells us:—

> "I believe that oftentimes,
> A long half-hour together, I have stood
> Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies."

This is all the information that the poet gives us on the subject, and the only outward and visible reason that appears for the deep interest wherewith Wordsworth ponders over his grave, is, that the boy was fond of imitating the hooting of an owl. As to the circumstance of the boy's sensibility to nature, how could Wordsworth know it,

unless from the boy himself? which is most improbable, for

> "This boy was taken from his mates, and died
> In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old;"

and lads of twelve years old do not speak of their feelings, especially of this nature, if indeed they ever have such feelings.

But the explanation of the whole is to be found in the expression, "guided by one of *my own* primary consciousnesses." Wordsworth, as being a poet, who is a man of a thousand, felt thus; and therefore runs into the absurdity of attributing such feelings to any other boy, among the thousand, who happens to hoot to the owls, as he himself did when young.

This over-importance which Wordsworth gives to his slightest sensations, produces in his writings a solemnity about trifles, a seriousness and energy in little things, which bears the appearance (I believe the appearance only) of affectation—very destructive to the simplicity which he desires should characterize his compositions. For instance, in the following verses:

> "I wander'd lonely as a cloud
> That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
> When all at once I saw a crowd—
> A host of golden daffodils."

What a prelude is the pomposity of the cloud-simile, to the host of daffodils which were "tossing their heads in sprightly dance!" Then he goes on to say,

> "I gazed, and gazed, but little thought
> What wealth to me the show had brought.
> For oft when on my couch I lie,
> In vacant or in pensive mood,
> They flash upon that inward eye,
> Which is the bliss of solitude;
> And then my heart with pleasure fills
> And dances with the daffodils!"

He calls this a sort of "ocular spectrum,"—a most bilious

"ocular spectrum" indeed, as ever haunted the jaundiced sight! What a pity that the beautiful expression,

> "That inward eye,
> Which is the bliss of solitude,"

should be found in such bad company! Thus it is that Wordsworth's most exquisite thoughts and images escape the common view, like grains of gold in the unsifted sands of Pactolus.

Again, in the Excursion, Wordsworth thus sounds the trumpet of preparation, to herald in—a lamb!

> "List! I heard
> From yon huge breast of rock a solemn bleat,
> Sent forth as if it were the mountain's voice,
> As if the visible mountain made the cry!
> Again! * * * *
> It was a lamb left somewhere to itself,
> The plaintive spirit of the solitude!"

In this instance, also, I doubt not but that "the effect upon the soul" (that is, Wordsworth's soul) "was such as he expressed." I can well believe, that to a poet, amidst the utter desolation of incumbent mountains, where

> "The region all around
> Stands silent, empty of all shape of life,"

the bleat of a lamb may be a solemn thing; but as few persons can hear such a sound under such circumstances—as fewer still can hear it with a poet's sensibility—it were wise in the bard to keep the feeling to himself, or, at any rate, to mention it only in confidence to a few particular friends. It neither reads nor tells well in a library or drawing-room—and the Excursion is rather too weighty a companion for the mountain-tops.

I have frequently heard quoted, as a proof of "that fine colouring of imagination" which Wordsworth can fling over the humblest subject, the following passage from the Wagonner:

> "And the smoke and respiration,
> Rising, like an exhalation,

Blends with the mist—a moving shroud
To form—an undissolving cloud,
Which, with slant ray, the merry sun
Takes delight to play *upon*.

[Which must be pronounced *upun*.]

Never surely old Apollo,
He, or *other god as old*,
Of whom in story we are told,
Who *had* a favourite to follow
Through a battle, *or elsewhere*.
Round the object of his care,
In a time of peril, threw
Veil of such celestial hue;
Interposed so bright a screen
Him and his enemies between!"

There is a mixture of poverty and grandeur in the very diction of these lines (as I have intimated by marking some mean expressions by Italics)—but let that pass. Of what is the poet speaking? Would any one divine that he was describing the *breath* and *steam* (surely he has kept clear of the "real language" of men in this instance) proceeding from a team of horses? Could any Œdipus surmise, that "Apollo's favourite" is only a type of "mild Benjamin" "the Wagonner"—"his enemies" only a metaphor for Benjamin's master, angry at his staying too long on the road,

"Who from Keswick has pricked forth,
Sour and surly as the North!"

It is easy to call this sublimity. It is equally easy to call it fustian and bombast. What, indeed, is bombast but a disproportion between the incident, or idea, and the language that conveys the incident or idea? What more could Wordsworth have said in describing the sun-illuminated smoke of a whole army in combat, than he has said of the perspiring horses! If the humbler the object is, the nobler is the effort of the imagination in aggrandizing it, it is plain, that if he had compared the steam from a tea-kettle to Apollo's celestial veil, the image would have been still finer. But, if a due regard to proportion be essential to produce the pleasure which the mind takes

in her perception of things; if we turn with disgust from a cottage with a Grecian portico; if even nature teach us, by her own works, that a certain scale is to be observed (for she does not place a Mont Blanc amongst the mountains of Cumberland, or a Skiddaw close to Box Hill)—then we must allow that Wordsworth is greatly wrong when he places the low and the lofty in such immediate juxtaposition. It is very pretty, doubtless, to say, that

> "The meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts which do often lie too deep for tears;"

but there should be differences and shades of degree in our raptures; a daisy should not impart the same elevation of feeling as a cloud-canopied mountain, and a man must be near-sighted indeed who can pore upon the one, while the other is towering above him. Why has Nature set forth such a majestic banquet, if her humbler fare suffices to nourish the mind to its utmost capacity and vigour?

The same remarks will apply, even more forcibly, to the following passage also taken from the Wagonner:

> "Now, heroes, for the true commotion,
> The triumph of your late devotion!
> Can aught on earth impede delight
> Still mounting to a higher height;
> And higher still—a greedy flight!
> Can any low-born care pursue her,
> Can any mortal clog come *to* her?
> No notion have they—not a thought
> That is from joyless regions brought!
> And, while they coast the silent lake,
> Their inspiration I partake;
> Share their empyreal spirits—yea,
> With their enraptured vision, see—
> O fancy, what a jubilee!"

Here is a coil about heroes and devotion, and delight, and exemption from low-born care, and mortal clogs (or pattens.) Who would not think that some high-minded beings, having just lifted their thoughts to heaven, were coasting "the silent lake" in an ecstasy of divine beatitude; while they beheld with the eye of faith a jubilee of holy joy,

which could be no other than the Millennium? But what is the real state of the matter? A sailor and a wagonner, half-seas-over, reeling by the side of a lake, behold

> "Earth, spangled sky, and lake serene
> Involved and restless all;"

or, in other words, "see double," and in a rapture of maudlin tenderness, shake hands and embrace. This being the case, it seems rather an awkward confession of the bard, that he "partakes their inspiration, and shares their empyreal spirits, (Qu.—imperial spirits?) and sees, as they do, "a dancing and a glancing" among the stars. Indeed, did not the poet's character stand so deservedly high, there might be something suspicious in his *penchant* for drunkards and thieves. In another poem, he goes into raptures because a child and his grandmother (as he expresses it) "both go a-stealing together." He mystically says,

> "And yet into whatever sin they may fall,
> This child but *half* knows it, and that *not at all.*"

And (as if any teacher were needed to convince us that man is a thieving animal) he concludes,

> "Old man, whom so oft I with pity have eyed,
> I love thee, and love *the sweet boy* at thy side:
> Long yet mayst thou live! for a *teacher* we see,
> That lifts up the veil of our nature in thee."

But, in the instance before us, the bard takes care to let us know,

> "This sight to me the muse imparts."

Oh, Mr. Wordsworth, how, after such an original and splendid passage, could you admit the most commonplace of all commonplaces? you, who profess to avoid poetic diction as zealously as others cultivate it, to talk of "the muse," and, more horrible still, "the muse *imparts*," and (climax of abomination!) the rhyme in the next line is "hearts!" I must extract one more passage from the

Wagonner, as an instance of the peril which lies in laying on too vividly a colouring of imagination.

> " Right gladly had the horses stirr'd,
> When they the wish'd-for greeting heard,
> The whip's loud notice from the door,
> That they were free to move once more.
> You think these doings
>
> [*i. e.* Benjamin getting drunk]
>
> must have bred
> In them disheartening doubts and dread:
> No! not a horse *of all the eight*,
> Although it be a moonless night,
> Fears either for himself or freight!"

Wonderful! most wonderful! most contrary indeed to all one should have guessed, supposed, or predicted!

Well and feelingly may Wordsworth say, that he " forbears to speak of an incongruity, which would shock the intelligent reader, viz. should the poet interweave any foreign splendour of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests." Undoubtedly the less said on that point the better.

Can it be believed that such passages as the above, from the Wagonner, should be *selected* by Wordsworth's admirers as proofs of his imaginative powers? I have *heard* them recited without one " blank misgiving." The more strange, the more incongruous are the images and expressions, the more does the true disciple of Wordsworth consider himself bound not only to defend, but to prove them admirable. He seems to have a lurking suspicion that he will be pronounced in the wrong, and therefore chooses the very worst specimens of the poet's manner to prove that he is in the right. Like a wise general, he defends the weakest post, and leaves the strongholds to take care of themselves. Obstinate in error, he will not only say that black is not black, but prove by logical induction, that black is white. In the first edition of Peter Bell was a stanza, since expunged, and thus tacitly condemned by the author himself—one of many, containing ingenious con. jectures as to the nature of an object which Peter saw one

night in the water, (a very common and novel-like trick, by the by, to raise a reader's curiosity.) The stanza was as follows:

> "Is it a party in a parlour
> Cramm'd just as they on earth were cramm'd,
> Some sipping punch, some drinking tea;
> But, as you by their faces see,
> All silent, and all—damn'd!"

I asked my Wordsworthian friend if he really and truly could admire this passage! "Admire it!" he replied, "I think it one of the sublimest in the whole compass of English poetry! How awfully grand is the thrilling contrast between the common and every-day occupations of the beings conjectured to be seen, and the hopeless horror of their countenances, between their mirthful employments, and their preternatural silence! They are, if we only look at them with a casual eye, 'some sipping punch, some drinking tea;' but the poet, by a marvellous and almost divine stroke of the imagination, makes them 'all silent and all—damn'd!'" The last word fell with such a lump upon my ear, that I felt much in the condition of the unhappy party in the parlour, and replied not—for it was manifestly useless to argue with such an enthusiastic adorer. A blind prostration of intellect to their idol, is indeed the chief characteristic of Wordsworth's proselytes. The oracle sayeth, "If an author, by any *single* composition, has impressed us with respect for his talents, it is useful to consider this as affording a presumption that, on other occasions where we have been displeased, he, nevertheless, may not have written ill or absurdly;" and accordingly the disciples say, "that Wordsworth has *often* written finely cannot be denied. Why not then give him credit for *always* knowing what he is about, better than any of us?" Strange reasoning! in the face of conviction that

> "Fallible man
> Is still found fallible, however wise!"

and when we know instances, in the first place, of the

worst authors writing one good thing, and in the next, of the best authors writing some bad things. Even Milton nods, and even Leigh Hunt has written one of the most beautiful small poems extant, beginning, "Sleep breathes at last from out thee, my little patient boy." But the very essence of Wordsworthianism is the belief that its king can do no wrong. It is the very popery of poetry; and one doubt of its Hierarch's infallibility would be fatal to its empire. Therefore the disciples defend every line, every word, that Wordsworth has ever written—not as they would defend any passage in a favourite author, but with all the *blind* obstinacy of men who adopt a peculiar creed. I grant that *all* the absurdities of Wordsworth's partizans are no more to be charged upon him, than all the old womanism of Wesley's disciples was (in past times) attributable to their vigorous-minded master,—but *some* of the blame must attach, in both instances, to the nature of the creed and to its propagator. Wordsworth talks much and feelingly of the outcry raised against him and his poems; he has suffered more from injudicious praise. He deprecates the injustice of his enemies. Let him rather pray to be delivered from his friends. When they declare that he is equal to Milton, he should be too wise to believe them.

Thus have I endeavoured to prove, by exposing the evil tendency of an opposite principle, that, whether in passages of description, sentiment, or passion, the expression should be suited to the thought, and the thought to the expression. A diamond in a setting of wood, or a nut in a chasing of gold, alike offend that sense of congruity, which nature has implanted in us. But "words spoken in due season are" (to use the saying of the wise man) "as apples of gold in pictures of silver." The meaning is the most precious part, but the setting is precious too. Wordsworth himself says, "Proportion and congruity, the requisite knowledge being supposed, are subjects upon which taste may be trusted. It is competent to this office"—neither is this a mean office—for if (as Shakspeare says) "discretion is the better part of valour," much more is it the better part of genius. Wordsworth, in his enumeration of the powers which constitute a good poet, places judgment *last*. "Judgment (he says)

to decide how and where, and in what degree, each of these faculties ought to be exerted; so that *the less shall not be sacrificed to the greater; nor the greater, slighting the less, arrogate, to its own injury, more than its due.*" I hope that Wordsworth meant to abide by the old saying, "though *last* not *least;*" for I do not remember a single instance of any poet lacking judgment (according to Wordsworth's own definition of it,) who has ever been raised, by the common verdict of mankind, sanctified by time—the true Vox Populi, which Wordsworth professes to venerate—to a primordial rank in his art.

PART III.

Thus far Wordsworth explains his own theory, of which the whole substance seems to be the almost self-evident proposition—that natural thoughts, clothed in simple language, (however lowly the subject,) speak at once to the heart.

But the poet's disciples go beyond their master in aggrandizing his principles of composition. They "see in Wordsworth more than Wordsworth knew." Conscious, perhaps, that his own exposition (in prose) of his theory can lay claim to verbal originality alone, and that, moreover, it half condemns his own practice, they deduce from his works themselves a far more sublime and mystical creed —the "Revelation"—sufficient as I have heretofore observed, in the opinion of the elect, to work a moral change in any erring (but philosophic) individual. The Revelation, as far as I can learn, consists in a divine discovery by the poet, of the following arcana—namely, a certain accordance, which imaginative minds perceive when, shutting out the clamour of the world, they listen to Nature's still small voice, between the external universe, and the internal microcosm of man;—a purifying influence exerted through the medium of visible objects upon the invisible mental powers;—a sort of *anima mundi* pervading all that is;—a sublime harmony between the natural and moral creation. It is, in short, the quakerism of philoso-

phy, the transcendentalism of poetry; a something between the abstractedness of Plato, and the unction of Madame Guion. But let Wordsworth speak for himself:

> "My voice proclaims
> How exquisitely the individual mind
> (And the progressive powers perhaps no less
> Of the whole species) to the external world
> Is fitted;—and how exquisitely too
> (Theme this but little heard of among men!)
> The external world is fitted to the mind."

Is this new? Akenside, in his Pleasures of Imagination, says,

> "For as old Memnon's image, long renown'd
> By fabling Nilus, to the quivering touch
> Of Titan's ray, with each repulsive string
> Consenting, sounded through the warbling air
> Unbidden strains; even so did Nature's hand
> To certain species of external things
> Attune the finer organs of the mind."

But Wordsworth, moreover, insists upon a few items culled from other quarters. He seems to believe in certain native and beautiful properties of the human heart; (what the divines would say to this I know not;) he thinks that we are born in a glorious state of wisdom and of "heaven-born freedom," and that we have nothing to do but to keep ourselves aloof from the "weight of custom," and to carry on one smooth unbroken stream of thought from infancy to age, in order to be very perfect creatures. He greatly reprobates the fragmental manner in which most persons confound their identity by running after new objects, or adopting new opinions at different periods of their lives, and in consequence breaks out into the following short but pithy poem:

> "My heart leaps up, when I behold
> A rainbow in the sky,
> So was it when my life began,
> So is it now I am a man,
> So be it when I shall grow old,
> Or let me die!

The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety."

This is the whole of the poem, which I have heard many admirers of Wordsworth extol as an almost superhuman flight of intellect. This, they say, is the text which contains the essence of all his after discourses—this the epitome of the Wordsworthian philosophy—this the Shibboleth of the true believers. If you comprehend and feel this, you are already in the vestibule of the temple—if you do *not* comprehend and feel this, you have come into the world to very little purpose—you are but a piece of animated dust. Alas for me! I can indeed understand, or seem to understand, this divine little poem; but then I can perceive in it nothing beyond the quaint expression of a very natural wish, often uttered both in poetry and prose, namely, to preserve unto the evening of life

"Immaculate the manners of the morn."

In plain language, the meaning of the poem appears to be—"The sight of a rainbow gives me as much delight now as when I was a child, and I hope that, when I am old, I shall still be equally alive to this and other beauties of nature. I had rather die than become insensible to them. A man will resemble what he was when young; and, seeing that I was a promising child, I trust that I shall always be consistent, and that feelings of piety, excited by natural objects, will accompany me to my life's end." I may boast that I have supplied a hiatus in the last three lines by inserting—"seeing that I was a promising child," for without this clause the reasoning is inefficient.

"The child is father of the man,
And I could wish my days to be," &c.

is a *non sequitur:* for if childhood really contain the germ of our future character, it is clear that this circumstance must be either a blessing, or a curse, according as a child is amiable or otherwise; unless, indeed, Wordsworth means to assert that *all* children are born with equally happy dis-

positions; and, in this case, it would not be worth while to combat an opinion so contrary to the conclusions of experience. But no!—he is too orthodox to disseminate such a heresy.

We will now proceed to a certain ode, entitled "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of early Childhood," since it is the sermon of the foregoing text, the *opus magnum*, the *ne plus ultra* of mysterious excellence; it contains and condenses the grand peculiarities of "the Revelation." I was once present amongst a party, consisting of many true believers in the Wordsworthian faith, of a few neophytes, and one or two absolute and wicked sceptics. A sincere and most zealous disciple offered to read aloud the ode in question. Reader, didst thou ever hear a Wordsworthian spout poetry? If not, thou canst scarcely frame to thyself a mode of recitation so singular. A praying Quaker, a preaching Whitfieldian, is nothing to a spouting Wordsworthian. In compliance (as I suppose) with their master's wishes, who declares that, "in much the greatest part of his poems, as a substitute for the classic lyre or romantic harp, he requires nothing more than an animated or impassioned recitation adapted to the subject;" and that the reader must not be "deprived of a voluntary power to modulate, *in subordination to the sense*, the music of the poem;" taking a hint also, I imagine, from Wordsworth's description of the poet's privilege to

> "Murmur near the running brooks
> A music sweeter than their own,"

they part chant, part speak, part murmur, part mouth (with many a rise and fall and dying cadence) all poetry, but more especially Wordsworth's poetry, after an unimaginable manner—whether in subordination to the sense it were hard to determine.

No sooner had the Wordsworthian begun,

> "There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
> The earth, and every common sight
> To me did seem
> Apparell'd in celestial light,"

than one of the sceptics, of laughing propensities, crammed his handkerchief half way down his throat; the other looked keen and composed; the disciples groaned; and the neophytes shook their heads in deep conviction. The reciter's voice deepened in unction as he repeated,

> "The moon doth with delight
> Look round her when the heavens are bare,"

and, unheeding the aside remark of the calmer sceptic that the last was rather a *bare* line, he proceeded without farther interruption through some really beautiful passages, descriptive of that season when (as Shakspeare says) "May hath put a spirit of youth in every thing," and of the regret which the mind experiences from not sympathizing with the general gladness as vividly as in early youth—until he came to the following:

> "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
> The soul, that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar;
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory, do we come

(Here the reader's voice became very impassioned.)

> From God, who is our home;
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy."

Here one of the neophytes timidly interposed with—"I confess that I do not *quite* comprehend that passage. Perhaps you would be kind enough to explain it to us." The neophyte could not easily have made a request more disagreeable, or more embarrassing, to the disciple, who was a man hating definition, and delighting in the vague, the obscure, the mysterious; and of whose mind the whole tenor was synthetical, rather than analytical. Making a wry face, then, he floundered about in a vain attempt to render the poet's creed intelligible, until, getting quite into a passion, he accused the poor neophyte of having interrupted his feelings in their full flow; and roundly declared

that things so out of the common way, so sublime, and so abstruse, could be conveyed in no language but their own.

Here the composed sceptic very quietly said, "It appears to me, that the passage in question is nothing more than an assertion of that old Platonic doctrine, the pre-existence of the soul, which the poet calls 'our life's star,' and which he represents as having previously set to, or, in other words, lost sight of, another state of being, before it rises upon this present world. He also seems to favour the classical creed of a little dip in Lethe, before we take upon us the fleshly form, by the expression, 'Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,' and at the same time avers that, like the son of Thetis, we did not undergo a complete immersion, insomuch that glimpses of our former and more glorious state yet remain unto us, more especially in childhood, as we then are nearer to the scene of our original splendour, and as yet unclouded by the gross exhalations of earthly cares." The Wordsworthian loudly protested against so commonplace and (as he called it) degrading an exposition of the poet's doctrine, and then went on to that part of the ode, where the author declares that he does not value the recollections of childhood on account of the delight, liberty, and hope, of that happy period,

> "But for those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings,
> Blank misgivings of a creature
> Moving about in worlds not realised."

Here again the timid neophyte besought a little enlightening. "What can 'fallings from us' mean, I wonder?" he dolefully sighed out, as if he despaired of ever getting beyond his noviciate.

The previous annotator was again forced to unravel the mystic knot. "The poet (he said) is still speaking of the dim recollections, which he supposes us to retain in childhood, of our former state, and calls them 'obstinate questionings,' that ever recur to the mind with the inquiry, Whence came we?—transitory gleams of our glorious pre-existence, that 'fall away' and 'vanish' from before us almost as soon as they appear—'misgivings' that we

are not as we have been—a feeling that we have scarcely as yet realised our present state of being to ourselves." The neophyte thanked the expositor, but still sighed; "for," said he, "when I think of my childhood, I have only visions of traps, and balls, and whippings. I never remember being 'haunted for ever by the Eternal Mind.' To be sure, I did ask a great many questions, and was tolerably obstinate, but I fear these are not the 'obstinate questionings,' of which Mr. Wordsworth speaks." The reader proceeded :—

"Hence, in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea,
Which brought us hither;
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

"Well!" exclaimed a sort of neutral personage, a very good, but somewhat heavy man—"these lines are, I must say, very grand, and—(he paused)—very sublime! I like them better than all the rest."—"Are you quite certain that you understand them?" asked the laughing sceptic. "To be sure!" answered the previous speaker. "Have I not often put a conch shell to my ear, and heard the roaring of the sea as plainly as if I were at Brighton, though I really was in London?" A burst of laughter from the querist followed the reply, and became infectious to many of the party. When order was restored, the other sceptic, who had maintained his gravity throughout, remarked that he thought the neutral's explanation of the idea raised in his mind by the poet's words was interesting, inasmuch as it proved that, very frequently, the pleasure we derive from poetry consists in the colouring which our own minds impart to an author's meaning; and that words, taken in the aggregate, often stamp on the fancy an image, which, when they are analysed, is found to be scarcely analogous to their real signification. Thus, also, one line in a poem may excite a series of delightful thoughts, which the next line may destroy by giving too definite a form to the unfinished sketch whereon imagination had delighted to exer-

cise her scope and power. "To give an instance of this," he continued, "I remember opening, for the first time, Lord Byron's third canto of Childe Harold, at the notes, and reading this line placed at the end of one of them,

> 'The sky is changed; and such a change!—oh night!'

This simple ejaculation 'Oh night!' touched upon a thousand vague and delightful associations, and involuntarily I anticipated to myself, in a dim kind of way, the grandeur that was to follow. But, when I turned to the page whence the line was taken, and read,—

> 'Oh night,
> And storm, and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,
> Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
> Of a dark eye in woman,'

the whole tone of my feelings seemed lowered, and the same sort of jarring sensation was produced in my spiritual man, as that which our bodily organs experience, when, walking in the dark, we put out one foot with the notion that a deep step is below it, and find ourselves still on plain ground. This power of association—this imperfection of language as a vehicle of thought—this omnipotence of mind over matter, should make us less surprised that ideas, which appear original and splendid to one person, should to another seem trite and poor. That which Shakspeare affirms of a jest, is equally true with regard to serious matters.

"Their propriety lies in the ear of him that hears them. Wordsworth, if I mistake not, himself acknowledges, that, in some instances, 'feelings even of the ludicrous may be given to his readers by expressions which appeared to him tender and pathetic;' but he does not, as in fairness he should have done, observe, on the other hand, that ideas and expressions which he scarcely *meant* to be other than laughable, or at least subordinate, may excite in his admirers very tender or noble feelings. He tells us, (for I have accurately read his own defence of his system,) 'the reader ought never to forget that he is himself exposed to the same errors as the poet, and perhaps in a much greater

degree;' but, I confess, I am of opinion, that in proportion as the author's feeling of his subject is more intense and more tinged with his own peculiar consciousness, in that proportion is he more liable to be mistaken in appreciating the originality and excellence of his compositions. That which we feel vividly, we are apt to think we feel newly; and all that appears new to ourselves, we deem must be new to all the world. Every poet is, no doubt, original to himself, just as every retailer of Joe Miller is a wit in his own eyes, for no one knowingly relates a twice-told tale. Let a really original thought strike a reader ever so much, it can never have upon his mind the same full and fresh effect that it had on the writer's, when it first struck him; —and for this reason—a true poet can never express his *whole* meaning: there still remains behind that which passes utterance. Wordsworth, fond as he is of paradox, never vented a stranger than when he affirmed that the author is a more competent judge of his own works than the reader, *because* the latter 'is so much less interested in the subject.' The voice of ages,—the embodied spirit of human wisdom—to which Wordsworth declares 'his devout respect, his reverence, is due,' has decreed that no man is a competent witness in his own cause; and for this manifest reason, that, as long as we are fallible human creatures, our self-partiality must, to a certain degree throw dust in the eyes of the best of us. It is the looker-on who sees most of the game: it is the cool, *uninterested* reader who can best detect an author's errors. Even though the former, as Wordsworth fears, 'may decide lightly and carelessly,' yet his very lightness and carelessness may hit off a truer judgment than any to which the passionate earnestness of the poet can, in its over zeal, attain. The fresh eye of a casual spectator can better decide upon a portrait's resemblance than the eye of the painter, who has so long pored over the canvass, as to have his very errors wrought into his visual perceptions with all the force of truth, and who has bestowed so much attention upon each separate part, that the result escapes him. It is this which renders it dangerous for an author to paint too exclusively, as Wordsworth has, from his own mind. Although it is not to be expected that a poet's ideas are to be recognised by all the world, (since he places

himself in colloquy with the better part of his species,) yet it is a poet's wisdom, as well as his duty, to bring forward such thoughts and feelings as shall be held in common by a large body of mankind, otherwise he runs a risk of substituting the idiosyncrasies of an individual, for the grand features of human nature in general. The greater part of the Platonic ode, to which we have been listening, lies under this objection, namely, that it gives a private interpretation to a feeling almost universal—I mean the lingering regret with which we look back upon the period of childhood. Wordsworth calls the ode, 'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of early Childhood.' It should rather be entitled, 'Intimations of Pre-Existence;' unless our author means to say that, having existed from all eternity, we are of an eternal and indestructible essence; or, in other words, that being incarnate portions of the Deity (as Plato supposes), we are as immortal as himself. But if the poet intends to affirm this, do you not perceive that he frustrates his own aim? For if we are of God's indivisible essence, and receive our separate consciousness from the wall of flesh which, at our birth, was raised between us and the Fount of Being, we must, on the dissolution of the body, on the casting down of the partition, be again merged in the simple and uncompounded Godhead, lose our individual consciousness, and, although in one sense immortal, yet, in another sense, become as though we had never been. If I were to speak as a critic, of the whole poem, I should say that Wordsworth does not display in it any great clearness of thought, or felicity of language. I grant that ideas, however well expressed, may possibly be so abstruse as to present difficulties to the ordinary reader; but the ode in question is not so much abstruse in idea as crabbed in expression. There appears to be a laborious toiling after originality, ending in a dismal want of harmony. With a dithyrambic irregularity of construction, which ought to have afforded the poet full scope for varied music, there exists a break-tooth ruggedness of versification—the general characteristic of Wordsworth's attempts at mysterious loftiness. Melodious as he is in his simpler movements, the jerks and jumbles of his more ambitious style are truly astonishing. His sublimity

seems, like the burden of Sisyphus, pushed hard up hill, only to rumble back to the plain. In one instance we find a line of four syllables succeeded by a super-Alexandrine of fourteen.

> 'Thou child of joy,
> Shout round me—let me hear thy shouts, thou happy shepherd boy!"

The rhymes are inartificial, and indeed incorrect, to a degree which would appear to indicate either a want of ear, or a deficiency of skill in the poet ; and which would for ever forbid the ode from ranking with the great lyrical models in our language. Witness—

> 'Oh evil day, if I were *sullen*
> While the earth herself is adorning
> This sweet May morning,
> And the children are *pulling*,' &c.

And again,

> 'Not in entire *forgetfulness*,
> And not in utter *nakedness*,
> But trailing clouds of glory, do we *come*
> From God, who is our *home*.'

In a composition of high pretensions, such careless and brief numbers as these,

> 'A wedding or a festival,
> A mourning or a funeral ;'

> 'As if his whole vocation
> Were endless imitation ;'

together with the perpetual introduction of the expletives 'did,' and 'do,' produce the same unhappy effect as a dancer in a minuet tumbling head over heels. But I have too long suspended the conclusion of the ode, which is beautiful, and sufficiently attests the superiority of Wordsworth's natural, over his artificial style. What can be more noble than the following lines? They must find an echo in every human breast.

> ‘ What though the radiance, which was once so bright,
> Be now for ever taken from my sight,
> Though nothing can bring back the hour
> Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
> We will grieve not, rather find
> Strength in what remains behind,
> In the primal sympathy,
> Which having been must ever be,
> In the soothing thoughts that spring
> Out of human suffering,
> In the faith, that looks through death,
> In years that bring the philosophic mind.’ ”

“ Well,” exclaimed the Wordsworthian “ who would have thought that *you*, of all persons in the world, knew Wordsworth by heart?”—“ I have derived as great pleasure,” replied the sceptic, “ from the best part of his works, as I have received pain from the worst.” The ode was then finished without farther interruption, and the party dispersed; but not before the good dull neutral had petitioned for the loan of the book, that he might study at leisure that sublime passage about “ the mighty waters rolling evermore.”

It may be expected that I should not pass by in silence the poem which some persons consider Wordsworth’s best —the Excursion. It is certainly the most ambitious of his productions, and by its length seems to claim an importance, not possessed by his shorter pieces. But while I acknowledge that there are exquisitely beautiful passages in the Excursion (and perhaps none more so than that which the Edinburgh Review extracted for reprobation, beginning—

> “ Oh then what soul was his, when, on the tops
> Of the high mountains, he beheld the sun
> Rise up and bathe the world in light!”)
>
> P. 13, 8vo. ed.

—while I reverence the purity of intention, and devotional love of nature, which it displays, I cannot but consider that the ground-work is a mistake, and the execution, on the whole, a failure. As this poem is the most bulky which Wordsworth has published, so it displays on a

larger scale, the errors produced by his erroneous theory. By tying himself down to humble life, the author has involved himself in a net of contradictions; for his system bound him to choose a hero of lowly birth and breeding, yet his purpose demanded that he should make that hero the mouth-piece of the profoundest philosophical reflections. He was also, by the plan of his poem, constrained to give a vagabond existence to the principal personage, whose unity of presence was to connect the scattered thoughts, scenes, and histories, into one; therefore he does not hesitate boldly to shock our poetical associations, by choosing a pedlar for the hero of the Excursion. Whether he has been more especially mistaken in selecting a man of this judaical trade—the very mention of which brings a black beard, a mahogany box, garters, tapes, and tin trays before the eye—I will not pause to inquire; but, "taking up the question on general grounds," I may observe, that to make *any* man in low life the repository of such sentiments, as a high-gifted individual alone could be supposed to entertain, is extremely injudicious; because probability is violated, and probability is the soul of that pleasure which we receive from fictitious incident or dialogue. If a Burns, or a Chatterton, be a miracle, a production of nature out of the ordinary course of her creation; if by *possibility*, once in a century, a low-born man reaches to high attainments by native vigour of intellect—why choose the solitary instance on which to found a poem of human interest—why make a pedlar utter reflections which are only to be found in the mind of a Wordsworth? For instance; (I quote *ad aperturam libri;*)

"Powers depart,
The gray-hair'd wanderer steadfastly replied,
Possessions vanish, and opinions change,
And passions hold a fluctuating seat;
But by the storms of circumstance unshaken,
And subject neither to eclipse or wane,
Duty exists;—immutably survive,
For our support, the measures and the forms,
Which an abstract intelligence supplies,
Whose kingdom is where time and space are not."

Is it likely, that the same voice, which asks a farmer's wife to buy a piece of bobbin, should pronounce a speech like the foregoing?

The language also of the Excursion, as being more strictly in accordance with that part of Wordsworth's theory which identifies verse with prose, is generally harsh and dragging, full of long unimaginative, and, (if I may use the expression,) *mathematical* words. For instance—

> "Of rustic parents bred, he had been train'd
> (So prompted their aspiring wish) to skill
> In numbers, and the sedentary art
> Of penmanship,—with pride profess'd, and taught
> By his endeavours in the mountain dales.
> Now, those sad tidings weighing on his heart,
> To books, and papers, and the studious desk
> He stoutly readdress'd himself."

What art, I would ask, can render such words as "sedentary," and "penmanship" poetical? The mind has been too much accustomed to them, in its prosaic moods, to feel them so. This is *blank* verse indeed! "The continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement" of which Wordsworth speaks, are as though they were not in such metre as this. I would undertake to read many a page of this poem without being convicted of poetry—that is, if I read it in the usual mode of recitation; but give it to a Wordsworthian, and he perhaps, by the alchemy of his voice, would convert it into numbers. If Wordsworth recites poetry in the same style as his admirers, I can easily imagine how it is that the prosaic seems to him the poetical,—the ludicrous, the sublime; for they repeat the tale of Goody Blake with the same good emphasis and discretion wherewith they say or sing a passage from the Excursion. Their monotone levels all distinctions, and would make the most laughable comedy in the world a very tragic performance. But an ordinary reader must regret that Mr. Wordsworth should have given himself the trouble to arrange a great part of the Excursion in lines of ten syllables; for, as far as regards effect, the pleasure of the ear is lost. The most fatal fault of the Excursion is that it is too long. I

do not mean in respect to quantity, (for I have heard a longer sermon of fifteen minutes than one of fifty,) but long in respect to the quantity of idea spread over a surface of words. Every thing is long in it, the similes, the stories, the speeches, the words, the sentences (which are indeed of a breathless length),—and yet, awful to relate, it is only the third part "of a long and laborious work!"

But it may still be urged, by those who consider Wordsworth a poet of *first-rate* merit and originality, that the force of his genius has been demonstrated by its effects upon the taste and literature of the age. They may boast that he brought back the public mind from a love of false glare and glitter, to the simplicity and truth of nature.

He himself says, after a retrospective view of different eras of literature, "It may be asked, where lies the particular relation of what has been said to these volumes? The question will be easily answered by the *discerning* reader, who is old enough to remember the taste that prevailed when some of these poems were first published, seventeen years ago, who has also observed to what degree the poetry of this island has *since that period been coloured by them*."

That the taste of the age, about the period when Wordsworth published his first poems, was far gone from nature, I allow. I grant that (to use Wordsworth's own words) "the invaluable works of our elder writers were driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse," and I honour the attempt to restore a healthier tone of feeling. Still, I cannot attribute the inevitable reaction, which took place at one period, to aught but the natural tendency of all extremes to produce reaction, and unfortunately again to verge into extremes. Wordsworth himself I consider less a moulding spirit of the age, than a perverted production of it. He began to write at the era when men were wearied with perpetual stimulants, and disgusted with copies of copies *ad infinitum*. Thomson, in his Seasons, had already dared to use nothing but a pencil and a pallet, and his own eyes, in delineating nature; Burns had presented her to the world in her sweetest, her freshest, her simplest attire: and Wordsworth went a step

farther,—he stripped her naked. Yet his followers have been few. The master-spirits of an age have always had their imitators, and have given somewhat of an abiding character to the literature of a whole century. But who has imitated Wordsworth? Where is the stamp and impress of his mind to be found in this generation? Simplicity has again lost her charms for the public taste. Nature, indeed, is still worshipped, but it is nature in frenzy and distortion. Alas! that evil should be so much more enduring and energetic than good! If Wordsworth cannot justly be ranked (as his worshippers rank him) the first genius of the age, still, his lower station on the fair hill of virtue is more enviable than that of others on the lightning-shattered pinnacle of vice. And, if Wordsworth would be contented to occupy that more lovely station gracefully and meekly, there would be no dissentient voice to dispute his honours. But he has yet to learn the important lesson of remaining silent under evil report and good report. Why, if Wordsworth so implicitly believes in the justice of "Time the corrector, where our judgments err;" why, if he is so steadfastly assured that the "great spirit of human knowledge," moving on the wings of the past and the future, will assign him his proper station in the ranks of literature; why, if he is persuaded that his volumes, "both in words and things, will operate in their degree to extend the domain of sensibility, for the delight, the honour, and the benefit of human nature,"—why does he write so many pages to *prove* the truth of his convictions? Can he talk himself into immortality? Self-praise is, of all modes of self-aggrandisement, the least graceful, and the most impolitic. Why should we give a man that which he has already bestowed on himself? And, if we think that the self-eulogist claims too great a share of merit, human nature is up in arms to dispute with him every inch of his overgrown territory. What shall we say to a poet who thus writes of his own works? He first notices, that "after the transgression of Adam, Milton, with other appearances of sympathising nature, thus marks the immediate consequence:

> 'Sky lower'd, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
> Wept at completion of the mortal sin.'"

And then, a little while after, he goes on to say, "Awe-stricken as I am by contemplating the operations of the mind of this truly divine poet, I scarcely dare venture to add, that 'An Address to an Infant ! ! !' which the reader will find under the class of Fancy in the present volumes, exhibits something of this communion and interchange," &c. Yet awe-stricken as Wordsworth says he is in the contemplation of Milton's mind, he does not scruple to parody Milton's sonnet, beginning "A book was writ of late call'd Tetrachordon," by one beginning "A book was writ of late call'd Peter Bell." He should have remembered that Milton never wrote a line in defence of his *poems*, as indeed a person's own poetry is no fit subject for polemics: and while assimilating himself (in kind, if not in degree) to Shakspeare, he should have taken a lesson from the silent grandeur with which the latter gave his works to posterity, not even keeping a copy of those writings, which he knew "the world would not willingly let die." He should have reflected that true power is calm. Indeed, were I not disposed to estimate Wordsworth's powers very highly, I should almost draw an argument against them from the tone of self-exaltation which pervades his prose writings. To be dissatisfied with its own productions, is the most usual temper of a mighty mind that sees before it "the unreached paradise of its despair." Virgil condemned his Æneid, the delight of after ages, to the flames; and Collins, with his own hands, burnt the unsold edition of his poems. Wordsworth, however, need not fear. The uneasy doubts, respecting his real title to immortal fame, which his very restlessness and irritability betray, are groundless. He *must* survive. But, in the mean time, he must allow the present generation to be a little amused, when they meet in his works with such a passage as the following:—"Whither, then, shall we turn for that union of qualifications which must necessarily exist before the decisions of a critic can be of absolute value? for a mind at once poetical and philosophical; for a critic whose affections are as free and kindly as the spirit of society, and whose understanding is severe as that of dispassionate government? Where are we to look for that initiatory composure of mind which no selfishness

can disturb? for a natural sensibility that has been tutored into correctness, without losing any thing of its quietness, &c. . . . . associated with a judgment that cannot be duped into admiration by aught that is unworthy of it?" And he then answers his own interrogatories:—"Among those, and those only, who never having suffered their youthful love of poetry to remit much of its force, have applied to the consideration of the laws of this art, the best power of their understandings." And does not Mr. Wordsworth consider himself to possess these qualifications? Is he not to be found amongst this elect band of critics? Can he not, therefore, criticise his own works better than any exoteric? This spirit of self-admiration has made Wordsworth overrate the effects which his poetry has produced on the age. He mistakes the clamour of a party for the voice of a multitude. He says, "A sketch of *my own* notion of the constitution of fame has been given; and, as far as concerns myself, I have cause to be satisfied. The love, the admiration, the indifference, the slight, the aversion, and even the contempt, with which these poems have been received, knowing, as I do, the source, within my own mind, from which they have proceeded, and the labour and pains which, when labour and pains *appeared needful*, have been bestowed upon them, &c., &c., ... are all proofs that for the present time I have not laboured in vain; and afford assurances, more or less authentic, that the products of my industry will endure." Wordsworth forgets that this theory and his poems have been made a party question, and that he has perhaps more extrinsic causes of fame than any other; that his startling oddities, and paradoxical assertions, are perhaps as stimulating as the outrageous *stimulation* (as he calls it) which he reprobates. Wordsworth thinks that he introduced a taste for simplicity. If so, he introduced a taste most hostile to an admiration of his own writings, for he is any thing but simple. He is grotesque, which is quite opposite to being simple. His very attempt to clothe lofty sentiments in lowly language betrays the greatest eccentricity. If a king wore a shepherd's frock, he would manifest more ambitious singularity than were he dressed in purple. Inconsistency and strangeness have been the very steps by

which Wordsworth has mounted into notice. Even were it granted that he had *influenced* the taste of the age, it by no means follows that his influence has been *beneficial*. He talks of the "strange abuses which poets have introduced into their language, till they and their readers take them as matters of course, if they do not single them out expressly as objects of admiration." Even if he have abolished these, what does he gain if he replaces one form of abuses by another form of abuses, till his readers take them as matters of course, and most certainly do often single them out expressly as objects of admiration?"

Wordsworth's love of singularity is such, that he will not even publish his poems in the ordinary form—but must classify them under the heads of "Poems founded on the Affections"—"Poems of the Fancy"—"Poems of the Imagination," &c. When they first made their appearance, they were not divided according to any arrangement of the kind; therefore it seems that this ingenious classification was an after-thought—still farther (it might be) to separate them from the herd of common poems. One word upon the term "Poems *of* the Imagination." It appears to me greatly too vague for the use of such a philosophical writer as Wordsworth, whom his partisans laud as almost the founder of a pure philosophical language. He says that "poems, apparently miscellaneous, may with propriety be arranged either with reference to the powers of mind *predominant* in the production of them, or to the mould in which they are cast; or, lastly, to the subjects to which they relate." Does the word "of" express all this? Does it comprehend all the three cases? To which head is the poem of Goody Blake and Harry Gill to be referred? I suppose to the last; for as the story narrated is a *fact*, imagination was not requisite for the production of it, and as it is related in a plain style, it is not cast in an imaginative mould. The question then is, Does it *relate* to the imagination? If we entertain the same lofty, and somewhat vague ideas, that Mr. Wordsworth does, of this power, we should say *not;* for, if it was imagination that made Harry Gill cold for life, it appears to be a faculty of the same order, only more intensely exhibited, with that which suggests the maladies of a ner-

vous lady; and it is hard to conceive that this is the same power which dictated the Paradise Lost, and which breathes throughout Shakspeare's dramas. The main object of Harry Gill seems to be, not so much to demonstrate the power of the human imagination, as to teach farmers to be merciful; for with this moral the tale concludes—

> "Now think, ye farmers all, I pray,
> Of Goody Blake and Harry Gill!"

This rather savours of a post-application to the theory. Such expedients as these to appear original, and to excite attention, may succeed for a time, but when the party question has ceased, will Wordsworth's poems ever be remembered or admired as illustrations of a theory, or as coming under the class of some predominant power of the mind? Let Wordsworth ask himself in what manner poetry is recalled to the memory of any person—some thought, some image dwells with us, which some association recalls; and so far from stopping to inquire, Does this come under the head of Fancy or Imagination? we scarcely ask if the lines are to be found in Shakspeare, Dryden, or Pope. Good writing has but one mistress—Nature, who is the same in all, however variously she may arrange the folds of her decorative mantle; and it is the jewel of the casket, the thought, the idea, that inward part of poetry which stirs the sources of reflection in the mind it addresses, which alone is valuable. The rest is leather and prunella. If we are moved with the *matter* of a quotation, it signifies little whether the *manner* be in accordance with any particular theory. We admire it as good *per se*. If a theory could make a poet, might not all be poets? Away, then, with the theory, and with half the poems founded on the theory—the sister Emmelines—the small celandines, sparrows' eggs, and Mr. Wilkinson's spade into the bargain.

I have thus endeavoured to show, that neither by his theory, nor by his mode of illustrating it, can Wordsworth claim the honours due to the first-rate and original genius—that he has not done any thing better than it has been done by others. If we were fully to admit his own test of

genius,—namely, "the art of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was *never done before*,"—we should deny that Wordsworth has any genius at all. It is true that he has frequently "done well what is worthy to be done;" but he has *not* accomplished what "was never done before." Even amongst writers of our own day, he does not stand alone. In the choice of humble themes, he has a formidable competitor in Crabbe; in narrative, he is rivalled by Scott and Southey; in impassioned grandeur, by Byron; and (if we look a little farther back) in philosophy, by Akenside. Yet I am far from denying that Wordsworth has genius. In my opinion, the art of doing well what is worthy to be done, is of itself a sufficient proof of genius. Virgil has followed Homer in the management and conduct of his great heroic poem; yet who will assert that Virgil has no genius? I am rather disposed to adopt Madame de Stael's definition of this subtle essence, namely, "enthusiasm acting upon talent;" and I conceive, that if a thing be good of its kind, it may manifest genius, even though its prototype should exist. An author of the highest order indeed, such as Homer, Shakspeare, Dante, is necessarily the founder of his class; but a man may be a fine writer, who, to whatever class he may be referred, can be esteemed for his fine writing alone. Now, I do not think that Wordsworth is first of any class; but I do think that he excels sufficiently in what belongs to two or three classes, to be entitled (if we look to his best performances) even a great writer.

One fatal bar to Wordsworth's elevation in the ranks of poetry is, that (to speak properly) he has no style of his own. This assertion may surprise both his admirers and non-admirers, each of whom may have mistaken certain peculiarities of diction for a style of composition. That even these peculiarities are assumed, and do not result from an inherent originality of constitution, is evident from his two earliest poems, namely, the "Evening Walk," and "Descriptive Sketches," which were published by themselves before the appearance of the "Lyrical Ballads," and which are given entire in the later edition of his works. In these poems, Wordsworth pursues the beaten track, adopts the good old Popean metre,

and most approved cadence, and raises the whole composition upon the stilts of poetic diction—his present horror. He represents himself as wandering

> "His *wizard* course where *hoary* Derwent takes
> Through crags, and *forest glooms*, and opening lakes;"

and depicts scenes,

> "Where, *all unshaded*, blazing forests throw
> *Rich golden verdure* on the waves below;"

and where, moreover,

> "*Soft bosoms* breathe around *contagious* sighs,
> And *amorous* music on the water dies."

These poems indeed show talent, and contain some beautiful lines,—as, for example,

> "In thoughtless gaiety I coursed the plain,
> *And hope itself was all I knew of pain.*"

And in a comparison of life to a sun-dial, he even finely says,

> "*We know but from its shade the present hour*;"

but the greater part of these productions is written in a style of vicious ornament, and most commonplace diction. We find "angelic moods," "ruthless ministers," and "ægis orbs." I shall be told, perhaps, that Wordsworth was a very young man when he wrote thus, and that his present style is the adoption of his maturer judgment. It is the very circumstance of his having *adopted* a style, which makes me say that he has no style of his own. The early productions of our greatest poets (as far as they are preserved to us) differ only in degree, not in kind, from their after works. Il Penseroso has Milton's stamp upon it, and in Comus (as Dr. Johnson observes) may plainly be discerned the dawn of "Paradise Lost." Pope's "Pastorals" have the same cadence and method of expression which his maturer works exhibit. Shakspeare's early poems and sonnets are marked by his peculiar turn of

language, and possess a singularly dramatic character. These great masters never sat down to *adopt* a fixed style of composition. It was their minds which made their language, afterwards indeed pruned by experience, and ripened by the summer of their intellect; but the fruit had a sharp and native flavour long "before the mellowing year." That which was said by Wordsworth relative to the connexion between youth and age, may be truly affirmed of their style—"the child is father of the man." But between the Wordsworth of the "Descriptive Sketches," and the Wordsworth of the "Lyrical Ballads," there exists no link of union. At one leap, he passed from the extreme of melodious ornament to the extreme of harsh simplicity; and by the rapidity of the transition proved that he possessed no native originality of expression. His early poems were imitations of Pope and Darwin; his succeeding compositions were imitations of "Percy's Relics of Ancient English Poetry;" in his sonnets he has imitated Milton; in his inscriptions, Akenside. If we admit, for the sake of argument, that his song possesses any native note, where shall we discover it, if not in his earliest warblings? We must turn from the instructed cadences of the bulfinch to the first trill which came fresh from the teaching of nature. If, then, Wordsworth's first style was his truest, his subsequent manner could not possibly have been natural to him; and, if not natural, how could it fulfil the conditions of his own theory, how could it make good his pretensions to convey simple thoughts in natural language? What can be native but that which flows from nature? Our poet too visibly displays the ropes, wheels, and pulleys, whereby he sets his machinery in motion, when he says that he has taken "as much *pains* to avoid poetic diction, as others ordinarily take to produce it;" or when he talks of "*processes* of creation, or composition, governed by certain *fixed laws*." Perhaps (and I can easily believe it) he found it difficult to write so ill . . . . It is rather singular that Wordsworth's later poems have sided round to the opinion of the world, and that they approach nearer in style to his early productions. They are less startling, less incongruous,—more ornate, more latinized than those

in his middle manner. He goes so far as to commence a sonnet with,

> "Change me, ye gods, into some breathing rose,
> The love-sick stripling fancifully cries;"

and he has (as he once phrased it) *stooped* to accommodate himself to public opinion so much as to omit several stanzas, and even whole poems, which had excited more animadversion than others. By this temporizing conduct, he has even offended his worshippers, many of whom have regretted, in my hearing, the absence of the Wordsworthian peculiarities from his later strains, and the consequent decline of his genius. If his genius consisted in these peculiarities, what sort of a genius must it have been? The truth is, that the spring of Wordsworth's poetical conduct has ever been the love of popularity—ay, let his admirers start, and the poet be ever so voluble, I repeat, of popularity. And a very rational incentive it is: it only becomes ridiculous when loudly disavowed. Wordsworth sought popularity, in his first publication, by accommodating his style to the then prevailing taste. This gained him nothing. He was overlooked amongst the multitude of conformists. He then bore boldly up against general opinion, raised up a host of haters, and consequently another host of defenders, and chafed himself into notice, even as an uprooted tree, while it floats down the stream, raises no disturbance in the water, but when it stops short against the bank, throws up a dash of foam and sparkles. At present, since the human mind must ever be uneasy, while even one Mordecai sits in the gate, his object is to conciliate his literary enemies, yet still to retain his literary friends—an object, I fear, unattainable. Thus, I repeat, governed by any impulse rather than that of his own mind, Wordsworth has no settled style, no native peculiarity of expression. A line quoted from Shakspeare hath the image and superscription on it. Milton's autograph is not more decided than the poetry it conveys; but read to any one, not acquainted with Wordsworth's writings, his early poems—his Betty Foy, his Laodamia, one of his sonnets, and a passage from the Excursion—would the auditor conjecture

that they were written by one and the same person? You may urge that this variety of style shows great versatility of talent. Possibly so, but versatility itself is a proof of lightness rather than of strength: an intellectual gladiator will not be an intellectual athlete. Wordsworth has frittered away his undoubtedly great powers by trying many styles and "experiments" in literature.

The last reason which I shall assign for my denying Wordsworth's supremacy is—the extreme inequality of his writings. By inequality, I do not mean the defects incident to all human composition, or the judicious neglect by which certain parts of a poem are left less laboured than others—I mean an inequality almost peculiar to Wordsworth, and greatly resulting from the tendency, which I before noticed, of his mind, to view all things, great and small, on a level of equal importance. From this disproportionate mode of observing objects, arises an extreme minuteness in depicting them:

> "Nothing is left out, much less forgot;"

and on this account it is that we read Wordsworth's most beautiful passages in fear and trembling, for we can never be certain that the next stroke of his pen may not hurl us at once from the eminence to which we had risen. From the affecting story of a mourner, we are snatched to

> "Gooseberry trees that shot in long lank slips,
> Or currants hanging from the leafless stems,
> In scanty strings;"—*Excursion.*

from the solemn contemplation of a funeral, to

> "A work in the French tongue, a novel of Voltaire;"
> *Excursion.*

We read such touching lines as the following:

> "Beside yon spring I stood,
> And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel
> One sadness they and I. For them a bond
> Of brotherhood is broken: time has been,
> When, every day, the touch of human hand

> Dislodged the natural sleep that binds them up
> In mortal stillness, and they minister'd
> To human comfort;"

and immediately we are hurried away to

> "The useless fragment of a wooden bowl,
> Green with the moss of years—a pensive sight!"

Thus, by going one step too far, Wordsworth loses all the ground which he had previously gained. He so nakedly exhibits objects over which the decent veil should be drawn; he brings into such unhappy prominence the minor parts of a picture, that he leaves nothing to the imagination, which, if allowed more play, would suggest to itself, in its own beautiful light, those very adjuncts to the scene, which, when put into words, only offend its delicate perceptions. The lonely spring had no need of the wooden bowl to make its loneliness be felt. The "fragment" was in every way "useless." This is what Delille calls "peindre les ongles." I have always regretted that one of Wordsword's most beautiful small poems should exhibit, in two places, this faulty mode of description.

> "I met Louisa in the shade,
> And, having seen that lovely maid,
> Why should I fear to say
> That she is *ruddy*, *fleet*, and *strong*,
> And down the rocks can leap along
> Like rivulets in May!"

Here we see a beautiful image marred by unlucky associations. This is still more the case in the following stanza:

> "She loves her fire, her cottage-home;
> Yet o'er the moorland will she roam
> In weather rough and bleak;
> And when against the wind she *strains*,
> Oh might I kiss the mountain rains,
> That sparkle on her cheek!"

Here, one of the most fresh and animated pictures in the whole compass of English poetry is blurred by one

disagreeable expression. Applied to the movement of horses, as in the triplet,

> "Up against the hill they *strain*—
> Tugging at the iron chain,
> Tugging all with might and main,"

the word is appropriate; but, as describing the activity of a young and beautiful girl, it is out of place; for Louisa, although "ruddy, fleet, and strong,"

> —— "Hath smiles to earth unknown,
> Smiles, that with motion of their own
> Do spread, and sink, and rise;
> That come and go with endless play,
> And ever, as they pass away,
> Are hidden in her eyes."

The foregoing stanza, which is perfect both in thought and in expression, makes us feel how much we lose by the fatal perversity with which Wordsworth blends the coarse and the elegant, the ridiculous and the sublime. Would that he had "*feared to say*" a good deal of what he has said! A fondness for repetition, not less than for amplification, characterises his Muse. For instance, in the beginning of the Excursion, we are told,

> "From his sixth year, the boy of whom I speak,
> In summer, tended cattle on the hills;"

and, in the space of a page or two, this piece of information is repeated, for the benefit of the forgetful reader;

> "From early childhood—even, as hath been said,
> From his sixth year, he had been sent abroad
> In summer to tend herds."

Weakening what he thereby vainly endeavours to render impressive, our author frequently uses the prosaic expression, "or rather."

> "The old inventive poets, had they seen,
> *Or rather* felt," &c.

> "At early dawn, *or rather* when the air
> Glimmers with fading light," &c.
> *Sonnets on the Duddon.*

But I should weary my reader by numbering all the heads of the hydra fault. What I have brought forward may suffice, to prove that Wordsworth is unequal, to a degree never yet observed in any of the primates of poetry. It may be urged that we are too apt to judge a living author by his worst productions, while we judge him "centum qui perficit annos" by his best. There is some truth in this; but the best works of any established author are generally good throughout, however they may have written unworthily in other pieces; while Wordsworth's good and bad are often so blended, so identified even, in the same piece, that he is not elevated by it to the rank which he would have gained, had it been complete in itself. I would not act so unfairly as to judge Wordsworth by his Harry Gill; I would impartially rate him by his most important work—the Excursion. I do not deny but that this latter poem demonstrates genius sufficient to have built a proportionate and goodly edifice; but, as it is, the Excursion stands like a vast unwieldly structure, combining the barbarous magnificence with the unsightly rudeness of darker ages; adorned with lofty towers, disfigured by masses of shapeless architecture, displaying some portions in apparent ruin, and others that seem never to have been completed; hallowed by shrines of elaborate carving, desecrated by headless and grass-grown images; irradiated with chambers of gorgeous delight, perplexed by obscure passages that lead to nothing.

I have now laid before the reader my reasons for refusing to pay Wordsworth the same homage that I think justly due to Shakspeare, Milton, Pope, Thomson, Gray, Collins, and Burns. The nature of the criticisms, and the intricate mazes in which Wordsworth has involved his theory, have obliged me to treat the subject at some length; and the specious manner in which the author has invested thoughts by no means new with an air of originality, has constrained me to enter into the details with perhaps too great a degree of minuteness. Yet for this I can scarcely apologize, as I consider the subject sufficiently important to justify a particular investigation. In this day, when the correct and classical models of poetical composition are not only deserted, but contemned,—when

Pope is looked upon as a mere heartless versifier, and when a place beside Milton is gravely demanded for Wordsworth, there is great need that such questions should be calmly and impartially discussed. It may be expected that I should here make some disparaging speech concerning the feebleness of my own voice; but I forbear, for such speeches are never believed. If it be asked from what motives I have written, I answer, first, and more especially from the conviction just mentioned above, that correctives to literary taste are needed in the present day, and from a wish to protect the rising generation from the sophistry of zealous proselytes. To this leading incentive may, no doubt, be added the usual blending of motives, which produce almost every human action. As far as I know myself, they are these. The pleasure of considering any literary question—a large endowment (as the phrenologists would say) of the organ of combativeness—a love of what is genuine, impelling me to oppose that which is vulgarly called *cant*, of all sorts, (and that there *is* a cant of Wordsworthianism, few can deny)—and finally, the natural tendency of the mind to revolt from unfounded pretensions. These motives have influenced me, without the admixture (I owe it to myself to affirm) of one grain of malice. Indeed, when I consider the pleasure which some of Wordsworth's best productions have given me, when I think how often a striking line or image from his works will rise upon my remembrance, to enhance the enjoyment of the fairest landscape, or of the happiest incident, I seem to stand convicted almost of ingratitude towards one who has ministered so largely towards my gratification; and nothing but a strong belief that, in proportion as Wordsworth's powers are great, and the beauties of his Muse numerous, in that proportion are his faults influential and dangerous, could have overcome the reluctance with which I sat down, with an apparent intent to lower the fame of the bard. I say *apparent*, for the fact is, that I propose to do him more real justice than his vehement admirers, inasmuch as I shall bring forward his best compositions, while they only defend his worst. Moreover, from the false supremacy in which his disciples have enthroned him, the fall must, one day, be

so great as to shake his reputation altogether; while, on the other hand, his claims to admiration being once placed on the basis of truth, become immutable, and not to be assailed. I have fully complied with Wordsworth's one request, which he makes to his reader, namely, "that in judging of the poems in question, he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others." "I do abide," as Wordsworth desires, "independently by my own feelings." I may be "incapable," but I am not biassed. Let my reader bear in mind, that I have, all along, only judged Wordsworth by the public standard of his works—as an author, and not as a man. The literary vanity on which I have freely animadverted, does not exist in his private life; in that sphere he is unimpeachable; and with regard to his political conduct, no one would be readier than myself to defend him from charges, which, when brought against a man of his stamp of mind, are plainly ridiculous. I have now concluded the indictment, and all that remains to me, is the pleasanter task of calling witnesses on the other side. Having endeavoured to prove that Wordsworth cannot be classed amongst our highest authors, who are great by consistency, I shall proceed to show, in the next and last part of this essay, that he may, nevertheless, fairly claim to be associated with the band of true poets in general.

PART IV.

Let me now proceed to the second part of my subject, and endeavour to show, that in proportion as Wordsworth has been over estimated by his too ardent admirers, he has been underrated by those, who have had neither opportunity nor desire to investigate his claims to public notice. This will be a pleasant task, for I shall have to recall passages from which I have derived no ordinary degree of gratification, and which, I hope, will impart somewhat of the same feeling to my reader. At the same time, I fear lest my method of defence should seem, when, contrasted

with my manner of conducting the impeachment, languid and inartificial. My previous plan forbids me to show forth the beauties of Wordsworth in an argumentative and methodical way; for all the former part of my essay tends to prove that Wordsworth is systematically wrong—how then, without legal ambidexterity, can I undertake to prove that he is systematically right? As I have maintained that Wordsworth has never produced a great and consistent whole, and that his fine thoughts lie scattered throughout his writings, I must necessarily display his merits rather by quotation than by argument: thus, I lay myself open to the charge of expending my powers in censure, and of rendering the work of praise a mere affair of the scissors. However, I am encouraged by the reflection that, with a large mass of readers, the course which I am about to pursue, will be the most certain of attaining its end. Wordsworth is not generally admired, only because he is not generally known. To adduce a case in point—I had frequently endeavoured to persuade some friends that Wordsworth was an author of great merit. Like many other persons, they entrenched themselves behind a settled conviction of his inanity and childishness. Read him they would not: admire him they were very certain they could not. Reader, do not smile! *De te fabula narratur.* Did you never condemn a cause (perhaps Wordsworth's cause) unheard? At length, after the controversy had died away, I betook myself to quoting from his works, without bringing forward the author's name. "What an exquisite piece of poetry!" exclaimed one of my candid friends, after I had finished reciting Wordsworth's sonnet composed on Westminster Bridge; "Is it not by some great writer? I scarcely know any one living whom I consider worthy to have composed it." I repeated Lucy Gray—"What pathos!" Laodamia—"What grandeur!" "These poems are by Wordsworth," at length I said; "and, now that you know this, I will not allow you to recede from one syllable of your praise." Since that day, I have heard no more of Wordsworth's childishness from my worthy friends. Now, although in my present defence of Wordsworth I cannot secure the advantage of concealing his name, which alone excites repugnance in so many

with whom a name is every thing; yet I may possibly startle some objectors into acquiescence, by flashing before their eyes those passages of dazzling merit, for which they never would have searched in the parent volume. Some persons may remark, that I have filled three numbers with censures of Wordsworth's writings, and that I have only devoted one to his vindication. I answer, that blame demands more particularity than praise. A friend, we will suppose, reads me a favourite poem. Struck with some fine passage, I exclaim, "How beautiful!" He does not inquire, "*Why* do you think that passage beautiful?" Shortly after, I perhaps exclaim,—"That is bad, or faulty." Immediately follows the question, "*Why* do you think that faulty? Give me your reasons." Thus, having censured certain parts of the writings and theory of Wordsworth, I considered myself bound to assign, as if in reply to an inquirer, the particular causes of my dislike; on the other hand, in substantiating Wordsworth's claim to admiration, I would rather appeal to the feelings of men, than endeavour (a hopeless task!) to argue my reader into approbation. To explain my meaning more briefly—faults may be detected by analysis; beauties are only injured by analysis—faults may be argued upon; beauties must be felt. On these accounts, I consider that the best refutation of all poetical calumnies against Wordsworth's writings, is to be found in the writings themselves. I would simply address a non-admirer of the poet with the well-known entreaty—"Strike, but hear!" Abuse Wordsworth as much as you think fit, but in fairness, listen to so much of his compositions as after ages will purify from the dross that surrounds them, and will collect into one body of worth and splendour. Then give your verdict—and continue to abuse him, if you can. Let me hope, then, that in laying before my readers some of Wordsworth's best things, without many comments of my own, I am doing him all possible justice. Haply the large number of persons who have hitherto decided upon our author from hearsay, may find that they have all this time been fighting with a shadowy Wordsworth of their own creation. Haply the passages, which I shall bring

before them, will strike their minds with all the charms of novelty, as well as of poetical beauty.

It will be my endeavour to prove by appropriate extracts from Wordsworth's poems, that he has displayed great powers of description, in the *first* place, of external nature; *secondly*, of nature as connected with some internal passion, or moral thought, in the heart and mind of man; *thirdly*, of human appearance, as indicative of human character, or varieties of feeling. I shall also attempt to show, that he has manifested an ability to move the affections by means of simple pathos—that he has occasionally attained a chaste and classical dignity—that he has successfully illustrated religious and moral truths; and, finally, that he has brought the sonnet—that difficult vehicle of poetic inspiration—to its highest possible pitch of excellence.

In description of natural scenery, Wordsworth is almost always good. Like Antæus, he is strong whenever he touches his native earth. If, in his best poems, we too often find something to condemn, let us remember, that even in his worst, we frequently stumble upon passages of unexpected beauty—passages of pure and masterly description. In spite of the self-riveted chains of his theory, the poet *will* break forth throughout Wordsworth's writings, and falsify his own dogmas as triumphantly, as one who wishes to refute them could desire. Even from the dulness of a Thanksgiving Ode, sparkles of living poetry shine out. Whenever Wordsworth breaks into description, he leaves prose far behind. For instance—

> "The stillness of those frosty plains,
> Their utter stillness, and the silent grace
> Of yon ethereal summits, white with snow,
> (Whose tranquil pomp and spotless purity
> Report of storms gone by
> To us who tread below,)
> Do with the service of this day accord."

The above lines are calculated, I may safely affirm, to imbue the mind with the very feeling of a calm and tenderly bright winter's day. To use a strong metaphor,

Silence speaks in them. The allusion to bygone tempests is a touch from a master's hand. It heightens without disturbing the universal repose, and connects the troublous soul of man with the serene aspect of nature—the memory of the past, with the enjoyment of the present—earth with heaven, in a very happy and beautiful manner. *A priori*, it might be supposed that a man who, like Wordsworth, possessing a poet's keen perceptions, has passed all his life amidst the grandeur of a mountainous country, should pour upon his page all the changeful hues of clouds and vapours; and should inform his verse with the "undescribed sounds" of earth, air, and water. Nor, if we open Wordsworth's volumes, will the expectation be disappointed. I do not know any author who has made a happier use of the grand phenomena of nature. His little work on the scenery of the English Lakes, although written in prose, may be mentioned as being the true production of a poet. It ought to become the manual of the poet, and, I may add, of the painter, who is studying Nature in her own domain. This work is remarkable, if it were only as a monument of the superiority of imagination over science. Here is a man, who has never inscribed himself amongst the members of the Royal Academy, yet who, by mere force of genius, by that intuitive penetration, which "looks all Nature through," writes like a painter, composes pictures, and throws out suggestions, to originate which our would-be Claudes and Poussins are totally incapable.

It is a remarkable circumstance that our great descriptive poets have seldom ventured upon a particular delineation of mountain scenery, and its accompanying phenomena. Milton's description of Paradise is like a picture skilfully composed from the choicest parts of individual sketches. It is truth arranged by fiction. Thomson (although born in a land of mist and mountains) seems to alternate, in his Seasons, between gorgeous but vague representations of foreign climes, and faithful transcripts of England's milder scenery. He appears more pleased

"To taste the smell of dairy, and ascend
Some eminence, Augusta, in thy plains,"

than to climb the painful steeps of a Scottish mountain. He exclaims, indeed, "To me be Nature's volume wide displayed!"—but for what purpose?—"Some *easy* passage raptured to translate." His finest poem,—the enchanting "Castle of Indolence,"—in the composition of which the mantle of Spenser seems to have descended upon the bard—is a land of dreams, shadowed by unearthly groves, illuminated by unearthly light. After Thomson, came Cowper, who, even more than Thomson, may be pronounced to have adhered to real English landscape-painting. I do not mention this predilection for Nature's common form as a defect in either of the abovenamed poets. On the contrary, I conceive that, by their choice of well-known objects, they secured for themselves a more extensive sympathy than they could have commanded, had they delineated those features of Nature, which are not (to use a beautiful expression of Sir Thomas Brown) "expansed unto the eyes of all." But the reader will perceive the wide dominion, which their timidity or their policy has left unconquered—unappropriated, and, as it were, ready to the grasp of such a man as Wordsworth, who not only was born, but has resided amongst rocks, lakes, and mountains, (thus uniting the force of habit to that of early association,) and who possesses the heart, the eye, and the hand of a poet. On this ground Wordsworth may take a lofty and commanding station. When I reflect that to him both the present and the future time are and will be indebted for the most accurate and noble embodying of Nature's grandest forms, I am disposed to retract my former assertion, that Wordsworth has done nothing more than has been done by others. He is not the first descriptive poet, but, it must be confessed, that he is the first descriptive poet of his order. He has given "a local habitation and a name" to the subtle essences of the elements; he has given a voice to storms and torrents. The Excursion is full of such wild determined forms as Salvator Rosa loved to fling together,—of such calm or such tempestuous skies as Gaspar Poussin dared to transfer to canvass. As an example, I select a passage which appears to me a triumphant proof

of the powers of language, when wielded by a powerful mind.

———"A step,
A single step, that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapour, open'd to my view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense, or by the dreaming soul!
* * * * * * *
The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
Was of a mighty city—boldly say
A wilderness of building, sinking far
And self-withdrawn into a wondrous depth,
Far sinking into splendour, without end.
Fabric it seem'd of diamond and of gold,
With alabaster domes and silver spires,
And blazing terrace upon terrace high
Uplifted; here, serene pavilions bright
In avenues disposed; there, towers begirt
With battlements, that on their restless fronts
Bore stars—illumination of all gems!
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
Upon the dark materials of the storm
Now pacified; on them and on the coves,
And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto
The vapours had receded, taking there
Their station under a cerulean sky."

Excursion.

We might perhaps search in vain throughout the whole compass of English poetry, for another example of "words tinged with so many colours." Yet Wordsworth exclaims, immediately after bringing this striking spectacle so successfully before the imagination of the reader,

"Oh 'twas an unimaginable sight!"

So far will a true poet's feeling transcend his own most burning language. I have before hinted, that Wordsworth has not only presented the hues of nature to the eye, but has also limited her harmonies to the ear. Of this, also, I will adduce an instance.

"Astounded in the mountain gap
By peals of thunder, clap on clap,

And many a terror-striking flash,
And somewhere, as it seems, a crash
Among the rocks ; with weight of rain,
And sullen motions, long and slow,
That to a dreary distance go—
Till breaking in upon the dying strain,
A rending o'er his head begins the fray again."
Wagonner.

Surely the four lines marked by the italic character would alone be sufficient to decide the question, whether such a grace as imitative harmony really exists. I own that it is difficult to determine how much of the effect upon the mind depends upon the meaning associated with the words; but let it be remembered, that words designative of sound, have naturally derived their birth from an attempt—in the infancy of language—actually to imitate the sounds of which they are symbolical. After God's own language—the Hebrew—and the affluent Greek, there is probably no tongue so rich in imitative harmonies as our own. Wherever its native texture breaks boldly forth through the foreign fripperies with which it is overlaid, it possesses all the strength of elemental nature. Our climate, our insular situation, the character of our earliest conquerors, may, in some degree, account for this. We should naturally expect, that the land of ocean and of storm would engender a more sinewy language than the sunny plains of France. Let any person, with a true ear, observe the difference between the two words *snow* and *rain*. The hushing sound of the sibilant, in the first, followed by the soft liquid, and by the round full vowel, is not less indicative of the still descent of snow, than the harsher liquid and vowel, in the second, are of the falling shower. I fear that I shall be considered fanciful, yet I cannot help remarking that the letter R, the sound of which, when lengthened out, is so expressive of the murmur of streams and brooks, is generally to be found in words relating to the element of water, and in such combinations as, either single or reduplicated, suit precisely its different modifications. The words "*long*" and "*slow*" are, if pronounced in a natural manner, actually of a longer time than the words *short* and *quick*. There is a drag upon the nasal

N and *G*; there is a protracted effect in the vowel followed by a double vowel, in the two first words, not to be found in the two last. To speak musically, the former might be noted down in semibreves, the latter in crotchets. I forbear to say more on the intimate connexion between language and the sounds or ideas of which it is symbolical, since the subject is extensive and important enough to demand a separate dissertation. Thus much, however, in illustration of Wordsworth's beautiful lines, wherein the sound is so true an echo to the sense, I trust, will not be thought irrelevant. So replete are Wordsworth's works with passages of fine or of pleasing description, that it is difficult to particularize a few, and impossible to name them all. I must, therefore, confine myself to pointing out those which appear to me more especially to display an intimate acquaintance with nature, and a graphic fidelity in representing her varieties. In the Wagonner, a description of early morning, beginning—

> "See Skiddaw's top with rosy light
> Is touch'd,"

would, I believe, have been as often quoted with enthusiasm as Walter Scott's moonlight picture of Melrose Abbey, had it been found amongst the minstrelsy of the great Northern Magician. How fresh and vigorous is the following couplet—

> "Thence look thou forth o'er wood and lawn,
> *Hoar with the frost-like dews of dawn*,"

How admirably the poet has placed in the landscape, by a single touch,

> "The ruin'd towers of Threlkeld Hall,
> *Lurking in a double shade,*
> *By trees and lingering twilight made!*"

A fragment, entitled a Night-Piece, amongst the minor poems, deserves notice. It is a fragment, as carefully finished as one of Raphael's heads from the life, intended to be introduced into a larger picture, and perhaps more

beautiful by itself, than when forming a portion of other beauties. In reading it, we seem actually to behold

> "The continuous cloud of texture close,
> Heavy and wan, all whiten'd by the moon;"

and, like the traveller on his lonesome journey, we are startled by the sudden gleam of light, by which the clouds are split asunder. We look up and behold

> "The clear moon and the glory of the heavens."

In what follows, there is a fine poetical touch—a sort of mysterious beauty—

> "There in a black, blue vault she sails along,
> Follow'd by multitudes of stars, that, small,
> And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
> Drive as she drives;—*how fast they wheel away,*
> *Yet vanish not! The wind is in the tree,*
> *But they are silent.*"

Hitherto I have confined myself to passages of almost pure description. But Wordsworth occasionally combines very beautiful feelings with beautiful imagery, and interprets nature's meanings with the initiated knowledge of one who, to use his own expression, is endowed with "the vision and the faculty divine." In other words, he has (as I undertook, in the second place, to prove) successfully exhibited "nature in connexion with some internal passion, or moral thought, in the heart and mind of man." The passage, which I am about to adduce, in testimony of this, is, an extract, long; but if any one should *feel* that it is long, I may say, with Beattie, "He need not woo the muse—he is her scorn." I should be most unjust to the poet were I not to give the passage entire:—

> "Has not the soul, the being of your life,
> Received a shock of awful consciousness,
> In some calm season, when these lofty rocks,
> At night's approach, bring down th' unclouded sky
> To rest upon their circumambient walls;
> A temple framing of dimensions vast,
> And yet not too enormous for the sound

Of human anthems—choral song, or burst
Sublime of instrumental harmony,
To glorify th' Eternal! What if these
Did never break the stillness that prevails
Here, if the solemn nightingale be mute,
And the soft woodlark here did never chant
Her vespers, Nature fails not to provide
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,
And blind recesses of the cavern'd rocks;
The little rills and waters numberless,
Inaudible by daylight, blend their notes
With the loud streams: and often, at the hour
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,
One voice—one solitary raven, flying
Athwart the concave of the dark-blue dome,
Unseen, perchance above the power of sight—
An iron knell! With echoes from afar,
Faint, and still fainter."—(*Excursion.*)

To those who are acquainted with the phenomena of mountainous countries, I need not point out the exquisite fitness of every component part of the above description. But to those who have never dwelt amongst rocks and waters, I may observe, that, in all its accompaniments, there is a peculiar truth and beauty, which can scarcely be appreciated by the inhabitants of lowlier regions, however they may enter into the feelings with which the description is connected. The soul of any reflective being may, indeed, receive "a shock of awful consciousness" from the contemplation of the unclouded heavens; but the walls of the temple are wanting—those walls which, as if endued with silent life, are so finely said by the poet to *bring down* the sky to rest, as if with love, upon their glorious summits. The weaving in of the evening shades has completely this effect. The outlines of the mountains do not so much appear to soar into the clear-obscure, as to attract the clear-obscure towards themselves. Again, there is a peculiar propriety in the accompanying melodies with which the poet has enriched his scenery. Amongst mountains, the hush of evening draws forth the sound of the

smaller waterfalls in a wonderful and almost unaccountable manner. By night I have seemed to hear fifty streams, the voices of which I never could distinguish during the stillest day, even in places remote from that confused murmur of human existence, which might be supposed to have its share in deadening tones so delicate. Perhaps the dewy freshness of the night air may be a fitter medium for sound; but certain it is, that I have been able to divide from each other the notes of the various streams, amidst the general concert, (united yet distinct,) as one would distinguish between voice and voice in a chorus of birds. The "iron knell" is more finely characteristic of the raven's note than can be conceived by any person who has not heard it come suddenly upon the ear, in a solitary vale, clanging from rock to rock with monotonous grandeur. Under such circumstances, the effect which it produces is positively startling. No ordinary idea of a raven's *croak* will assist us in forming a notion of it. The "iron knell" of the poet, with all its dim associations, will raise the imagination as near to the reality as is perhaps possible. In fine, the severe rejection of all commonplace ornament from the above passage—of all but that which suits the season and the scene—the appropriate solemnity of the versification, and the sustained loftiness of the diction, render the whole description consistent and majestic.

Although I consider Wordsworth mistaken in so constantly endeavouring to educe lofty feelings from lowly subjects, yet it must be allowed that he is occasionally successful in the working up of apparently unpromising materials. A little piece, called Nutting, is a pleasing instance of this; and he has not only contrived to render skating poetical, but has made it the basis of some very striking description, combined with ennobling sensations. He represents himself in the sportive vigour of youth, together with his companions, engaged in this sport:—

"All shod with steel,
We hiss'd along the polish'd ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase,
And woodland pleasures."

What follows is extremely beautiful:—

> " With the din
> Meanwhile the precipices rang aloud;
> The leafless trees, and every icy crag,
> Tinkled like iron; *while the distant hills*
> *Into the tumult sent an alien sound*
> *Of melancholy,* not unnoticed; while the stars
> Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
> The orange sky of evening died away."

The lines distinguished by italics possess a grace similar to that which I pointed out in a previous quotation. As there the memory of "storms gone by" endeared still more the present tranquillity of nature, so here the "alien sound of melancholy" enhances joy by a thought of sorrow. We are strange beings: we love to be reminded of our mortal state even in the midst of our desires to forget it: we pursue pleasure, but we are ever looking back upon pain: we would fain prolong the banquet of life, yet we place a skull in the midst of its festal flowers. And why? Because ours is a twofold life—the union of mortal with immortal. We covet happiness by the very constitution of our nature: we find earthly happiness insufficient—we turn back to the more majestic form of sorrow. We court the transitory, but seek the permanent. On this account it is, that whatever addresses us as man, and at the same time makes us feel that we are more than man, has the greatest power over our passions. Shakspeare well knew that mirth is a more affecting thing than grief, or rather, that mirth is the very avenue to grief. Again, the affections are more readily called into play by a mixture of mirth and melancholy, because such a mixture does actually more resemble human life, with which our affections are entwined, than a mere transcript of one to the exclusion of the other. One brief note coming from the depths of sorrow upon the light strains of pleasure, unlocks our tears more quickly than the most solemn invocation to wo. Although Wordsworth does not precisely, like Shakspeare, make us weep with a witticism, yet no author is more happy than himself in heightening his subject by a hint, a suggestion, by the shadow of a cloud, which causes

us to look up to the cloud itself. He gives the picture life without marring its repose. He does not present us with a description of external nature alone, because he knows that external nature chiefly addresses the imagination, that calm yet radiant power from which "the dangerous passions keep aloof." There was once a long controversy between the respective effects of art and nature. The two should never have been disjoined. Art is not felt as art, but as leading us back to man and nature. The world is the habitation of man. Viewed merely as a stupendous effort of creative power, it is elevating: viewed as our own home, it is touching—for its meaning and its purpose are before us. Look over a vast expanse of country: is it the mere sight which fills the eyes with tears? Unconsciously the thought occurs, upon how many human hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, we gaze in ignorance! Every little column of smoke, pointing out the habitation of man, may be the index to a scene of suffering, or of delight, may guide the eye to the arena of a struggle, which demons and angels watch in emulous anxiety. Yonder old tower, how eloquently it speaks of mortal grandeur and decay! Yonder ship, how it brings even the mighty ocean within the sphere of humanity! Should the prospect be over a desolate region, "empty of all shape of life," the source of its effect upon our feelings is, under a different modification, still the same—man—for ever man. We are affected by the thought that man is not there—there, where he ought to be. In the first case, we looked upon him in connexion with his birthright—now, we gaze upon the inheritance without the heir. The veriest anchorite that ever raved about solitude, owes the force of his appeal to the existence of the world which he deprecates. But I have detained my reader too long from the conclusion of Wordsworth's lines upon skating. As its own beauty will speak for itself, I will give the rest of the poem without further remark; merely premising—for the benefit of Southrons—that the ice of lakes, which are fed by pure mountain streams, is a very different thing from the ice of the serpentine river. It is, without a strong metaphor, a crystal pavement, capable of reflecting the stars as truly as did the unfrozen waters. So transpicuous is ice of this nature,

that it is somewhat awful to move over its untried surface, beneath which the eye can descend into strange depths and oozy hollows.

> "Not seldom from the uproar I retired
> Into a silent bay, or sportively
> Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
> To cross the bright reflection of a star,
> Image that, dying still before me, gleam'd
> Upon the glassy plain: and oftentimes
> When we had given our bodies to the wind,
> And all the shadowy banks on either side
> Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
> The rapid line of motion, then at once
> Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
> Stopp'd short; yet still the solitary cliffs
> Wheel'd by me, even as if the earth had roll'd,
> With visible motion, her diurnal round!
> Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
> Feebler and feebler; and I stood and watch'd
> Till all was tranquil as a summer sea."

I now proceed to show that Wordsworth displays power in his portraits of human beings. Here also he is not a mere describer. The lineaments which he draws, are indications of the mind within. Not unfrequently he gives some masterly touches, which are to the character described, what the hands of a watch are to the dial-plate. They tell the "whereabout" of the whole man. Indeed, Wordsworth is altogether so graphic in his delineations both of nature and of human beings, that if I did not remember the remark of Horace, "Ut pictura, poesis erit," I should conclude that he had deeply studied the art of painting. But the truth is, that herein consists the difference between the poet and the poetaster. While the latter only describes either from recollection, or from a survey of some object, the former paints from an image before his mental eye—an image in this respect transcending Nature herself, inasmuch as it combines the selectest parts of Nature. "Be desperately individual in your studies from nature," said a celebrated artist to a friend of mine, who wished to excel in painting; "in your perfect compositions, be as general as you please." The

advice, if addressed to a poet, would be equally good. He must not aim at depicting the forms of Nature so much as the "spirit of her forms." Wordsworth, in his representation of Peter Bell, has admirably exemplified this imaginative kind of painting. I cannot give a better specimen of his successful efforts in this vein.

> "Though Nature could not touch his heart
>   By lovely forms and placid weather,
> And tender sounds, yet you might see
> At once that Peter Bell and she
>   Had often been together.
>
> "A savage wildness round him hung
>   As of a dweller out of doors;
> In his whole figure and his mien,
> A savage character was seen
>   Of mountains and of dreary moors.
>
> *   *   *   *   *   *
>
> "He had a dark and sidelong walk,
>   And long and slouching was his gait;
> *Beneath his looks so bare and bold,*
> *You might perceive his spirit cold*
>   *Was playing with some inward bait.*
>
> *   *   *   *   *   *
>
> "There was a hardness in his cheek,
>   There was a hardness in his eye,
> As if the man had fix'd his face,
> In many a solitary place,
>   Against the wind and open sky."

I would ask those, who are possessed with an opinion that Wordsworth is a childish writer, if this portrait be not sketched with a vigorous hand? Do we not seem actually to look upon the lawless wanderer, who,

> "To all th' unshaped half-human thoughts
>   Which solitary Nature feeds,
> Mid summer storms, or winter's ice,
> Has —— join'd whatever vice,
>   The cruel city breeds?"

Is not the man's whole history written in his countenance? Does it not tell tales of nightly plunder and daily

debauchery? Does it not hint dark secrets of alliances with smugglers on the coast, with gipsies on the wold, with poachers in the forest? Is it not hard and cruel enough to be the tablet of an altar, whereon the hope and peace of many a rustic beauty has been sacrificed? Upon that brow has gathered the sweat of no honest toil, the swarthy tint of no rural labour—there may be even a spot of blood. He has been with Nature, yet Nature has touched him not. Her storms have furrowed his face, but have only annealed his heart. Can any thought be more striking? What can represent more forcibly the desperate condition of the man than the idea that Nature herself has contributed to harden him, as the pure soft element of water, dropping through some gloomy chasm, sometimes converts to stone the substances on which it falls? Let me now place before the reader a portrait in quite a different style—a Morland after a Salvator—the representation of a true English ploughboy.

> "His joints are stiff;
> Beneath a cumbrous frock, that to the knees
> Invests the thriving churl, his legs appear,
> Fellows to those which lustily upheld
> The wooden stools, for everlasting use,
> On which our fathers sate. And mark his brow!
> Under whose shaggy canopy are set
> Two eyes, not dim, but of a healthy stare;
> Wide, sluggish, blank, and ignorant, and strange;
> Proclaiming boldly that they never drew
> A look or motion of intelligence
> From infant conning of the Christ-cross row,
> Or puzzling through a primer, line by line,
> Till perfect mastery crown the pains at last."
>
> *Excursion.*

There is, in the above lines, a kind of forcible humour, which may remind the reader of Cowper's manner in the Task. The versification is good, and gives so much point to the thoughts, that it should seem as if custom, rather than necessity, had caused all satires, from Donne to Churchill, to be written in rhyme.

In describing the external indications of human passions, the silent eloquence of look and gesture, Words-

worth is sometimes eminently successful. The whole story of Margaret, in the Excursion, is a series of affecting pictures. Her husband had joined a troop of soldiers, and she had heard no tidings of him for more than a year. The gradual doubt respecting his fate, slowly sickening into despair, is touched, through all its gradations, with a most skilful pencil. By degrees her garden and cottage, which used to display all the pride of neatness, "bespeak a sleepy hand of negligence," and at length fall into decay and ruin. The mourner's spirit sinks into a kindred state of desolation, and yet she cannot rest. Her despair is even without the comfort of its usual apathy. The irritation always kept up by the remains of suspense—by the absence of all tidings, and the consequent impossibility of utter certainty—gives a restlessness to her mind, and to the movements of her body. If she sees a soldier pass, her cheek still flushes, and her step involuntarily bears her from the cottage door. Even her child

> "Had from its mother caught the trick of grief,
> And sigh'd amidst its playthings."

A state more miserable can scarcely be conceived. As a contemporary poet has observed,

> —— "What can match the sickness of suspense?
> To act, to suffer, may be nobly great,—
> But nature's mightiest effort is to wait!"

In such a condition, the mind expends its force upon itself. Its energies fall back upon the heart like arrows sent towards heaven. Nothing is known, therefore nothing can be combated. Nothing is to be done, but every thing is to be feared. Here, the human imagination is unveiled in its most terrible aspect—here its endless, boundless, indestructible powers find their full scope. Conjecture cannot exhaust it. Wordsworth has given to the world perhaps the finest picture extant of a being, whose thoughts thus beat themselves against the bars of their prison. The following passage can scarcely be read with an unmoved heart:

"Yes, it would have grieved
Your very soul to see her; evermore
Her eyelids droop'd, her eyes were downward cast;
And, when she at her table gave me food,
She did not look at me. Her voice was low,
Her body was subdued. In every act,
Pertaining to her house affairs, appear'd
The careless stillness of a thinking mind,
Self-occupied, to which all outward things
Are like an idle matter. Still she sigh'd,
But yet no motion of the breast was seen,
No heaving of the heart. While by the fire
We sate together, sighs came on my ear,
I knew not how, and hardly whence they came."

Excursion.

The power which Wordsworth has shown in the foregoing description, to move the softer affections, leads me to the next branch of my subject. I would prove that simple pathos is an attribute of Wordsworth's Muse. It has been remarked that authors never esteem their productions according to their real degrees of merit. Wordsworth is a singular instance of the truth of this observation. He has pointed out the Idiot Boy and Goody Blake to the reader's notice, but has omitted altogether the mention of some pieces, which more nearly than any thing he ever wrote exemplify the best parts of his own theory. Occasionally he has quaffed from the very Hippocrene of Nature, and has displayed the pure and simple effects of real inspiration. I would adduce, as an example of this, "The Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman." I must premise, that, when the wandering tribes of North America, in the migrations consequent upon their wild and precarious mode of existence, pass from one region to another, a cruel necessity obliges them to leave behind any of their comrades, who, from sickness or a failure of strength, shall fall by the way. In those desolate tracts, to delay their own progress on the sufferer's account, would endanger the lives of the whole community; and often the poor creature, who endures all the tortures of a forced march, will voluntarily request to be left to the milder hand of death. The last offices which the tribe render to their deserted companions, are to kindle a fire,

and to leave a supply of water and food behind them, with the lingering hope that they may yet be able to resume their journey. The subject is in itself affecting, and Wordsworth has treated it in a very touching manner. The dying woman, whose lament falls upon the silence of the frozen desert, breaks out into speech with that sort of impatient horror which the utter loneliness and awful appearances of that dreadful region might be supposed to excite:

> "Before I see another day,
> Oh let my body die away!
> In sleep, I hear the northern gleams,
> The stars were mingled with my dreams."

The haunting effect of strange wild objects upon the enfeebled mind of sickness is in the last couplet finely conceived. So also is the idea that she could have travelled on yet a litttle farther with her companions:

> "Alas! ye might have dragg'd me on
> Another day, a single one!
> Too soon I yielded to despair—
> Why did ye listen to my prayer?
> *When ye were gone my limbs were stronger.*"

This is beautifully true to nature. It is not for her own sake that she clings so tenaciously to life and to human fellowship—not on her own account does she pray so earnestly for "another day—a single one." She is a mother; and as every fraction of time spent with her infant is a heap of gold, so every least division of an hour passed apart from it is a weight of lead. Who can read the continuation of her complaint without being moved?

> "*My child! they gave thee to another,*
> *A woman who was not thy mother.*
> When from my arms my babe they took,
> Oh me, how strangely did he look!
> Through his whole body something ran,
> A most strange working did I see;—
> As if he strove to be a man,
> That he might pull the sledge for me."

The first couplet is worth whole realms of amplification. The single line—"A woman who was not thy mother," is a world of feeling in itself. Thus does a great master find the shortest passage to the heart, while a mere describer, wandering in a labyrinth, never reaches the heart at all. The poem concludes with a burst of delirious agony—a state of mind in which intense desire dares possibility:

> "I'll follow you across the snow;
> Ye travel heavily and slow!
> In spite of all my weary pain,
> I'll look upon your tents again!"

Always, with the exception of Betty Foy, Wordsworth has been peculiarly happy in his delineation of the maternal passion. Were I not afraid to multiply quotations, I should dwell more particularly on a small poem entitled "The Affliction of Margaret." I cannot, however, omit the following stanza, since the feeling which it conveys is capable of general application:

> "Ah little doth the young one dream,
> When full of play and childish cares,
> What power hath even his wildest scream
> Heard by its mother unawares.
> He knows it not, he cannot guess:
> Years to a mother bring distress,
> But do not make her love the less."

"But, dear me," methinks I hear a soft voice timidly inquire, "has Mr. Wordsworth never written any thing about an—another—sort of love?" He has, madam; and so well as to deserve the gratitude of the whole female community. While your favourite, Lord Byron, has represented you as the mere objects of a frantic passion, which I will not name, and has luxuriated accordingly in descriptions of gazelle eyes and hyacinthine locks, Wordsworth has painted you with equal purity and warmth. Exquisite as are Lord Byron's stanzas to the memory of Thyrza, I fear that the lady was no better than she should

be; but we can have no doubt of the virtue of the loved, lost object, who is commemorated in the following lines:

> " She dwelt among th' untrodden ways,
> Beside the springs of Dove;
> A maid whom there were none to praise,
> And very few to love.
>
> A violet by a mossy stone
> Half hidden from the eye;
> Fair as a star when only one
> Is shining in the sky.
>
> She lived unknown, and few could know
> When Lucy ceased to be;
> But she is in her grave,—and oh
> The difference to *me!*"

" Well now, are those lines really by Mr. Wordsworth? I declare they are very pretty. But do you not think, that, 'oh, the difference to *me!*' is a little bit too simple?" Not in the least. Would you have liked the verse better had it been, (if the rhyme permitted,) " What pangs my bosom rend?" The simplicity of the expression matters little if it fulfils the purpose of the author; and it is of no consequence how common the words may be, if they are only the surface to a mine of thought. The great object of poetry is, to suggest more than she expresses, and especially at the close of a strain, she is fortunate if she can leave food for reflection. The contrast between the careless indifference of the world in general, and the intense feeling of the poet who has lost all that was his world, is perfectly indicated in the concluding stanza; and what more could we wish? The last line is the motto to a golden casket of once-treasured hopes and tender memories;—what more could we wish? To pursue a little farther the train of thoughts which it excites. Wordsworth says, in another poem,

> " You must love him, ere to you
> He will seem worthy of your love."

This is perfectly true to nature. Love not only invests its objects with imaginary attributes, but actually does per-

ceive those which exist, but which are not visible to an indifferent eye. Friendship possesses some of this intuitive discernment. But how much is her spiritual perception heightened by love! When the reciprocal action of the sensual and intellectual powers produce what may be called (almost with propriety) an additional sense, the mental glance becomes like the sun in heaven, not only penetrating all mysteries by its light, but calling forth dormant faculties from their slumber by its warmth. It was the torch of Love which animated the statue of Pygmalion;—to others, perhaps, the statue was but marble still. How singular is the feeling we experience, when we think that the being whom we love is nothing to others, every thing to ourselves—that others see daily with indifference the form, whose shadow even to behold for a few moments is to us happiness unspeakable! To the world, the object of our love is merely a human being—to us, somewhat above mortality. This may be an image to you, but it is a saint to me, says the Catholic. No author has expressed this union of earthly with divine with greater depth than Wordsworth. His women are, to use his own beautiful language,

——"Creatures not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
And yet are spirits too, and bright,
With something of an angel light."

Only hear how forcibly he depicts the waking from the security into which this feeling lulls us, when our dream of unearthly charms is tremendously broken by the shock of death:

"A slumber did my spirit seal,
I had no human fears:
She seem'd a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force,
She neither hears, nor sees,
Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees."

Here, how much is said in little—how many themes for reflection are suggested! That form, which the imaginative colouring of real passion had invested with immortality, is now no more than the inanimate productions of nature. Once the living vehicle of the soul, and almost identified with it, in the wondrous motions of eye and lip, it is now immoveable and impassive as the solid rocks! It is a subject too painful to dwell upon. Let us revive ourselves by the following fresh picture of life and loveliness:

> "She was a phantom of delight,
> When first she gleam'd upon my sight;
> A lovely apparition sent
> To be a moment's ornament;
> *Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,*
> *Like twilight's too her dusky hair;*
> *But all things else about her drawn*
> *From May-time and the cheerful dawn.*"

Who does not see the beautiful girl moving in the light of poetry and youth; and bringing gladness with her as surely as the morning-star leads on the day? "Well, I must say," the soft voice replies, "I had no idea that Wordsworth had written such sweet things. I shall tell all my friends what a poet he is, and shall buy his works directly."

I should exceed the limits which I have prescribed to myself, were I to give extracts from any more of Wordsworth's poems, which display a pathetic simplicity. The reader will do well to peruse, at his own leisure, "The Childless Father," "Lucy Gray," "We are Seven," and the story of "Ruth." I think that he will not only be struck with the lovely thoughts in these poems, but with the easy melody of their versification. Every word seems to fall naturally into its right place, and the rhyme appears to be less a preparation of art, than a necessary consequence of the diction.

Another characteristic of Wordsworth's muse is a certain classical dignity. Persons, who are acquainted with his works by quotation only, or by report, can scarcely be aware how often, and how strikingly, he has displayed this excellence. So much injustice has he done himself. The

Laodamia is known but by a few—by those alone, who, being gifted with a real affection for poetry, have attentively studied and searched the writings of our true poets, and have formed their own opinions, without respect to the popular voice. They have already assigned the Laodamia a high rank amongst poems of a severe and intellectual beauty. It is a perfect piece of statuary, elaborated with Phidian skill, and its repose, like that of "the statue which enchants the world," is the repose of life. As the effect of this fine composition depends more upon the grandeur and harmony of the whole, than upon the beauty of detached parts, I should only mar the impression which it is calculated to produce on the mind of the classic reader, by presenting him with a specimen of its excellence. This would be to exhibit a stone of the temple, in order to display the proportions of the temple itself. I will rather give entire the following sonnet, as an example of the chaste severity of Wordsworth's loftier style:

> "Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour;
> England hath need of thee! She is a fen
> Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
> Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
> Have forfeited their ancient English dower
> Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;—
> Oh raise us up! Return to us again;
> And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power!
> *Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart:*
> *Thou hadst a voice, whose sound was like the sea,*
> *Pure as the naked heavens*, majestic, free;
> So didst thou travel on life's common way
> In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
> The lowliest duties on herself did lay."

Surely this is great writing. There is no affectation, no babyism here. The poet has girded his robe about him, and has prepared himself for a lofty encounter. The portion marked by italics is, in particular, grand, from the very simplicity of its thought and diction. The most sublime objects in nature are chosen to illustrate the author's noble ideas; and, in the short compass of three lines, "ocean, with all its solemn noise," and the illimitable firmament,

are presented to the ear and eye. An inferior writer would have dilated upon the thought: Wordsworth knew that an inch of gold is better than a yard of gold leaf. The conclusion of the sonnet conveys, by a few touches, the striking picture of a majestic mind, unbending towards the world, yet reverencing itself; and thus completes the magnificence of poetry with the important truth—that humility is the basis of moral grandeur. Wordsworth's Ode to Duty may be mentioned as another instance of this purity of thought and of expression. The following stanza is very noble:

> "Stern lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
> The Godhead's most benignant grace;
> Nor know we any thing so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face:
> Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
> And fragrance in thy footing treads."

Both as a moral and as a religious poet, Wordsworth may take a high station. In the latter point of view, more especially, his name may not only be associated with those of Young and Cowper, but even with that of Milton; for, except in the works of the above-named writers, we shall search vainly, through the English classics, for passages of devotional fervour expressed as finely as many which Wordsworth has given us. A poem, called "Resolution and Independence," may serve to display our author as a moralist of a very different stamp to the mere casuist, whom (snatching for once the pencil of satire) he stigmatises as

> "One to whose smooth-rubb'd soul can cling,
> Nor form, nor feeling, great nor small;
> A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
> An intellectual all in all!"

The poem opens with a fresh and beautiful description of a calm and bright morning succeeding to a night of storms. All nature is revived—"the birds are singing in the distant woods," and

> "All things that love the sun are out of doors;
> The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;

> The grass is bright with rain-drops; on the moors
> The hare is running races in her mirth."

With this morning jubilee of creation the poet at first sympathizes, but by degrees he falls into a train of melancholy and anxious thought. He compares his fate with that of the happy creatures round him—the skylark warbling in the sky, and the playful hare—and he feels that he only resembles them in his present exemption from care and sorrow. Happy as he now is, he cannot forbear from casting a prospective look towards evils, to which his present state of security, and the changefulness of this mortal life seem to render him peculiarly liable. Even his poetical feelings seem to point him out as a mark for the arrows of misfortune. He muses painfully upon the fate of genius in every age, and more especially he

> "Thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
> The sleepless soul that perish'd in his pride,—
> Of him who walk'd in glory and in joy,
> Following his plough along the mountain side."

In this mood, he meets with an old man whose employment is that of a leech-gatherer; the infirmities of disease and age having precluded him from any more active mode of gaining his subsistence. Of him it is finely said,—

> "Motionless as a cloud the old man stood,
> That heareth not the loud winds when they call."

The poet is much struck with the apparently wretched occupation of one, on whose form time and pain seemed to have cast, "a more than human weight." But, on conversing with the leech-gatherer, he finds him not only resigned to his lot, but cheerful. The content of this man, as contrasted with his own recent doubts, and anxious forebodings, strongly impresses the poet's mind with an important lesson of trust in Providence. He says—

> "The man did seem
> Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
> Or like a man from some far region sent,
> To give me human strength by strong admonishment."

The leech-gatherer's words have the more effect upon his imagination, inasmuch as they are

> "With something of a lofty utterance drest,
> Choice word and measured phrase; above the reach
> Of ordinary men."

The poem thus concludes:—

> "When he ended,
> I could have laugh'd myself to scorn to find
> In that decrepit man so firm a mind.
> God, said I, be my help and stay secure,
> I'll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor."

Wordsworth may be said, in this composition, to have drawn, from the simplest elements, fine imagery and a noble moral. There is something exceedingly striking in the figure of the old man standing motionless on the solitary moor. It seems peculiarly adapted to the purposes of painting, and has indeed been occasionally chosen by artists as a subject for their pencil.

Of Wordsworth's devotional poetry, the following passage from the Excursion, although slightly tinged with the Platonism of his creed, is perhaps as fine an example as can be cited:

> "Thou, dread source,
> Prime self-existing cause and end of all,
> That, in the scale of being, fill their place,
> Above our human region, or below,
> Set and sustain'd;—Thou—who didst wrap the cloud
> Of infancy around us, that Thyself,
> Therein, with our simplicity awhile
> Mightst hold communion undisturb'd—
> Who, from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,
> Or from its death-like void, with punctual care,
> And touch as gentle as the morning light,
> Restor'st us daily to the power of sense.
> And reason's steadfast rule,—Thou, Thou alone
> Art everlasting, and the blessed spirits,
> Which thou includest, as the sea her waves."

I should say, that the muse of Wordsworth appears to

breathe her native air, when she attunes her voice to strains like these. How singular, that the author of the Lyrical Ballads should seem to be most at home in grave and lofty numbers! Yet such is the fact: Wordsworth will be venerated as a moral and religious poet, when, as a theorist, he will be sunk into oblivion.

But it is chiefly by his sonnets that Wordsworth will be known to posterity. Boileau says,—

> "Un sonnet sans défaut vaut seul un long poëme,
> Mais en vain mille auteurs y pensent arriver;
> A peine——
> —Peut on admirer deux ou trois entre mille."

If we consider how many have attempted, and how few have succeeded in this species of composition, we shall acknowledge the truth of the latter part of the above assertion. The very shortness of the sonnet is its difficulty. Like the man who had not time to write a short letter, many authors, more especially in the present day, seem to have no leisure to condense their thoughts. They are able, indeed, to pour out their unpremeditated verse with much facility; and if they be men of real talent, some merit will undoubtedly be found in their compositions; but this merit must necessarily be of an expanded kind. Water runs apace—richer potations issue more slowly from the cask. Now a sonnet is worth nothing unless it condense the elasticity of thought into its own small compass. We do not require that a hogshead should be filled with ottar of roses; but we do demand that the small and portable vial should contain a precious essence. When we read the sonnets of Milton, or of Warton, we feel that each of them is the result of more thought, and more tends to produce thought in others, than many a long poem which has issued from a mind of weaker stuff. On this ground, more than on account of their nonconformity to the sonnet rules, I should deny the name of sonnet to the compositions of Bowles, or Mrs. Charlotte Smith. They may be pretty songs, or pathetic elegies, but they are not sonnets. They were popular, for they neither resulted from deep thought, nor required deep thought for the comprehension of them. The sonnets of Shakspeare and Milton (however admired

by the few) have never been popular, because they address themselves to the understanding as well as the heart, to the imagination rather than to the fancy. Of this stamp are the sonnets of Wordsworth. They may therefore fail to delight the popular palate in an equal degree with (as some wit called them) "Mrs. Charlotte Smith's whipt syllabubs in black glasses;" but they will be dear to the lovers of original excellence as long as any thinking minds can be found in the community. They will be remembered—for there is something in a good sonnet peculiarly rememberable. "Brevity," says, Shakspeare, "is the soul of wit;" and inasmuch as the soul survives the body, condensed wisdom also possesses a principle of longevity beyond the "thews and outward flourishes" of wordy rhetoric. Proverbs live, while whole epics perish. Amongst Wordsworth's miscellaneous sonnets (and they are numerous) there is scarcely one which is not good—there are many which are strikingly fine. They are all written after the strictest model of the legitimate sonnet, which, from its artful construction and repeated rhymes, presents many difficulties to the composer; and yet there is an ease in Wordsworth's management of the sonnet, which proves that this is a kind of composition the most congenial, the most fitted to his powers. The lines are sufficiently broken to prevent the repetition of the same rhymes from palling on the ear; yet not so much as altogether to prevent their recurrence from being perceived, (a fault by no means uncommon,) so as to confound the distinction between rhyme and blank verse. The subjects are varied; and from Wordsworth's sonnets it would be easy to select specimens of the descriptive, the pathetic, the playful, the majestic, the fanciful, the imaginative. I have already presented my reader with a glorious example of Wordsworth's majestic style, in the sonnet to Milton. I will now, therefore, confine myself to one other specimen, which appears to me to combine many of the characteristics which I have mentioned distinctively above:

"Where lies the land to which yon ship must go?
Festively she puts forth in trim array,

As vigorous as a lark at break of day:
Is she for tropic suns or polar snow?
What boots th' inquiry?—Neither friend nor foe
She cares for; let her travel where she may,
She finds familiar names, a beaten way
Ever before her, and a wind to blow.
Yet still I ask, what haven is her mark?
And almost as it was when ships were rare,
(From time to time, like pilgrims, here and there
Crossing the waters,) doubt and something dark,
Of the old sea some reverential fear
Is with me at thy farewell, joyous bark!"

Here we have beautiful description, majesty of numbers, a lively fancy, a touch of pathos, and a fine exercise of the imaginative powers. I cannot conclude this branch of my subject, without pointing out to the reader's notice, more especially, Wordsworth's Introductory Sonnet, that on the extinction of the Venetian Republic, and the series of Sonnets on the river Duddon. That, in particular, which begins,

"Hail, twilight, sovereign of one peaceful hour,"

is a fine instance of the vigour with which an original mind can refresh a hackneyed theme. It is rather unlike the sonnets of young ladies and young masters on the same subject.

The reader has now before him the claims of Wordsworth (fairly stated, as I hope) to public notice. That he is a true poet, no one, who has read the extracts which I have given from his works, can for a moment doubt. He is not a mere versifier, who rhymes away the vacant hour. He is not a mere trifler in the art, who amongst other elegant studies, resorts to poetry as a recreation. It is evident that poetry has been to him "the stuff of which his life is wrought." In spite of his attempts to identify poetry and prose, he cannot think in prose, he cannot write in prose. He is all over poetical feeling. A poet he was born, and a poet he will die. Let him speak of himself in his early days:

"I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite: a feeling, and a love."

Tintern Abbey.

Let him exhibit himself at a later period:

"Life's autumn past, I stand on winter's verge,
And daily lose what I desire to keep: .
Yet rather would I instantly decline
To the traditionary sympathies
Of a most rustic ignorance, ...
. . . . . . than see and hear
The repetitions wearisome of sense,
Where soul is dead, and feeling hath no place."

Can any one doubt that this man is a poet? The young and fervent, who admire Lord Byron's intense enthusiasm in the perception of external nature, know not how much of it was kindled at Wordsworth's altar. In the noble author's works, they may have met with many a contemptuous sarcasm on Wordsworth and his poetry. They ought to be informed, that these expressions of contempt and dislike are but the results of the natural tendency of men to hate their benefactors. Perhaps also something of good policy mingled with a bitterer feeling. Lord Byron might wish to make it seem impossible that he should borrow from one whom he despised so heartily. But it was a part of Lord Byron's daring character, never to be deterred from seizing upon any materials, which suited his purpose, by the fear of detection. In these things, to put a good face upon the matter is half the battle. Thus—whether it was that he thought that the boldest thieves are ever the least suspected, or that his contemptuous appreciation of his contemporaries, led him to believe that posterity would rather suppose that they plundered from him, than he from them,—as Ben Jonson says, "would deem it to be his as well as theirs,"—or even, perhaps, that *his* works alone would survive to future ages—certain it is, that instead of timidly and laboriously pilfering from old and obscure authors, Lord Byron at once appropriated to himself the finest thoughts of living writers. Whenever a

peculiarly original idea was started, it was sure to appear on the next published pages of Lord Byron. Thus, when Montgomery sang,

> "He only, like the ocean-weed uptorn,
> And loose along the world of waters borne,
> Was cast companionless from wave to wave,"

Lord Byron echoed,

> "I am as the weed
> Torn from the rock on ocean's foam to sail,
> Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail."

With regard to Lord Byron's obligations to Wordsworth, they are less verbal, and therefore less palpable; but no one, who is acquainted with the works of the two authors, can doubt but that Wordsworth is to be traced most palpably through the third and fourth cantos of Childe Harold. A poem, by Lord Byron, called the "Grave of Churchill," a fact literally rendered, is in its style a close copy of Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," from which I have given extracts. In a wonderfully fine passage in the Excursion, Wordsworth desires to "surrender himself to the elements," as if he "were a spirit," and exclaims—

> "While the mists
> Flying, and rainy vapours call out shapes
> And phantoms from the crags and solid earth
> As fast as a musician scatters sounds
> Out of an instrument . . . .
> . . . . . What a joy to roam
> An equal amongst mightiest energies!"

Lord Byron seems to have had this in his thoughts, when he made Manfred say—

> "Oh that I were
> The viewless spirit of a lovely sound!
> . . . . . Born and dying
> With the blest tone that made me."

The difference is only that Wordsworth's hopeful and cheering idea has become desponding and gloomy, in passing through the alembic of Lord Byron's brain. In

the one case it is the wish of a believing philosopher, exulting in the immortality which he feels to be his own: in the other, of an infidel voluptuary, jaded down to a prayer for annihilation. I mention these things to prove that persons, who admire (and justly) Lord Byron for the vigour of his verse, do most unjustly accuse Wordsworth of feebleness and puerility; and that while they quote with rapture, passages, which are at least *suggested* by Wordsworth's poetry, they are unconsciously doing honour to the genius of the latter.

Having now brought my defence to a close, I have only to repeat that, if my reader is of the same opinion as myself, he will not quarrel with me for having quoted so largely from Wordsworth's poems. In reading works of criticism, I have generally found that I enjoyed the extracts more than the critical commentary; and I can easily imagine, that the reader will peruse these pages with a similar feeling.

In conclusion, let me briefly recapitulate my reasons, both for denying Wordsworth a place amongst the greatest of our national poets, and for assigning him a high station amongst the band of true poets in general.

He has not produced any one great, original, and consistent work, or even any one poem of consequence, to which all these epithets can, with justice, be collectively applied. The want of a fixed style, the inequality of his compositions, the exuberant verbosity of some, and the eccentric meanness of others: the striking deficiency, which his works usually display, in judgment—a quality essential to the attainment of first-rate excellence—are all so many barriers betwixt Wordsworth and the summit of fame. Although it perhaps may be allowed, that Milton is the only poet who exceeds Wordsworth in devotional sublimity; yet, when we consider the universal excellence of the former in all that he has attempted—when we look upon him as the author of our great epic—it never can be conceded, that posterity will assign the latter a station beside him.

On the other hand, the variety of subjects, which Wordsworth has touched; the varied powers which he has displayed; the passages of redeeming beauty interspersed

even amongst the worst and the dullest of his productions; the originality of detached thoughts scattered throughout works, to which, on the whole, we must deny the praise of originality; the deep pathos, and occasional grandeur of his lyre; the real poetical feeling which generally runs through its many modulations; his accurate observation of external nature; and the success with which he blends the purest and most devotional thoughts with the glories of the visible universe—all these are merits, which so far "make up in number what they want in weight," that, although insufficient to raise him to the shrine, they fairly admit him within the sacred temple of poesy. While Shakspeare is pinnacled at almost an invisible height, "sole-sitting" where others "dare not soar;" while Milton, Spenser, Thomson, and Collins, "aye sing around the cloudy throne;" Wordsworth may join the numerous and radiant band, who occupy the less daring heights of Parnassus, rifle its caves of "mildly-gleaming ore," arrange its flowers and turf into gardens of artificial beauty; or, as our poet, "snatch a grace beyond the reach of art" from the rocks and waterfalls that grace its wilder recesses.

POETRY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1830.)

THE age in which we live has been fruitful of poetical works; we may venture to say, that it has been fruitful of poets. There has been no period, we believe, of our literature, since the age of Elizabeth, that has been marked by such an overflow of poetry. For although, through the whole of the intervening time, we may observe that the vein of poetry has been prevalent in the English nation, (we do not now speak of our own before that incorporation of the literature of the two countries, which the last half century has witnessed,) although, on looking back, we recognise at every step familiar and honourable, and some illustrious names of the English Parnassus, yet we find at no time so many together of high distinction. And least of all do we find any number at one time; we find, indeed, few altogether to whom the language of verse is the language of imagination and passion. At no other period was the whole literature of the land tinged, coloured, and vivified with poetry. It will be matter of curious speculation to those who shall write the later history of English literature, to trace out the causes, while they mark the periods of the different appearances which our poetry has put on; and to explain how a people, adapted in their character for poetry, and at all times loving it in all its shapes, should have departed frequently so far from its genuine character, and from its impassioned spirit. In Milton, the power of poetry seemed to expire; not merely because no voice like his was heard, when his own voice had ceased; but because the very purposes of poetry seemed changed; and the demesnes of verse to be subjected to

other faculties and the sceptre passed into unlineal hands, Milton, like his great predecessors, drew his poetry from the depths of his own spirit brooding over nature and human life. But for the race that succeeded, it seemed as if a veil had fallen between nature and the poets eyes ; as if that world, which by its visible glory feeds inspiration, had, like the city of Ad, been wrapped in darkness from the eyes of men, and they had known of it only in surviving traditions. Excepting Thomson alone, who is there among our poets, in the space between that race which died in Milton, and the age of poetry which has since sprung up almost with our own generation—who among them is there that seems to stand beholding the world of nature and of man, and chanting to men the voice of his visions, a strain that, like a bright reflection of lovely imagery, discloses to the minds of others the impressions that fall beautiful and numberless on his own? Even Collins, pure, sweet, and ethereal—though his song in its rapture commerces with the skies, and though a wild and melancholy beauty from his own spirit passes upon all the forms of nature and of life that he touches—though there might seem to be, therefore, a perfect inspiration in his poetry, yet does he not rather give to nature than receive from her? Does he speak under the strong constraint of a passion drawn from the living world, and though changed and exalted in the poet's mind, yet bearing with it, as it rushes out in his song, the imperishable elements from which it was composed? Or does it not rather seem to be the voice of a spirit which does not feed on the breath of this world, but has thinly veiled from human apprehension the thoughts and feelings of its own spiritual being, in imagery of that world which is known to men? And of that imagery how much is supplied to him from other poets? We dare not say that nature was veiled from his sight ; the feeling in which he speaks is so tender, native, and pure. He has caught from her hues and ethereal forms ; but surely we may say, that he does not speak as a passionate lover of nature. He does not speak as one to whom Nature, in all her aspects and moods, is health and life ; whose soul by delighted verse is wedded to the world ; but by the force of its own inherent creative

power changes into new shapes, and brings forth into new existence, its own impressions from outward creation.

A generation of poets has appeared in our day, who have gone back to nature; and have sought the elements of poetry immediately in the world of nature and of human life. Cowper was perhaps the first. The charm of his poetry is a pure, innocent, lovely mind, delighting itself in pure, innocent and lovely nature;—the freshness of the fields, the fragrance of the flowers, breathes in his verse. His own delight in simple, happy, rural life, is there; and we are delighted, as, with happy faces, and with endeared familiar love we walked by his side, and shared with him in his pleasures. How shall we speak of Burns? Of him whose poetry, so full of himself, is almost one impassioned strain of delight in nature, and in the life he drew from her breast? Of him, ploughman as he was, whose ennobling songs have fed with thought, and lifted up with passion, the minds of the high born and the learned? But all the poets who now occupy the places of eminence in the literature of the island, many and high in talents as they are, it may be said generally, that the great character of their poetry is, that return to the great elementary sources of poetry; to the world of nature and human life. Wordsworth searching deeply in his own spirit, the laws of passion, and lavishing eloquence to delineate nature with almost a lover's fondness; Scott, the painter of all he sees, and of all that his imagination has seen, who has brought back departed years, and clothed them in the shape and colours of real life; Southey, with wild and creative power, multiplying before our sight visions from unreal worlds, but making for them a dwelling-place of the beautiful and mighty scenes of our own, and ever touching their fanciful natures with pure and gentle feeling, springing up from the deep fountains of human loves; Campbell, who seemingly speaks but to embody ecstacy in words, touching, and but touching, the forms of nature and the passions of men, with a pencil of light; Moore, full of delight, and breathing in enchanting words and verse his own delight, through all ears and hearts; Byron, who—but suffice it for the present to say, that all these, and many other writers of genius, though of less fame,

their contemporaries have filled their poetry with the passionate impressions which have been flung from the face and bosom of nature upon their spirits, or have risen up to them in strong sympathy with the affections and passions of other men, or yet deeplier from their own. Though there may be much in the poetry which this age has produced, which will be condemned as false to nature; and more, far more, which must be censured and rejected, as violating the severe and high canons of art—yet this must be admitted, we think, as a comprehensive description, as its great and honourable distinction, that it is full to overflowing of the love of the works of God.

The great difference between the poetry of Milton and that of our own day, is the severe obedience to an intellectual law which governed his mind in composition. The study of his poetry would be as much a work of exact intellectual analysis, as that of the logical writings of Aristotle. It is evident that he was not satisfied with great conception; it was not enough that language yielded her powerful words to invest those conceptions with a living form. But he knew that when he wrote, he practised an intellectual art:—that both the workings of imagination and the vivid impression of speech, must be reduced into an order satisfying to intelligence; and hence, in his boldest poetry, in the midst of wonder and astonishment, we never feel, for a moment, that reason is shaken in her sovereignty over all the actions of the mind: we are made to feel, on the contrary, that her prevailing, over-ruling power rises in strength and majesty, as all the powers that are subjected to her kindle and dilate.

Such a character in composition, testifies not only to the high intellectual power of the mind which formed the work, but it shows the spirit of the age. We are assured by that evidence, if we had no other, that the age which gave Milton birth, had cultivated, to the highest, the intellectual faculties. We read, in his poetry, the severe and painful studies, the toiling energies of thought, the labours of abstract speculation, and long-concatenated reasonings, which tried the strength of the human faculties in the

schools. Imagination has clothed that strength in her own forms; but the strength is of that nurture. The "giant of mighty bone" has heroic beauty; but the structure of his unconquerable frame is of Titan origin.

In the poetry of our own age, we miss the principle of intellectual strength. The two most popular poets of the day, Scott and Byron, are, above all the known writers of the country, remarkable for the confusion of intellectual processes, and the violation of intellectual laws, almost throughout their composition. They rest upon conception. Imagination and passion yield them abundant creation; language, vivid and living, clothes the brood of their minds in visible form; and there is their composition. Take their writings, and analyse them by any laws, known or possible, of human speech, and you would expel thought from them: there are passages of great splendour and fascination, which may be demonstrated to be unintelligible. But what then? The sympathy of a reader is sometimes stronger than the laws of language. He *will* understand. He asks satisfaction to his own imagination and passion; and in the truths of imagination and passion he finds it.

The fault is one which does not prove that there is not, in the minds of both these illustrious writers, vast intellectual capacity and vigour. But it does appear to argue, that their minds have not undergone due intellectual discipline; and might justify an observer in suspecting, that out of the walk of their own genius, they would not be found of formidable strength. But the chief deduction from the extraordinary prevalence of such a defect in writers of such pre-eminent reputation and favour, is intellectual weakness in the age to which they belong. That high ancient discipline of the intellectual powers must long have disappeared, when those who write for the sympathy of the minds of highest cultivation, write in fearless scorn of intellectual laws, and yet win the wreath of the games.

This defect has not impeded their living reputation, but it may possibly obstruct their future. We apprehend it can hardly do otherwise than take from the authority of their genius.

Now, in an age when so much true poetry—true and high, with all its defects—blushes and breathes over the land—a crop of indigenous flowers—there will be much that is false and low, though with a certain show and seeming of truth and splendour. Poetry is scarcely imitation of Nature, so much as Nature's self; but there will be imitation—skilful or unskilful—of poetry;—and thus the art of mimicry will be cultivated by hundreds who possess talent, but no genius. So is it with us of this generation. The population of versifiers doubles itself every ten years. They, too, belong to schools. Each school—be it of Scott, or Wordsworth, or Byron—is like a room hung round with mirrors, all reflecting an Eidolon of a great master. The images—mere shadows—are all alike; yet each pretends to think itself no image, but an original substance. While often, to hide from the world and themselves the utter hollowness of their characters, they dress up the Eidolon in uncouth and fantastic habiliments, and try to impose the nothing upon our eyes as a something self-existent. But the mockery and the delusion is seen through; and such apparitions are chased off the day into chaos and old Night.

People, now-a-days, will write, because they see so many writing; the impulse comes upon them from without, not from within; loud voices from streets and squares of cities call on them to join the throng, but the still small voice, that speaketh in the penetralia of the spirit, is mute; and what else can be the result, but, in place of the song of lark, or linnet, or nightingale, at the best a concert of mocking-birds, at the worst, an oratorio of ganders and bubbleys?

At this particular juncture or crisis, the disease would fain assume the symptoms of religious inspiration. The poetasters are all pious—all smitten with sanctity—Christian all over—and crossing and jostling on the course of time—as they think, on the high road to heaven and immortality. Never was seen before such a shameless set of hypocrites. Down on their knees they fall in booksellers' shops, and, crowned with foolscap, repeat to Blue-Stockings, prayers addressed in doggerel to the

Deity! They bandy about the Bible as if it were an album. They forget that the poorest sinner has a soul to be saved, as well as a set of verses to be damned; they look forward to the first of the month with more fear and trembling than to the last day; and beseech a critic to be merciful upon them with far more earnestness than they ever beseeched their Maker. They pray through the press—vainly striving to give some publicity to what must be private for evermore; and are seen wiping away, at tea-parties, the tears of contrition and repentance for capital crimes perpetrated but on paper, and perpetrated thereon so paltrily, that so far from being worthy of hell fire, such delinquents, it is felt, would be more suitably punished by being singed like plucked fowls with their own unsaleable sheets. They are frequently so singed; yet singeing has not the effect upon them for which singeing is designed; and like chickens in a shower, that have got the pip, they keep still gasping and shooting out their tongues, and walking on tip-toe with their tails down, till finally they go to roost in some obscure corner, and are no more seen among bipeds.

Among those, however, who have been unfortunately beguiled by the spirit of imitation and sympathy into religious poetry, one or two—who, for the present, must be nameless—have shown feeling; and would they but obey their feeling, and prefer walking on the ground with their own free feet, to attempting to fly in the air with borrowed and bound wings, they might produce something really poetical, and acquire a creditable reputation. But they are too aspiring; and have taken into their hands the sacred lyre without due preparation. He who is so familiar with his Bible, that each chapter, open it where he will, teems with household words, may draw thence the theme of many a pleasant and pathetic song. For is not all human nature, and all human life, shadowed forth in those pages? But the soul, to sing well from the Bible, must be imbued with religious feelings, as a flower is alternately with dew and sunshine. The study of THE BOOK must have begun in the simplicity of childhood, when it was felt, indeed, to be divine—and carried on through all those silent intervals in which the soul of

manhood is restored, during the din of life, to the purity and peace of its early being. The Bible must be to such a poet even as the skies—with its sun, moon, and stars—its boundless blue, with all its cloud-mysteries—its peace deeper than the grave, because of realms beyond the grave—its tumult louder than that of life, because heard all together in all the elements. He who begins the study of the Bible late in life, must, indeed, devote himself to it —night and day—and with a humble, and a contrite heart, as well as an awakened and soaring spirit, ere he can hope to feel what he understands, or to understand what he feels,—thoughts and feelings breathing in upon him, like spiritual scents and sounds, as if from a region hanging, in its mystery, between heaven and earth. Nor do we think that he will venture on the composition of poetry drawn from such a source. The very thought of doing so, were it to occur to his mind, would seem irreverent; it would convince him that he was still the slave of vanity, and pride, and the world.

They alone, therefore, to whom God has given genius as well as faith, zeal and benevolence,—will, of their own accord, fix their Pindus either on Lebanon or Calvary—and of these but few. The genius must be high—the faith sure—and human love must coalesce with divine, that the strain may have power to reach the spirits of men, immersed as they are in matter, and with all their apprehensions and conceptions blended with material imagery, and the things of this moving earth and this restless life.

So gifted and so endowed, a great or good poet, having chosen his subject well within religion, is on the sure road to immortal fame. His work, when done, must secure sympathy for ever; a sympathy not dependent on creeds, but out of which creeds spring, all of them manifestly moulded by imaginative affections of religion. Christian poetry will outlive every other; for the time will come when Christian poetry will be deeper and higher far than any that has ever yet been known among men. Indeed, the sovereign songs hitherto have been either religious or superstitious; and as "the day-spring from on high that has visited us," spreads wider and wider over the earth,

"the soul of the world, dreaming of things to come," shall assuredly see more glorified visions than have yet been submitted to her ken. That poetry has so seldom satisfied the utmost longings and aspirations of human nature, can only have been because poetry has so seldom dealt in its power with the only mysteries worth knowing—the greater mysteries of religion, into which the soul of a Christian is initiated only through faith, an angel sent from heaven to spirits struggling by supplications and sacrifices to escape from sin and death.

THE BIRTH-DAY.*

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1837.)

It is remarked by Mr. Dyce, in the preface to his Specimen of British Poetesses (1827,) that of the selections which have been made from the chaos of our past poetry, the majority has been confined almost entirely to the writings of men ; and from the great collections of the English poets, where so many worthless compositions find a place, that the productions of women have been carefully excluded. It is true, he admits, that the grander inspirations of the Muse have not been often breathed into the softer frame. The magic tones which have added a new existence to the heart—the tremendous thoughts which have impressed a successive stamp on the fluctuation of ages, and which have almost changed the character of nations—these have not proceeded from woman ; but her sensibility, her tenderness, her grace, have not been lost nor misemployed : her genius has gradually risen with the opportunities which facilitated its ascent. To exhibit the growth and progress of the genius of our countrywomen in the department of poetry was the object of his most interesting volume ; and he expresses an honest satisfaction in the reflection that his tedious chase through the jungles of forgotten literature—for by far the greater number of female effusions lie concealed in obscure publications—must procure to his undertaking the good-will of the sex. For though, in the course of centuries, new anthologies will be found, more interesting and more exquisite, because the human mind, and, above all, the female mind, is making a rapid advance, yet his work will never be deprived of the happy distinction of being one of the

* The Birth-day, a Poem, by Caroline Bowles, now Mrs. Southey.

first that has been entirely consecrated to women. The specimens begin with Juliana Berners, and end with Letitia Landon.

We are not going to give an account of this selection, but having taken it down from Shelf Myra in a mistake for Caroline Bowles's "Birth-day,"—though 'tis bigger by half—we have passed a pleasant hour in turning over the leaves, skipping some, glancing at others, perusing a few, and sing-songing two or three by heart, forgetful how, where, or when we had committed them to memory, yet feeling they were old friends, and worthy of being welcomed the moment we saw their faces. Probably, till we come near our own times, there is but little of what one would call poetry in these specimens. The British poetesses seem a series of exceedingly sensible maids and matrons—not "with eyes in a fine frenzy rolling"—nor with hair dishevelled by the tossings of inspiration, but of calm countenances and sedate demeanour, not very distinguishable from those we love to look on by "parlour twilight" in any happy household we are in the habit of dropping in upon of an evening a familiar guest.

Poetry, or not poetry, such verses are to us often very delightful; and there are many moods of mind in which good people prefer Pomfret to Pindar.

Why should we always be desiring fancy, imagination, passion, intellect, power, in poetry, as if these were essential to it, and none were poets but those gifted with "the vision and the faculty divine?" Surely the pure expression of pure thoughts and feelings—the staple of common life—if imbued with a certain sweetness of soulfelt sound beyond that of ordinary speech—coloured, if that image please you better, with a somewhat greener light than is usual to our eyes—*is* poetry. Surely they who are moved so to commune with their own hearts, or with the hearts of them they love—since forms and hues of sentiment are thus produced that else had not been—*are* poets. There is genius in goodness; and gratitude beautifies the blessings bestowed by heaven on the pure of heart.

There is Katherine Philips—born 1631, died 1664—known as a poetess by the name of Orinda. She was the daughter of John Fowler, a London merchant, and married James Philips of the Priory, Cardigan. "Her devo-

tion to the muses," says Mr. Dyce, "did not prevent her from discharging, in the most exemplary manner, the duties of domestic life." Doubtless, it assisted her in doing so; and therefore, though she was praised more than once by Dryden, and was renowned by Cowley, a greater glory was hers; for Jeremy Taylor addressed to her his discourse on the Nature, Offices, and Measures of Friendship. Anne Killegrew, a kindred spirit, immortalized by Dryden in a memorable strain, says lovingly of her:—

> "Orinda, Albion's and her sex's grace,
> Owed not her glory to a beauteous face;
> It was her radiant soul that shone within,
> Which struck a lustre through her outward skin;
> That did her lips and cheeks with roses dye,
> Advanced her height, and sparkled in her eye;
> Nor did her sex at all obstruct her fame,
> But higher 'mong the stars it fix'd her name."

That she was very beautiful there can be no doubt; yet Orinda was celebrated against her will—for her poems, which had been dispersed among her friends in manuscript, were first printed without her knowledge or consent, and the publication caused her a fit of illness. You wish to read some of her verses? As you love us, believe them poetry.

A COUNTRY LIFE.

> "How sacred and how innocent
> A country life appears,
> How free from tumult, discontent,
> From flattery or fears!
>
> "This was the first and happiest life,
> When man enjoy'd himself;
> Till pride exchanged peace for strife,
> And happiness for pelf.
>
> "'Twas here the poets were inspired,
> Here taught the multitude;
> The brave they here with honour fired,
> And civilized the rude.
>
> "That golden age did entertain
> No passion but of love:
> The thoughts of ruling and of gain
> Did ne'er their fancies move.

"Then welcome, dearest solitude,
 My great felicity;
Though some are pleased to call thee rude,
 Thou art not so, but we.

"Them that do covet only rest,
 A cottage will suffice:
It is not brave to be possest
 Of earth, but to despise.

"Opinion is the rate of things,
 From hence our peace doth flow;
I have a better fate than kings,
 Because I think it so.

"When all the stormy world doth roar,
 How unconcern'd am I!
I cannot fear to tumble lower
 Who never could be high.

"Secure in these unenvy'd walls
 I think not on the state,
And pity no man's case that falls
 From his ambition's height.

"Silence and innocence are safe;
 A heart that's nobly true
At all these little arts can laugh
 That do the world subdue.

"While others revel it in state
 Here I'll contented sit,
And think I have as good a fate
 As wealth and pomp admit.

"Let others (nobler) seek to gain
 In knowledge happy fate,
And others busy them in vain
 To study ways of state.

"But I resolved from within,
 Confirmed from without,
In privacy intend to spin
 My future minutes out.

"And from this hermitage of mine,
 I banish all wild toys,
And nothing that is not divine
 Shall dare to tempt my joys.

"There are below but two things good,
Friendship and honesty,
And only those of all I would
Ask for felicity.

"In this retired and humble seat,
Free from both war and strife,
I am not forced to make retreat,
But choose to spend my life."

She was cut off by the small-pox—so was Anne Killigrew (1655), daughter of Sir Henry Killigrew, Master of the Savoy, and one of the prebendaries of Westminster. She was maid of honour to the Duchess of York; and her portrait, prefixed to her poetical compositions published after her death, a mezzotint from a picture by herself, is at once a proof, says Mr. Dyce, of her skill in painting. These lines are good.

THE COMPLAINT OF A LOVER.

"See'st thou yonder craggy rock,
Whose head o'erlooks the swelling main,
Where never shepherd fed his flock,
Or careful peasant sow'd his grain?

"No wholesome herb grows on the same,
Or bird of day will on it rest;
'Tis barren as the hopeless flame,
That scorches my tormented breast.

"Deep underneath a cave does lie,
The entrance hid with dismal yew,
Where Phœbus never show'd his eye,
Or cheerful day yet pierced through.

"In that dark melancholy cell
(Retreat and solace of my wo,)
Love, sad despair, and I, do dwell,
The springs from whence my grief do flow.

"Sleep, which to others ease doth prove,
Comes unto me, alas in vain;
For in my dreams I am in love,
And in them too she does disdain."

Mary Monk, daughter of Lord Molesworth, and wife of George Monk, Esq., (died 1715,) was a delightful being, and thou wilt read, perhaps not with unmoistened eyes, my Dora—these words of the dedication to the Princess of Wales, of her poems, written after her death by her father. "Most of them are the product of the leisure hours of a young gentlewoman lately deceased; who, in a remote country retirement, without omitting the daily care due to a large family, not only perfectly acquired the several languages here made use of (Latin, Italian, Spanish, and French,) but the good morals and principles contained in those books, so as to put them in practice, as well during her life and languishing sickness, as at the hour of her death; in short, she died not only like a Christian, but like a Roman lady, and so became at once the object of the grief and comfort of her relations." Of her poetry we have here two specimens—one a very noble translation from Felicaia on Providence—the other, "Verses written on her death-bed at Bath to her husband in London." They are indeed most affecting.

"Thou who dost all my worldly thoughts employ,
Thou pleasing source of all my earthly joy,
Thou tenderest husband and thou dearest friend,
To thee this first this last adieu I send!
At length the conqueror Death asserts his right,
And will for ever veil me from thy sight;
He wooes me to him with a cheerful grace,
And not one terror clouds his meagre face;
He promises a lasting rest from pain,
And shows that all life's fleeting joys are vain;
Th' eternal scenes of heaven he sets in view,
And tells me that no other joys are true.
But love, fond love, would yet resist his power,
Would fain awhile defer the parting hour;
He brings thy mourning image to my eyes,
And would obstruct my journey to the skies.
But say, thou dearest, thou unwearied friend!
Say, should'st thou grieve to see my sorrows end?
Thou know'st a painful pilgrimage I've past;
And should'st thou grieve that rest is come at last?
Rather rejoice to see me shake off life,
And die as I have lived, thy faithful wife."

Have not these "breathings," sincere and fervent, from breasts most pure, proved to your heart's content, that we were right in what we said above of poetry? These three were Christian ladies—in high life, but humble in spirit—all accomplished in this world's adornments, but intent on heaven. There is an odour, as of violets, while we press the pages to our lips.

We never had in our hands the poems of Anne, Countess of Winchelsea, printed in 1713; but we well remember reading some of them in beautiful manuscript, many years ago, at Rydal Mount. Wordsworth has immortalized her in the following sentence:—"It is remarkable that, excepting a passage or two in the Windsor Forest of Pope, and some delightful pictures in the poems of Lady Winchelsea, the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the Paradise Lost and the Seasons, does not contain a single new image of external nature." She was the daughter of Sir William Kingsmill of Sidmonton, in the county of Southampton, maid of honour to the Duchess of York, second wife of James II., and married Heneage, second son of Heneage, Earl of Winchelsea, to which title he succeeded on the death of his nephew. Mr. Dyce has given three of her compositions, all excellent—the Atheist and the Acorn—Life's Progress—and a Nocturnal Reverie. In the last are some "of the delightful pictures" alluded to by Wordsworth:

"In such a night, when every louder wind
Is to its distant cavern safe confined;
And only gentle Zephyr fans his wings,
And lonely Philomel, still waking, sings;
Or from some tree, famed for the owl's delight,
She, hollowing clear, directs the wanderer right:
In such a night, when passing clouds give place,
Or thinly veil the heaven's mysterious face;
When in some river, overhung with green,
The waving moon, and trembling leaves are seen;
When freshen'd grass now bears itself upright,
And makes cool banks to pleasing rest invite,
Whence spring the woodbine, and the bramble-rose,
And where the sleepy cowslip shelter'd grows;
Whilst now a paler hue the foxglove takes,
Yet chequers still with red the dusky brakes;

When scatter'd glow-worms, but in twilight fine,
Show trivial beauties, watch their hour to shine;
Whilst Salisb'ry stands the test of every light,
In perfect charms, and perfect virtue bright:
When odours which declined repelling day,
Through temperate air uninterrupted stray;
When darken'd groves their softest shadows wear,
And falling waters we distinctly hear;
When through the gloom more venerable shows
Some ancient fabric, awful in repose;
While sunburnt hills their swarthy looks conceal,
And swelling hay-cocks thicken up the vale;
When the loosed horse now, as his pasture leads,
Comes slowly grazing through th' adjoining meads,
Whose stealing pace, and lengthen'd shade we fear,
Till torn-up forage in his teeth we hear;
When nibbling sheep at large pursue their food,
And unmolested kine rechew the cud;
When curlews cry beneath the village walls,
And to her straggling brood the partridge calls;
Their short-lived jubilee the creatures keep,
Which but endures while tyrant man does sleep;
When a sedate content the spirit feels,
And no fierce light disturbs, whilst it reveals;
But silent musings urge the mind to seek
Something too high for syllables to speak;
Till the free soul to a composedness charm'd,
Finding the elements of rage disarm'd,
O'er all below a solemn quiet grown,
Joys in th' inferior world, and thinks it like her own:
In such a night let me abroad remain,
Till morning breaks, and all's confused again;
Our cares, our toils, our clamours are renew'd,
Of pleasures, seldom reach'd, again pursued."

We find nothing comparable to what we have now quoted in any of the effusions of the thirty poetesses—let us in courtesy so call them—who flourished from the death of Lady Winchelsea to that of Charlotte Smith. True, that Lady Mary Wortley Montague is among the number, but her brilliant genius was not poetical, and shines in another sphere. Elizabeth Rowe, when Betsy Singer, was warmly admired by Prior, among whose poems is an "answer to Mrs. Singer's pastoral on Love and Friendship." But though she says, finely we think,

"There in a melting, solemn, dying strain,
Let me all day upon my lyre complain,
And wind up all its soft harmonious strings
To noble, serious, melancholy things;"

her verse is far inferior to her prose, though that be vicious,—yet there are strains of true feeling in her Letters from the Dead to the Living. Mrs. Greville's celebrated Ode to Indifference does not disturb that mood, and Frances Sheridan's Ode to Patience tries that virtue. Yet they were both accomplished women, and both odes were thought admirable in their day. Henrietta, Lady O'Neil (born 1755—died 1793), had something of the true inspiration. Her Ode to the Poppy—too long to be extracted—is elegant and eloquent, and speaks the language of passion; and surely the following lines are natural and pathetic.

"Sweet age of blest delusion! blooming boys,
Ah! revel long in childhood's thoughtless joys,
With light and pliant spirits, that can stoop
To follow sportively the rolling hoop;
To watch the sleeping top with gay delight,
Or mark with raptured gaze the sailing kite;
Or eagerly pursuing Pleasure's call,
Can find it center'd in the bounding ball!
Alas! the day *will* come, when sports like these
Must lose their magic, and their power to please;
Too swiftly fled, the rosy hours of youth
Shall yield their fairy-charms to mournful truth;
Even now, a mother's fond prophetic fear
Sees the dark train of human ills appear;
Views various fortune for each lovely child,
Storms for the bold, and anguish for the mild;
Beholds already those expressive eyes
Beam a sad certainty of future sighs;
And dreads each suffering those dear breasts may know
In their long passage through a world of wo;
Perchance predestined every pang to prove,
That treacherous friends inflict, or faithless love;
For ah! how few have found existence sweet,
Where grief is sure, but happiness deceit!"

Mary Barber was the wife of a shopkeeper in Dublin, and Mary Leapor a cook, but neither of them had so much of

the *mens divinior* as might have been expected from their occupation. Molly makes Phillis, a country maid, reject the addresses of Sylvanus, a courtier, in favour of Corydon, on the ground of good eating. The lines are savoury.

> "Not this will lure me, for I'd have you know,
> This night to feast with Corydon I go;
> Then beef and coleworts, beans and bacon too,
> And the plum-pudding of delicious hue,
> Sweet-spiced cakes, and apple-pies good store,
> Deck the brown board—and who can wish for more?"

The verse of Ann Yearsley, the milk-woman, we never tasted, but suspect it was thin and sour; and we cannot excuse her for behaving so shamefully to Hannah More. Esther Chapone, as the world once knew, wrote Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, and Elizabeth Carter a translation of Epictetus, and they were ladies of the greatest learning and respectability; but the one's Ode to Solitude, and the other's Ode to Wisdom are really too much. Besides, they are as like as two peas. Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, the most beautiful of the beautiful, and richly endowed by nature with mental gifts, wrote lines—the Passage of the Mountain of St. Gothard—admired—at least so he said in verse—by Coleridge. And poor Mary Robinson, with all her frailties, did not deserve to be strapped in her infirmity by that cruel cobbler. "Her poems," says Mr. Dyce, "show that she possessed a good deal of fancy"—which is more than Gifford did—and "a very pleasing facility of composition." But no Englishwoman ever wrote verses worthy of being twice read, who had deviated from virtue.

Contemporaries of Charlotte Smith were Anna Seward, who possessed fine talents, and had she not been spoiled, would assuredly have excelled most of her sex in description of nature and of passion; Anne Hunter, all whose verses are written with elegance and feeling, and whose "Death Song" is a noble strain, almost worthy of Campbell himself; Anne Barbauld, an honoured name, but in poetry only an imitator of exquisite skill; Amelia Opie, whose "Father and Daughter" will endure "till pity's

self be dead," and of her songs and elegiac strains, some will outlive many compositions of the same kind now flourishing in fashionable life, whille hers would seem to be forgotten; and our own Anne Grant, whose "Highlanders," though occasionally somewhat heavy, contains many pictures entirely true to nature, and breathes of the heather. But her reputation rests on the wide and firm foundation of her prose, and she will for ever occupy a foremost place among our Scottish worthies.

But Britain had as yet produced no great poetess, and she has produced but one—Joanna Baillie. Her Plays on the Passions were hailed at once all over the land as works of genius of the highest kind, while yet the poetry of Cowper, and Crabbe, and Burns, had lost none of its freshness--they were secure in their "pride of place" during the successive reigns of Scott and Byron—and now that her magnificent plan has been completed, the whole may be regarded with undiminished admiration even by those who can comprehend the grandeur of Wordsworth. It is somewhat strange that Scotland should have given birth but to a single poetess; nothing strange that of her should have been born the greatest of all poetesses, so we grudge not to England the glory of all the rest. Those of this age, alive or dead, transcend in worth those of all her other ages. Nay, each of the PLANETARY FIVE is more lustrous than any of their constellations.

We plan and promise, but do not perform. The series on those luminaries is in our brain, but will not leave their pia mater. We know not well why it is so, but we often think together of Charlotte Smith, Mary Howitt, and Caroline Bowles. We are resolved to speak now of Caroline Bowles; nor shall the Monarch be suffered to leave the Roads without this sheet on board.

And now we have been brought "smooth-sliding without step," or, as is our wont, on the wilfulness of wings (how unlike to walking or rather wading one's way through an article like an ordinary human being with splay-feet and flat-fish soles!) to the poem more immediately before us, from which we are not without hopes of being able ere long to bring ourselves to extract not a few pregnant passages for your delectation. Our hearts—at no time

cold—warmed towards our critical brethren, as we heard them all—all of any mark or likelihood—dailies, weeklies, and monthlies—(the quarterlies are such laggards in love, that they generally arrive a year after the fair) enthusiastic in their praise of this delightful volume. People with a crick in their neck, a flea in their ear, may abuse the brotherhood; but we are deservedly popular among the tolerably happy; and no other class of men, we have been credibly informed, received so many unlooked-for legacies as the editors of periodical works. In politics it is impossible to be too truculent. He who gives quarter is a fool, and is cut down by his prisoner. No war worth looking at, much less mingling in, but that in which we fight under the bloody flag. May the first radical we meet on the field run us through the body, if we do not anticipate him; till then, we give him hearty greeting at the social board, and make no allusion to politics, except it be to laugh along with him at Lord Melbourne. But in literature we feel "that the blue sky bends over all;" and that all the nations of the earth are or ought to be at peace. All of us, after a hard-fought day in political warfare, that is, all of us who are left alive, are glad to lay down our weapons, and join in celebration of the triumph of some bold son or bright daughter of song.—How elevating a sight to see us all crowding round the object of our common admiration, and emulously binding the brows of genius with victorious wreaths! And oh! what if they be woman's brows! Then with our admiration mingles love; and we know of a surety that while we are honouring genius, we are rewarding virtue.

"The Birth-Day" is the autobiography of the childhood of genius by Caroline Bowles. And by what is the childhood of genius distinguished from the childhood of you or me, or any other good old man or woman? Read the Birth-Day, and perhaps you may know. Yet we believe that there is genius in all childhood. But the creative joy that makes it great in its simplicity dies a natural death or is killed, and there is an end of genius. In favoured spirits, neither few nor many, the joy and the might survive; they are the poets and the poetesses of whom Alexander Dyce and Christopher North delight to show specimens—

nor among them all is there a fairer spirit than Caroline Bowles. What a memory she has! for you must know that unless it be accompanied with imagination, memory is cold and lifeless. The forms it brings before us must be connected with beauty, that is, with affection or passion. All minds, even the dullest, remember the days of their youth; but all cannot bring back the indescribable brightness of that blessed season. They who would know what they once were, must not merely recollect, but they must imagine, the hills and valleys—if any such there were—in which their childhood played, the torrents, the waterfalls, the lakes, the heather, the rocks, the heaven's imperial dome, the raven floating only a little lower than the eagle in the sky. To imagine what he then heard and saw, he must imagine his own nature. He must collect from many vanished hours the power of his untamed heart, and he must, perhaps, transfuse also something of his maturer mind into these dreams of his former being, thus linking the past with the present in a continuous chain, which, though often invisible, is never broken. So is it too with the calmer affections that have grown within the shelter of a roof. We do not merely remember, we imagine our father's house, the fireside, all his features then most living, now dead and buried; the very manner of his smile, every tone of his voice. We must combine with all the passionate and plastic power of imagination the spirit of a thousand happy hours into one moment; and we must invest with all that we ever felt to be venerable such an image as alone can satisfy our filial hearts. It is thus that imagination, which first aided the growth of all our holiest and happiest affections, can preserve them to us unimpaired—

> "For she can give us back the dead,
> Even in the loveliest looks they wore."

We hope we have said sufficient to show that the subject of the Birth-Day is full of poetry; and depend upon it, should you be disposed to deny it, that, in spite of the muscularity of your bodily frame, which may be of an unusual strength, you are in your second childhood, which

is all unlike your first, on the authority of Shakspeare. Remember that Wordsworth has wisely said "the child is father of the man;" and be assured that if "your heart leaps not up" when you "behold a rainbow in the sky," you must be a monster of filial ingratitude. Be born again then; and though we do not insist on your changing your sex, be a boy worthy of dancing in a fairy ring hand-in-hand with pretty Caroline Bowles,

> "Whose hair is thick with many a curl,
> That clusters round her head."

For a few years during "the innocent brightness of the new-born day," boys and girls, God bless them! are one and the same creatures—by degrees they grow, almost unsuspectingly, each into a different kind of living soul. Mr. Elton, in his beautiful poem of Boyhood, has shown us Harry, and here Miss Bowles has shown us Carry, and now you may know, if you will, how in the education of nature

> "Uprose both living flowers beneath your eyes."

'Tis a cheerful poem the Birth-Day, and the heart of its producer often sings aloud for joy—yet 'tis a mournful poem too, and we can believe that her fair manuscript was now and then spotted with a tear. For have you not felt, when looking back on life, how its scenes and incidents, different as they may seem at the first glance of recognition, begin gradually to melt into each other, till they are indistinguishably blended in one pensive dream! In our happiest hours there may have been something in common with our most sorrowful—some shade of sadness cast over them by a passing cloud, that, on retrospect, allies them with the sombre spirit of grief. And in like manner, in our unhappiest hours, there may have been gleams of gladness that in memory seem almost to give them the character of peace. They all seem to resemble one another now that they are all past—the pleasures of memory are formed of the pains of reality—feelings indifferent, or even distressing, receive a sort of sanctification in the stillness of the time that is gone by, and all thoughts

and passions become then equalized, just like the human beings whom they adorned or degraded, when they too are at last gathered together in the bosom of the same earth.

But why will we moralize like a melancholy Jacques, when we had half promised to be merry? You must ask Caroline Bowles. For she has infected us with her vein of sadness, beginning her poem with this line—

"Dark gloomy day of winter's darkest month;"

And hugging the cold gloom to her heart,

"For memory with a serious reckoning now
Is busy with the past—with other years,
When the return of this, our natal day,
Brought gladness to warm hearts that loved me well."

And as a wayworn traveller lingers on the height pensively to survey the "pleasant plain o'erpast," and feels ere he descend as if that ridge "divided summer from winter,"

"So linger I,
Life's lonely pilgrim, on the last hill top,
With thoughtful, tender, retrospective gaze,
Ere turning down the deep descent I go
Of the cold shadowy side."

That is poetry; for the image, though old as the hills, and the human heart, and the heavens, is felt as if it were new, and there is in it an unexpected touch of beauty that endears the poetess to our affections. Such a spirit need not long be sad; and with a cheerful voice she exclaims,

"Come in your mellow'd hues, long vanish'd years!
Come in your soften'd outline, passing slow
O'er the charm'd mirror."

She looks and sees her parents—

"And one the good, the gentle, the beloved!
My mother's mother."

Sydney Smith truly tells us, in his pathetic and late lament for the doomed old cathedral services and ministrations, that this is an age of *persiflage*.

"None so mean as do them reverence"

to sanctities long regarded with awe at once sweet and solemn; and in proof thereof, we may cite, "familiar as household words," the interrogatory often put to one on the streets by strange men, "How's your mother?" The notion of any human being caring seriously for his mother is held to be the utmost extravagance the mind of man is capable of conceiving; and in that question is implied an accusation of folly, the absurd guilt of which, if seemingly confessed by a stare, rends their convulsed sides with unextinguishable laughter. "How's your grandmother?" is a flight above *persiflage*. How's your great-grandmother is a query not yet put by man to his kind.

Notwithstanding all this, we sympathize with the poetess as she says,

> "Even now methinks that placid smile I see,
> That kindly beamed on all, but chief on me,
> Her age's darling! not of hers alone;
> One yet surviving in a green old age,
> *Her mother* lived; and when I saw the light,
> Rejoicing hail'd her daughter's daughter's child."

But what shall we say of a poetess who, in this age of *persiflage*, in blank verse celebrates—her nurse? That it is childish. Then what an old fool was Homer! and what a simpleton Ulysses! That old dog, and that old nurse alone recognised the king. 'Tis the most affecting drivel in all the Odyssey. Then let Caroline Bowles put her dog and her nurse into a poem, and laugh till your eyes water. The nurse is alive at this day; and though it may be a peevish old body, doited and dozey, and better in the Poor's House, yet there is *something* in these lines:

> "Nor from that kindred, patriarchal group
> Be thou excluded, long tried, humble friend!
> Old faithful servant! Sole survivor now
> Of those beloved, for whom thine aged hands
> The last sad service tremblingly perform'd
> That closed their eyes, and for the long, long sleep
> Array'd them in the vestments of the grave.
> Yes—THOU survivest still to tend and watch
> Me, the sad orphan of thy master's house!
> My cradle hast thou rock'd with patient love
> (Love all-enduring, all-indulgent) borne

My childhood's wayward fancies, that from thee
Never rebuke or frown encounter'd cold.
* * * * * * *

Come nearer.—Let me rest my cheek even now
On thy dear shoulder, printed with a mark
Indelible, of suffering borne for me:
Fruit of contagious contact long endured,
When on the pillow lay my infant head
For days and nights, a helpless dying weight,
So thought by all; as almost all but thee
Shrank from the little victim of a scourge
Yet uncontroll'd by Jenner's heaven-taught hand.
And with my growth has grown the debt of love;
For many a day beside my restless bed,
In later years, thy station hast thou kept,
Watching my slumbers; or with fondest wiles
Soothing the fretful, fev'rish hour of pain:
And when at last, with languid frame I rose,
Feeble as infancy, what hand like thine,
With such a skilful gentleness, perform'd
The handmaid's office?—tenderly, as when
A helpless babe, thou oft had'st robed me thus.
Oh! the vast debt.—Yet to my grateful heart
Not burdensome, not irksome to repay:
For small requital dost thou claim, dear nurse!
Only to know thy fondly lavish'd cares
Have sometimes power to cheer and comfort me:
Then in thy face reflected, beams the light,
The unwonted gladness, that irradiates mine.
Long may'st thou sit as now, invited oft,
Beside my winter fire, with busy hands
And polished needles, knitting the warm wool;
Or resting with meek reverence from thy work,
When from *that Book*, that blessed Book! I read
The words of truth and life,—thy hope and mine."

Of things that were long before her "Birth-Day" the poetess, though she has heard them with much variety of phrase, many a time and oft, never wearies hearing from "Time's faithful chronicler." And we love to gather from hints of the dear old body's prolixities—though we happened to know it before—that Caroline Bowles is of an "old family"—to hear tell of

"That ancient manor of my Norman race
In all its feudal greatness;"

though now alas! (and yet no great pity), the ancient gateway is an isolated arch—

> "The noble trees,
> A triple avenue, its proud approach,
> Gone as they ne'er had been; the dove-cote tower
> A desecrated ruin; the old house—
> Dear nurse! full fain am I to weep with thee
> The faded glories of the 'good old time.'"

And did we say "no great pity?" We did; nor will the sweet singer be angry with us; for there are other changes in the course of nature that, to think of even for a moment, affect with a profounder sadness than even the dilapidations of holiest places or most endeared; and to them we turn at her bidding—and to her first dim apprehension—in the disappearance of the beloved—of death.

> "The kindred band is broken. One goes hence,
> The very aged. Follows soon, too soon,
> Another most endear'd, the next in age.
> Then fell from childhood's eyes its earliest tears.
> Unconscious half,
> Incomprehensive of the awful truth;
> But flowing faster when I look'd around
> And saw that others wept; and faster still,
> When clinging round my nurse's neck, with face
> Half buried there, to hide the bursting grief,
> I heard her tell how in the churchyard cold,
> In the dark pit, the form I loved was laid.
> Bitter exceedingly the passionate grief
> That wrings to agony the infant heart:
> The *first* sharp sorrow:—Ay—the breaking up
> Of that deep fountain never to be seal'd,
> Till we with time close up the great account.
> But that first outbreak, by its own excess
> Exhausted soon; exhausting the young powers:
> The quiv'ring lip relaxes into smiles,
> As soothing slumber, softly stealing on;
> Less and less frequent comes the swelling sob,
> Till like a summer breeze it dies away;
> While on the silken eyelash, and the cheek
> Flush'd into crimson, hang the large round drops—
> Well I remember, from that storm of grief
> Diverted soon, with what sensations new
> Of female vanity—(inherent sin!)

I saw myself array'd in mourning frock,
And long crape sash——Oh! many a riper grief
Forgets itself as soon, before a glass
Reflecting the becomingness of weeds."

To learn to read seems the easiest of all affairs after having learned to speak. We can conceive how a creature under two years of age picks up the name of an edible or an animal, and of a few other things, such as a stool or a table, or a bed, and so forth; but we cannot conceive how it masters the whole English language. We have known children about that time of life not merely voluble or fluent with such small vocabulary, but with a command of words that might well be called eloquence. We have been assured on good authority, that we ourselves preached an extemporary sermon the first Sunday of our fourth year, very superior to our most successful efforts in that line, even with notes, in these latter times. We knew the alphabet from the beginning—one day with Little Primer, which we remember thinking very tedious, sufficed to give us the complete mastery over him—Big Primer we cut—Goody-Two-Shoes, though most interesting as a tale, seemed on the Tuesday too simple in its style to satisfy such a proficient—and we went *per saltum* to Hume's History of England. Caroline Bowles conquered all difficulties with almost equal facility—and pardon our levity if it has been at all annoying—for sake of the following burst of feeling from the pure well-head of a religious heart.

"And soon attain'd, and sweet the fruit I reap'd.
Oh! never ending, ever new delight!
Stream swelling still to meet the eager lip!
Receiving as it flows fresh gushing rills
From hidden sources, purer, more profound.
Parents! dear parents! if the latent powers
Call'd into action by your early cares
(God's blessing on them!) had attain'd no more
Than that acquaintance with His written will,
Your first most pious purpose to instil,
How could I e'er acquit me of a debt
Might bankrupt gratitude? If scant my stores
Of human learning;—to my mother-tongues
(A twofold heritage) well nigh confined

My skill in languages;—if adverse Fate—
(Heathenish phrase!)—if *Providence* has fix'd
Barriers impassable 'cross many a path
Anticipation with her hope-wing'd feet,
Youthfully buoyant, all undoubting trod;—
If in the mind's infirmity, erewhile,
Thoughts that are almost murmurs whisper low
Stinging comparisons, suggestions sad,
Of what I *am*, and what I *might have* been—
This earth, so wide and glorious! I fast bound
(A human lichen!) to one narrow spot—
A sickly, worthless weed! Such brave bright spirits,
Starring this nether sphere, and I—lone wretch!
Cut off from oral intercourse with all—
'The day far spent,' and oh! how little known;—
The night at hand—alas! and nothing done;—
And neither 'word, nor knowledge, nor device,
Nor wisdom, in the grave whereto I go.'
* * * *
When thoughts like these arise; permitted tests
Proving my frailty—and thy mercy, Lord!
Let but thy ministering angel draw mine eyes
To yonder *Book;* and lo! this troublous world
Fades from before me like a morning mist;
And in a spirit, *not* mine own, I cry,
'Perish all knowledge, but what leads to thee!'"

Let these lines *tell*. But wee Carry is again before us; and she lets us into the secret of the intensity of her desire to be able to read. She had heard Jane—you need not be told who Jane was—when she was good-natured, tell fine stories of the lady who walked on the sea of glass to the ivory hill—and all about those children that met the Fairy at the well, and the toads, and frogs, and diamonds—and about the talking-bird and dancing water, and the singing bough, and Princess Fairstar. Jane told the stories not so very much amiss; but the rapt listener longed to read them for herself in the original print—and she did so, as if she had had a hundred eyes.

Strange infatuation! that a person of acknowledged good sense, as well as genius, like Caroline Bowles, should even yet, at her mature age, thus more than countenance, nay, recommend such absurd tales—fairy tales—as fit reading for children in an enlightened age like this, the age of

reason. Like other bubbles, all burst! And are not all bubbles—of earth, or of water—born but to burst? The child who does not follow, in an ecstasy of admiration, each fit intensified by each glory, the slow ascending series of illumined wonders, painted planet pursuing painted planet, nor yet the extinction of the phenomena seeming to destroy, but rather to deepen the beautiful mystery of the day-light stars—tiny balloons in which airy elves are voyaging—such child, stone-dead to the magic of pipe and saucer—insensible as a stock to the miracles of soap-suds—deserves—does he not—to have a plaster clapped on his mouth—to be burked—huddled into a tea-chest—and sold to Nox and Erebus?

Imagination shrivels up like a bit of Indian rubber, in the air of useful knowledge. No toleration now for any thing that will not stand the test of truth. Nowhere Wisdom with children round her knees; every where Wiseacre with mannikins. Nature is incensed, and sorrows to be denied the education of her own offspring; and life is without her sweetest season, the spring. The imaginative literature of the nursery has been obliterated by an irruption more barbarous than of Goths and Huns and Vandals—for hordes of schoolmasters are abroad, and the realms of fancy overrun are desolate.

Pray, are little girls yet allowed to have dolls? 'Tis hardly correct. The spirit of the age is impatient of such precocity of the maternal affection, and regards with favour only the cultivation of intellect. But the spirit of the age ought to reflect on this great truth, that to children dolls are not children, but grown-up ladies. They have children of their own; and though home-loving, are often apparelled for palaces, and with lace-veils and plumes of feathers prepare to pay visits to kings and queens. Let us out with it—nor blush at the confession—our first love was a doll. But our devoted life made no impression on her wooden heart, and we "flung her over the bridge" in passionate despair. Released from that bondage, we not merely "kept a harem in our hearts," but under our bed, while the chamber-maid fondly imagined they were nine-pins—and one morning, out of pure malice, swept them all away in her bakey with other refuse. While yet we were mourning their loss, lo!

"Like a ladye from a far countrée,"

and laid there by hands unseen on the counterpane of our crib,

"A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles!"

What flesh so exquisitely beautiful as wax! There is a delicacy in that material, to the inexperienced imagination, lovelier far than of breathing life. Her face wore one unchanging smile, so still that sometimes we almost feared she might be dead. One evening, while we were far off in the woods, she was spirited away, and we never beheld her again but in our sleep. We think we see her now! But hear Miss Bowles.

"Lo! what a train like Bluebeard's wives appear,
So many headless! half dismember'd some,
With batter'd faces—eyeless—noseless—grim
With crack'd enamel, and unsightly scars—
Some with bald pates, or hempen wigs unfrizzed,
And ghastly stumps, like Greenwich pensioners;
Others mere Torsos—arms, legs, heads, all gone!
But precious all. And chief that veteran doll,
She, from whose venerable face is worn
All prominence of feature: shining brown
(Like chestnut from its prickly coating freed)
With equal polish as the wigless skull—
Well I remember, with what bribery won
Of a fair rival—one of waxen mould
(Long coveted possession!) I was brought
The mutilated fav'rite to resign,
The blue-eyed fair one came—perfection's self!
With eager joy I clasp'd her waxen charms;
But then the stipulated sacrifice!
'And must we part?' my piteous looks express'd—
(Mute eloquence!) 'And *must* we part, dear Stump!'
'Oh! might I keep ye both!'—and both I kept."

Caroline had a genius for drawing in her childhood (and she is an *artist* now) and it was her delight to clip out in paper semblances of all the animals that issued from

Noah's ark. That pastime is common to most children; but bless us, what a difference in their handiwork! She studied the prints in Goldsmith—traditionary likenesses of lions and lynxes—staring likenesses not to be mistaken—incorrigible tigers, though punished with more than forty stripes, and leopards sorry to change their spots. And was Miss remiss at her needle? Sew—sew, except when fashioning

"Gay garments for the family of dolls,"

and then the small poetess was happy,

"No matter how they fitted, they were made."

And now, ye statesmen! home and foreign secretaries, lord chancellors, and prime ministers, fling your gewgaws aside, and hear tell of a SILVER THIMBLE.

"Precious gift bestow'd
By a kind aunt; one ever kind and good,
Mine early benefactress! since approved
By time and trial mine unchanging friend;
Yet most endear'd by the affecting bond
Of mutual sorrows, mutual sympathies."

'Tis a beautiful flight of fancy, and nothing can well be more pathetic than the return to reality at the close.

"Yet was that implement (the first possess'd,)
Proudly possess'd indeed, but seldom worn.
Easier to me, and pleasanter, to poke,
As one should poke a skewer, the needle through
With thumb and finger, than in silver thrall
T' imprison the small tip, too tiny still
For smallest thimble ever made to fit.
Dear aunt! you should have sought in wizard lore
The name of some artificer, empower'd
By royal patent of the Elfin Court
To make Mab's thimble—if the sprightly queen
Ever indeed vouchsafes in regal sport,
With needle, from the eyelash of a fly,
Pluck'd sharp and shining, and fine cobweb-thread,
T' embroider her light scarf of gossamer.
Not oft I doubt; she better loves to rove

Where trembling harebells on the green hill side
Wave in their azure beauty; or to slide
On a slant sunbeam down the fragrant tube
Of honeysuckle or sweet columbine,
And sip luxurious the ambrosial feast
Stored there for nature's alchemist, the bee,
Then satiate, and at rest, to sleep secure,
Even in that perfumed chamber, till the sun
Has plough'd with flaming wheels the Atlantic wave,
And the dark beetle, her mail'd sentinel,
Winds her shrill signal to invite her forth.
Not on her waking hour such pomp attends,
As when on Ohio's banks magnolias tall
Embalm the dews of night, and living sparks
Glance through the leaves, and star the deep serene.
But even here, in our romantic isle,
The pearl of ocean, girdled with its foam!
Land of the rainbow! even here she loves
The dewy freshness of the silent hour,
Whose gentle waftings have their incense too,
To scatter in her paths; the faint perfume
Of dog-rose pale, or aromatic breath
Of purple wild thyme, clouding the green sward;
And though in air no sparkling myriads dart
Their glancing fires to light the fairy queen,
Earth hath her stars, a living emerald each!
And by the lustre of those dewy gems
She trips it deftly with her merry train
In mossy dells, around the time-scarr'd trunk
Of giant oak; or 'neath the witch elm's shade,
Beside some deep dark pool, where one bright star
Trembles reflected; or in velvet meads,
Where, though the limpid blade of tender grass
Bends not beneath the 'many-twinkling' feet,
Dark circles on the paler sward defined
Reveal at morning where the dance has been;
Oft thickly studded with a mushroom belt,
The fungus growth of one short summer's night,
The ring so geometrically drawn,
As if the gnomes with scientific skill
(Forming the fairy sports) had mimicked there
The circling rampart of a Celtic camp,
Or with more apt similitude design'd
The Druid's holy ring of pale gray stones.
There oft the milkmaid, when with shining pail
She seeks the glistening pasture, finds dispersed
The relics of the banquet; leaves and flowers,

From golden kingcups cropp'd, and poplars white,
The cups and trenchers of the midnight feast.
Ah, lucky lass! when stirring with the lark,
On dairy charge intent, she thither hies
And finds her task forestalled—the cool tiled floor
Flooded, fresh sluiced; stool, shelf, and slab bright rubb'd;
Scalded and sweet the glazy milk-pans all;
And scower'd to silver sheen the ready pail;
And brighter still, within its circle left,
The glittering sixpence—industry's reward.

Me more delighted, in the fairy's haunts
To sport, like them an airy gleesome sprite,
Than, prisoner of an hour—e'en that too long,
The needle's task monotonous to ply.
But I have lived to prize the humble art,
To number with the happiest of my life
Those quiet evenings, when with busy hands
I plied the needle, listening as I wrought
(By that mechanical employ, more fix'd
Attention apt to rove) to that dear voice
Which from some fav'rite author read aloud.
The voice is silent, and the task laid by—
Distasteful now, when silence, with a tongue
More audibly intelligent than speech,
For ever whispers round me, 'She is gone.' "

Miss Bowles then alludes to her girlish love of poetry, and her earliest attempts at verse; and in one of several touching passages, indited in the same spirit, with unaffected humility, adds—

" Nature in me hath still her worshipper,
And in my soul her mighty spirit still
Awakes sweet music, tones, and symphonies,
Struck by the master-hand from every chord.
But prodigal of feeling, she withholds
The glorious power to pour its fulness out;
And in mid-song I falter, faint at heart,
With consciousness that every feeble note
But yields to the awakening harmony
A weak response—a trembling echo still."

" We would not hear thy enemy say so;" but where lives enemy of one like thee! Not under the cope of heaven. All who read thy writings must be thy friends,

and all lovers of nature must feel, as they peruse them, that few have painted its beauties with a more delicate hand of truth. To be creative in after life of the delights that feed and sustain it, under all changes of place and time, the love of nature must be inspired into the heart by communion with her in life's blissful morn. Not otherwise can that communion be so intimate and familiar as to "involuntary move harmonious numbers;" for the heart and the imagination derive their power from impressions received farther back than memory can reach, and the sources of inspiration lie hidden among the golden hills of the Orient.

Who was the favourite poet of her childhood? Thomson. How finely is his genius characterized!

> "And was it chance, or thy prevailing taste,
> Beloved instructress! that selected first
> (Part of my daily task) a portion short,
> Cull'd from thy 'Seasons,' Thomson?—Happy choice,
> Howe'er directed, happy choice for me;
> For as I read, new thoughts, new images
> Thrill'd through my heart, with undefined delight,
> Awakening so th' incipient elements
> Of tastes and sympathies, that with my life
> Have grown and strengthened; often on its course,
> Yea—on its darkest moments, shedding soft
> That rich warm glow they only can impart;
> A sensibility to nature's charms
> That seems its living spirit to infuse
> (A breathing soul) in things inanimate;
> To hold communion with the stirring air,
> The breath of flowers, the ever shifting clouds,
> The rustling leaves, the music of the stream,
> To people solitude with airy shapes,
> And the dark hour, when night and silence reigns,
> With immaterial forms of other worlds:
> But best and noblest privilege! to feel
> Pervading nature's all-harmonious whole,
> The great Creator's presence, in his works."

The Birth-Day is truly a religious poem; but though the spirit of religion pervades it, how unobtrusive its expression! Piety fears to make free with holiest words, and utter them but in the fulness of heart. Religious ser-

vices are nowhere formally described; but all their due observances and performances are reverently intimated; and we are made to know, in almost all the most serious or solemn pages—and sometimes, too, in those of lighter mood—

> "That piety is sweet to infant minds."

Yet joy is graciously provided to them from many sources; in innocence they do the will of God; they are not forgetful of Him, though conscious but of the happiness in which they swim along; and their prayers are acceptable at His throne, though the moment before, or the moment after they have been uttered, the kneeling child had been all gleeful, or flies off with her playmates, thoughtless as lambs frisking in the morning sun.

Caroline had her own flower-garden.

> "Flowers of all hues, and without thorn the rose."

Here she is at work.

> "Full oft I pause with reminiscent eye
> Upon the little spot of border-ground
> Once called '*my* garden.' Proud accession that
> To territorial right and power supreme!
> To *right possessive*, the exclusive *mine*
> So soon asserted, e'en by infant tongue.
> Methinks the thick-sown parallels I see
> Of thriving mustard, herb of rapid growth!
> The only one whose magical increase
> Keeps pace with young impatience, that expects
> Ripe pulse to-morrow from seed sown to-day.
> To-morrow and to-morrow passes on,
> And still no vestige of th' incipient plant;
> No longer to be borne, the third day's sun
> Beholds the little fingers delving deep
> T' unearth the buried seed; and up it comes
> Just swelling into vegetable life;
> Of which assured, into the mould again
> 'Tis stuck, *a little nearer to the top.*
> Such was the process horticultural
> I boldly practised in my new domain:
> As little chance of rest, as little chance
> To live and thrive had slip or cutting there;
> Which failing in three days to sprout amain,

Was twitched impatient up, with curious eye
Examined; and if fibrous threads appeared,
With renovated hope replanted soon.

"But thriving plants *were* there, though not of price.
No puny children of a foreign soil,
But hardy natives of our own dear earth,
From many a field and bank, and streamlet side
Transplanted careful, with the adhering mould.
The primrose, with her large indented leaves
And many blossoms pale, expanded there;
With wild anemone, and hyacinth,
And languid cowslip, lady of the mead,
And violets mingled hues of every sort,
Blue, white, and purple. The more fragrant white
Ev'n from that very root, in many a patch
Extended wide, still scents the garden round.
Maternal love received the childish gift,
A welcome offering, and the lowly flower
(A rustic stranger) bloom'd with cultured sweets;
And still it shares their bed, encroaching oft
(So ignorance presumes) on worthier claims.
She spared it, in the tenderness of love,
Her child's first gift; and I, for her dear sake,
Who prized the pale intruder, spare it now."

Loved occupations! Blameless calm delights! she fervently exclaims—I taste ye with as keen enjoyment still as in my days of childhood! She confesses to have laid aside even this crescent poem on her birth-day, and stolen forth on a moonless night to search by lantern light among the leaves for the spoilers that issue from the worm-holes to prey upon the dewy buds of the peeping larkspur, and a charming passage closes with some lines that will gladden the heart of the amiable author of the "Moral of Flowers," not more beautiful than many of her own. She has been speaking of a thaw, and says,—

"Yielding and moist becomes the darkning mould,
And from that snow-heaped border melts away
The drifted wreath; it shrinks and disappears.
And lo! as by enchantment, in its place
A rainbow streaks the ground—a flowery prism
Of crocus tribes innumerous to the sun,
Expanding with their gold and purple stars."

Such a rainbow we heard Mary Howitt, with her "soft low voice, an excellent thing in woman," describe one evening in Edinburgh—till we saw it on that plain, by the side of the clear-flowing Trent, near the pleasant town of Nottingham. You all know what we meant above, when saying a few words about the religion in this poem, by the conclusion of the first part. Miss Bowles touches on the Christian moral to be found in such a sight, and having spoken of the uses of adversity, "like that pale snow-wreath," imparting a fertilizing warmth that penetrates the surface of obdurate worldliness, says—

"Then from the barren waste, no longer such,
Ripening a thousand amaranthine flowers
Whose fragrance swells to heaven. Desires chastised,
Enlarged affections, tender charities,
Long suffering mercy, and the snow-drop buds
Of heavenly meekness—These, and thousands more
As beautiful, as kindly, are called forth,
Adversity! beneath thy fostering shade."

On a grass plat by the house-door there stood an old willow, on a transverse bough of which Mr. Bowles had hung a swing for his Carry—not unlike, we daresay, that with its nicely balanced seat (a chair with arms) got up by ourselves a few summers ago, chiefly for Mrs. Gentle—though we occasionally take a turn or two, to tranquilize our mind at a crisis in public affairs. Once, and only once, we had the hardihood to try how it carried double; but the consequences of that adventure had nearly been fatal; for the chair capsized, and its precious cargo found themselves on the sward, Mrs. Gentle in a swoon. The scene was by moonlight, and nothing in the shape of assistance was at hand. Our belief is that we fell asleep; and that we and the morning all awoke together, to the sound of a falling fountain, and a treeful of birds. But to return from that digression, there Caroline used

"to sway
With pendulous slow motion, dying off
To scarce perceptible, until at last
Settling to perfect stillness;"

building all the while many a fair castle in cloud-land, and

conjuring up gorgeous palaces by the sides of all the famous rivers in the regions of old romance.

My dear girl, why do you shudder so at the very idea of a toad, and writhe your features into an expression of disgust and horror? Nobody is asking you to put it into your bosom—don't faint, for if you do we must kiss you back into animation—or under your pillow. But let it crawl across the gravel path, from shade to shade, unreviled, for after all it is not ugly—and the lustre of its eyes, as you may have heard, is proverbial. Disgust is a habit. But 'tis most unlike you, sweet, to cherish any such feeling towards any one of God's creatures. No merit in loving birds and butterflies, for they are manifestly beautiful, and in sympathizing with all the displays of their joy, you are pleasurably moved by signs or symbols of your own happy prime. But reptiles, slimy creatures, palmer-worms, and caterpillars—let them find favour in your sight, and we will lay our hand on your head with a prouder blessing. Remember that ladies have been changed into toads; Caroline Bowles, when a mere child, bethought her of that metamorphosis, and entitled her poor toad "Princess Hemjunah."

"Fowls of the air, and beasts, and creeping things,
Ay, reptiles—slimy creatures—all that breathed
The breath of life, found favour in my sight;
And strange disgust I've seen (*I* thought it strange)
Wrinkle their features who beheld me touch,
Handle, caress the creatures they abhorr'd;
Enchase my finger with the palmer-worm
Or caterpillar's green, cold, clammy ring,
Or touch the rough back of the spotted toad.
One of that species, for long after years,
Ev'n till of late, became my pensioner—
A monstrous creature!—It was wont to sit
Among the roots of an old scraggy shrub,
A huge Gum-Cystus: All the summer long
'Princes Hemjunah' (titled so by me
In honour of that royal spell-bound fair
So long compell'd in reptile state to crawl),
'Princess Hemjunah' there from morn to eve
Made her pavilion of the spicy shrub;
And they who look'd beneath it, scarce discern'd
That living clod from the surrounding mould

But by the lustre of two living gems
That from the reptile's forehead upward beam'd
Intelligent, with ever-wakeful gaze.
There daily on some fresh green leaf I spread
A luscious banquet for that uncouth guest—
Milk, cream, and sugar,—to the creature's taste
Right welcome offering, unrejected still.

"When Autumn wind's gan strew the crisped leaves
Round that old Cystus, to some lonelier haunt,
Some dark retreat the hermit reptile crawl'd;
Belike some grotto, 'neath the hollow roots
Of ancient laurel or thick juniper,
Whose everlasting foliage darkly gleam'd
Through the bare branches of deciduous trees.
There self-immured, the livelong winter through,
Brooded unseen the solitary thing:
E'en when young Spring with violet-printed steps
Brush'd the white hoar-frost from her morning path,
The creature stirr'd not from its secret cell:
But on some balmy morn of rip'ning June,
Some morn of perfect summer, waken'd up
With choirs of music pour'd from every bush,
Dews dropping incense from th' unfolding leaves
Of half-blown roses, and the gentle South
Exhaling, blending, and diffusing sweets—
Then was I sure on some such morn to find
My princess crouch'd in her accustom'd form
Beneath the Cystus.

So for many years
—Ay—as I said, till late, she came and went,
And came again when summer suns return'd—
All knew and spared the creature for my sake,
Not without comment on the strange caprice
Protecting such deform'd detested thing.
But in a luckless hour—an autumn morn,
About the time when my poor toad withdrew
(Annually punctual) to her winter house,
The axe and pruning-knife were set at work—
—(Ah! uncle Philip! with unsparing zeal
You urged them on) to lop the straggling boughs
Whose rank luxuriance from the parent stem
Drain'd for their useless growth too large supply;
Branch after branch condemn'd fell thickly round,
Till, moderate reform intended first,
(Nice task to fix the boundary!) edged on,
Encroaching still to radical; and soon

Uncheck'd the devastating fury raged,
And shoots, and boughs, and limbs bestrew'd the ground,
And all denuded and exposed—sad sight!
The mangled trees held out their ghastly stumps.

"Spring reappear'd, and trees and shrubs put forth
Their budding leaves, and e'en those mangled trunks
(Though later) felt the vegetable life
Mount in their swelling sap, and all around
The recently dismember'd parts, peep'd out—
Pink tender shoots disparting into green,
And bursting forth at last, with rapid growth,
In full redundance—healthful, vig'rous, thick;
And June return'd with all her breathing sweets,
Her op'ning roses and soft southern gales;
And music pour'd from ev'ry bending spray;
E'en the old mangled Cystus bloom'd once more,
But my poor princess never came again."

No sentimentalism about the poetry of Caroline Bowles. She had her wild-tame hare, and her rabbits, and dormice, and squirrel, and cats and kittens, and dogs of many a race, from ancient Di to Black Mungo, and her own gentle playfellow Chloe, and her gallant Juba, and her pet sheep called Willy, a palfrey of mettled blood, not to mention jackdaws, magpies, bullfinches, turtle-doves, and owls, and many other manner of birds. But their keep cost but little; some of them were useful, and all of them were happy; and she herself, the happiest of them all, did not forget—the poor. For she was one of the

"Sound healthy children of the God of heaven;"

and the young hands that are duly held up in prayer are always "open as day to melting charity;" and there is not a lovelier sight beneath the skies than a meek-eyed maiden in hovel or by wayside silently giving alms.

Here is a picture that almost equals Cowper's Peasant's Nest.

"Bid them turn
(Those sentimental chemics, who extract
The essence of imaginary griefs
From overwrought refinement), bid them turn

To some poor cottage—not a bower of sweets
Where woodbines cluster o'er the neat warm thatch,
And mad Marias sing fantastic ditties,
But to some wretched hut, whose crazy walls,
Crumbling with age and dripping damps, scarce prop
The rotten roof, all verdant with decay;
Unlatch the door, those starting planks that ill
Keep out the wind and rain, and bid them look
At the *home-comforts* of the scene within.
There on the hearth a few fresh-gathered sticks,
Or smouldering sods, diffuse a feeble warmth,
Fann'd by that kneeling woman's lab'ring breath
Into a transient flame, o'erhanging which
Cowers close, with outspread palms, a haggard form,
But yesterday raised up from the sick-bed
Of wasting fever, yet to-night return'd
From the resumption of his daily toil.
'Too hastily resumed—imprudent man!'
Ay, but his famish'd infants cried for bread;
So he went forth and strove, till nature fail'd,
And the faint dews of weakness gather'd thick
In the dark hollows of his sallow cheek,
And round his white-parched lips. Then home he crawl'd
To the cold comforts of that cheerless hearth,
And of a meal whose dainties are set out
Invitingly—a cup of coarse black tea,
With milk unmingled, and a crust of bread.
No infant voices welcome his return
With joyous clamour, but the piteous wail,
'Father! I'm hungry—Father! give me bread!'
Salutes him from the little-huddled group
Beside that smoky flame, where one poor babe,
Shaking with ague-chills, creeps shuddering in
Between its mother's knees—that most forlorn,
Most wretched mother, with sad lullaby
Hushing the sickly infant at her breast,
Whose scanty nourishment yet drains her life."

You must not think that the whole poem is about the author's childhood. How could it? Herself of the present speaks of her own thoughts and feelings, even when in contrast, still harmonious with those of herself of the past; for so it ever is with a well-ordered life, whose growth has been unconstrained, and left free to the spontaneity of nature. Caroline Bowles, as every poetess

must be, is a devout conservative. But mark us well—of what? Of all that, for its own dear sake, she has once loved, and taken to her heart.

> "Old friend! old stone! old way-mark! art thou gone?
> I could have better spared a better thing
> Than sight of thy familiar shapeless form,
> Defaced and weather-stain'd."

And again in sportive sadness—

> "Beautiful elms! your spreading branches fell,
> Because, forsooth! across the king's highway,
> Conspiring with the free-born, charter'd air,
> Your verdant branches treasonably waved,
> And swung perchance the pendant dew-drop off
> On roof of royal mail, or on the eyes
> Of sleepy coachman, waken'd so full well
> For safety of his snoring 'four insides,'
> Unconscious innocents!"

Worse and worse; the oak that for time immemorial had stood intercepting no sunbeam, and flinging no shadow, has fallen at the decree of the "Great Road Dragon." Yet there had been

> "Only left of thee
> The huge old trunk, still verdant in decay
> With ivy garlands, and a tender growth
> (Like second childhood) of thine own young shoots;
> And there, like giant guardian of the pass,
> Thou stand'st, majestic ruin! thy huge roots
> (Whose every fretted niche and mossy cave
> Harbour'd a primrose) grappling the steep bank,
> A wayside rampart. Lo! they've rent away
> The living bulwark now, a ghastly breach,
> A crumbling hollow left to mark its site," &c.

And more beautiful still—

> "And the old thorns are gone—the thorns I loved,
> For that in childhood I could reach and pluck
> Their first sweet blossoms. They were low like me,
> Young, lowly bushes, I a little child,
> And we grew up together. They are gone;
> And the great elder by the mossy pales—

How sweet the blackbird sang in that old tree!
Sweeter, methinks, than now, from statelier shades—
They've fell'd that too—the goodly harmless thing!
That with its fragrant clusters overhung
Our garden hedge, and furnish'd its rich store
Of juicy berries for the Christmas wine
Spicy and hot, and its round hollow stems
(The pith extracted) for quaint arrow heads,
Such as my father in our archery games
Taught me to fashion. That they've ta'en away,
And so some relic daily disappears,
Something I've loved and prized; and now the last—
Almost the last—the poor old milestone falls,
And in its place this smooth, white, perk'd up thing,
With its great staring figures."

No change would our bitter-sweet Conservative suffer; and had her will been the rule of action, strange results, she confesses,

"Would shock the rational community."

No farmer should clip one straggling hedge—on pain of transportation for life; no road-surveyor change one rugged stone, nor pare one craggy bank, nor lop one wayside tree, unless bent to be hanged.

"I'd have the road
One bowery arch, what matter it so low
No mail might pass beneath? For aught I care
The post might come on foot—or not at all.
In short, in short, it's quite as well, perhaps,
I can but rail, not rule. Splenetic wrath
Will not tack on again dissever'd boughs,
Nor set up the old stones; so let me breathe
The fulness of a vexed spirit out
In impotent murmurs."

Caroline was an only child. There is little or nothing said about any companions of her own age—and yet as she seems never to have felt the want of them, why should we? though sometimes we have been expecting to see some elf like herself come gliding into the poem. A loving heart is never at a loss for objects of its love. The

natural affections attach themselves to the thoughts or ideas of all life's holiest relations; and doubtless the glad girl had then brothers and sisters in her dreams. Perhaps had the house been full of them in flesh and blood, she had never been a poetess. Solitary but never sad, and alone, except with mute creatures, in her very pastimes, yet never out of sight of parental eyes, or reach of parental hands, her thoughtful nature became more and more thoughtful in her happiness flowing ever from and back upon herself, and thus she learnt to think on her own heart, and to hark to the small still voice that never deceives,

"While life is calm and innocent."

Merry as she is, and frolicsome

"As a young fawn at play,"

there is a repose over the poem which for the most part breathes the spirit of still life. Speaking of her father, she says,

"Soon came the days,
When *his* companion, his—his only one,
My father's I became. Proud, happy child,
Untiring now, in many a lengthen'd walk,
Yet resting oft (his arm encircling me)
On the old mile-stone, in our homeward way."

A thought crosses us here that her mother may have died. Yet her name is mentioned in a subsequent passage; but this leaves us in uncertainty, for the order of time is not always preserved, and the transitions obey the bidding of some new-risen thought. The gloom hanging over the beginning of the following passage looks like that of death:—

"My father loved the patient angler's art;
And many a summer day, from early morn
To latest evening, by some streamlet's side
We two have tarried; strange companionship!
A sad and silent man; a joyous child.—

Yet were those days, as I recall them now,
Supremely happy. Silent though he was,
My father's eyes were often on his child
Tenderly eloquent—and his few words
Were kind and gentle. Never angry tone
Repulsed me, if I broke upon his thoughts
With childish question. But I learnt at last—
Learnt intuitively to hold my peace
When the dark hour was on him, and deep sighs
Spoke the perturbed spirit—only then
I crept a little closer to his side,
And stole my hand in his, or on his arm
Laid my cheek softly; till the simple wile
Won on his sad abstraction, and he turn'd
With a faint smile, and sigh'd, and shook his head,
Stooping toward me; so I reached at last
Mine arm about his neck, and clasp'd it close,
Printing his pale brow with a silent kiss."

"That was a lovely brook, by whose green marge
We two (the patient angler and his child)
Loiter'd away so many summer days!
A shallow sparkling stream, it hurried now
Leaping and glancing among large round stones,
With everlasting friction chafing still
Their polish'd smoothness—on a gravelly bed,
Then softly slipt away with rippling sound,
Or all inaudible, where the green moss
Sloped down to meet the clear reflected wave,
That lipp'd its emerald bank with seeming show
Of gentle dalliance. In a dark, deep pool
Collected now, the peaceful waters slept
Embay'd by rugged headlands; hollow roots
Of huge old pollard willows. Anchor'd there
Rode safe from every gale, a silvan fleet
Of milk-white water lilies; every bark
Worthy as those on his own sacred flood
To waft the Indian Cupid. Then the stream
Brawling again o'er pebbly shallows ran,
On—on, to where a rustic, rough-hewn bridge,
All bright with mosses and green ivy wreathes,
Spann'd the small channel with its single arch;
And underneath, the bank on either side
Shelved down into the water darkly green
With unsunn'd verdure; or whereon the sun
Look'd only when his rays at eventide

Obliquely glanced between the blacken'd piers
With arrowy beams of orient emerald light
Touching the river and its velvet marge—
'Twas there, beneath the archway, just within
Its rough misshapen piles, I found a cave,
A little secret cell, one large flat stone
Its ample floor, embedded deep in moss,
And a rich tuft of dark blue violet,
And fretted o'er with curious groining dark,
Like vault of Gothic chapel was the roof
Of that small cunning cave—'The Nereid's Grot!'
I named it learnedly, for I had read
About Egeria, and was deeply versed
In heathenish stories of the guardian tribes
In groves, and single trees, and silvan streams
Abiding co-existent. So methought
The little Naiad of our brook might haunt
That cool retreat, and to her guardian care
My wont was ever, at the bridge arrived,
To trust our basket, with its simple store
Of home-made, wholesome cates; by one at home
Provided, for our banquet-hour at noon.

"A joyful hour! anticipated keen
With zest of youthful appetite I trow,
Full oft expelling unsubstantial thoughts
Of Grots and Naiads, sublimated fare—
The busy, bustling joy, with housewife airs
(Directress, handmaid, lady of the feast!)
To spread that 'table in the wilderness!'
The spot selected with deliberate care,
Fastidious from variety of choice,
Where all was beautiful. Some pleasant nook
Among the fringing alders: or beneath
A single spreading oak: or higher up
Within the thicket, a more secret bower,
A little clearing carpeted all o'er
With creeping strawberry, and greenest moss
Thick vein'd with ivy. There unfolded smooth
The snowy napkin (carefully secured
At every corner with a pebbly weight,)
Was spread prelusive; fairly garnish'd soon
With the contents (most interesting then)
Of the well-plenish'd basket: simple viands,
And sweet brown bread, and biscuits for dessert,
And rich ripe cherries; and two slender flasks,

Of cider one, and one of sweet new milk,
Mine own allotted beverage, temper'd down
To wholesome thinness by admixture pure
From the near streamlet. Two small silver cups
Set our grand buffet—and all was done;
But there I stood immovable, entranced,
Absorb'd in admiration—shifting oft
My ground contemplative, to reperuse
In every point of view the perfect whole
Of that arrangement, mine own handywork.
Then glancing skyward, if my dazzled eyes
Shrank from the sunbeams, vertically bright,
Away, away, toward the river's brink
I ran to summon from his silent sport
My father to the banquet; tutor'd well,
As I approach'd his station, to restrain
All noisy outbreak of exuberant glee;
Lest from their quiet haunts the finny prey
Should dart far off to deeper solitudes.
The gentle summons met observance prompt,
Kindly considerate of the famish'd child:
And all in order left—the mimic fly
Examined and renew'd, if need required,
Or changed for other sort, as time of day,
Or clear or clouded sky, or various signs
Of atmosphere or water, so advised
Th' experienced angler; the long line afloat—
The rod securely fix'd; then into mine
The willing hand was yielded, and I led
With joyous exultation that dear guest
To our green banquet-room. Not Leicester's self,
When to the hall of princely Kenilworth
He led Elizabeth, exulted more
With inward gratulation at the show
Of his own proud magnificence, than I,
When full in view of mine arranged feast,
I held awhile my pleased companion back,
Exacting wonder—admiration, praise
With pointing finger, and triumphant 'There!' "

All that is perfectly beautiful—"one song that will not die"—and so is all the rest of the picture. The banquet over, and grateful acknowledgment made, her father goes again to the stream, bidding her take care "that nothing may be lost," and she, understanding well the meaning of the injunction, acts accordingly.

> "So lib'ral dole
> I scatter'd round for the small feather'd things
> Who from their leafy lodges all about
> Had watch'd the strange intruders and their ways;
> And eyed the feast with curious wistfulness,
> Half longing to partake. Some bold, brave bird,
> He of the crimson breast, approaching near
> And near and nearer, till his little beak
> Made prize of tempting crumb, and off he flew
> Triumphant, to return (permitted thief!)
> More daringly familiar.
> Neatly pack'd
> Napkin and cups, with the diminish'd store
> Of our well-lighten'd basket—largess left
> For our shy woodland hosts, some special treat
> In fork'd branch or hollow trunk for him
> The prettiest, merriest, with his frolic leaps
> And jet black sparkling eyes, and mimic wrath
> Clacking loud menace. Yet before me lay
> The long bright summer evening. Was it long,
> Tediously long in prospect? Nay, good sooth!
> The hours in Eden never swifter flew
> With Eve yet innocent, than fled with me
> Their course by thy fair stream, sweet Royden vale!"

Carry has been accustomed, on such occasions, to extract, "with permitted hand," from a certain pouch, ample and deep, within the fisher's coat, an old clumsy russet-covered book, which furnished enjoyment, increasing with renewed and more intimate experience—a copy of old Isaac Walton! And there,

> "The river at my feet, its mossy bank,
> Clipt by that cover'd oak my pleasant seat,
> Still as an image in its carved shrine,
> I nestled in my sylvan niche, like hare
> Upgather'd in her form, upon my knees
> The open book, over which I stoop'd intent,
> Half hidden (the large hat flung careless off,)
> In a gold gleaming shower of auburn curls."

Nor is there in print or manuscript a more faithful character than is here afterwards drawn in lines of light, by woman's hand, of gentle Isaac!

We know not whether the long quotation given above or the following be the more delightful.

"Dear garden! once again with lingering look
Reverted, half remorseful, let me dwell
Upon thee as thou wert in that old time
Of happy days departed. Thou art changed,
And I have changed thee—was it wisely done!
Wisely and well they say who look thereon
With unimpassion'd eye—cool, clear, undimm'd
By moisture such as memory gathers oft
In mine, while gazing on the things that are
Not with the hallow'd past, the loved, the lost,
Associated as those I now retrace
With tender sadness. The old shrubbery walk,
Straight as an arrow, was less graceful far
Than this fair winding among flowers and turf,
Till with an artful curve it sweeps from sight
To reappear again, just seen and lost
Among the hawthorns in the little dell.
Less lovely the old walk, but there I ran
Holding my mother's hand, a happy child;
There were her steps imprinted, and my father's,
And those of many a loved one, now laid low
In his last resting place. No flowers methinks
That now I cultivate are half so sweet,
So bright, so beautiful as those that bloom'd
In the old formal borders. *These* clove pinks
Yield not such fragrance as the true old sort
That spiced our pot-pourrie (my mother's pride)
With such peculiar richness; and this rose,
With its fine foreign name, is scentless, pale,
Compared with the *old* cabbage—those that blush'd
In the thick hedge of spiky lavender—
Such lavender as *is* not now-a-days;
And gillyflowers are not as they were then
Sure to 'come double;' and the night breeze now
Sighs not so loaded with delicious scents
Of lily and sevinger. Oh, my heart!
Is all indeed so alter'd?—or art thou
The changeling, sore aweary now at times
Of all beneath the sun!

"Such weariness
Knows not that blessed springtide of the heart
When 'treasures dwell in flowers.' How glad was
How joyously exultant, when I found
Such virtues in my flowery treasury
As hitherto methought discoverer's eye
Had pass'd unheeded! Here at once I found,

Unbought, unsued for, the desired command
(How longingly desired !) of various dyes,
Wherewith to tint the semblance incomplete
In its hard pencil ou line, of those forms
Of floral loveliness, whose juices now
Supplied me with a palette of all hues,
Bright as the rainbow. Brushes lack'd I none
For my rude process, the soft flower or leaf
Serving for such ; its moisture nice express'd
By a small cunning hand, where'er required
The imitative shadow to perfect
With glowing colour. Heavens! how plain I see,
Even at this moment, the first grand result
Of that occult invention. *There* it lies,
Living as life itself (I thought no less,)
A sprig of purple stock, that dullest eye
Must have detected, and fault-finding critic
Have own'd at least a likeness. Mother's love
Thought it perfection, when with stealing step
And flushing face and conscious, I drew near
And laid it on her lap without a word;
Then hung upon her shoulder, shrinking back
With a child's bashfulness, all hope and fear,
Shunning and courting notice;
But I kept
Profoundly secret, certain floral rites
Observed with piously romantic zeal
Through half a summer. Heaven forgave full sure
The unconscious profanation, and the sin,
If sin there was, be on thy head, old friend,
Pathetic Gesner! for thy touching song
(That most poetic prose) recording sad
The earliest annals of the human race,
And death's first triumph, fill'd me, heart and brain,
With stirring fancies, in my very dreams
Exciting strange desires to realize,
What to the inward vision was reveal'd,
Haunting it like a passion. For I saw,
Plain as in substance, that first human home
In the first earthly garden;—saw the flowers
Set round her leafy bower by banish'd Eve,
And water'd with her tears, as they recall'd
Faintly the forfeit Eden; the small rills
She taught to wander 'mongst their blooming tribes,
Completing—not the semblance, but the shade.

But beautiful, most beautiful methought
The altar of green turf, whereon were laid
Offerings as yet unstain'd with blood—choice fruits,
And fairest flowers fresh cull'd.
'And God must still,'—
So with myself I argued—'surely love
Such pure, sweet offerings. There can be no harm
In laying them, as Eve was wont, each day
On such an altar;—what if I could make
Something resembling that!' To work I went
With the strong purpose, which is strength and power;
And in a certain unfrequented nook
Of our long rambling garden, fenced about
By thorns and bushes, thick with summer leaves,
And threaded by a little water course
(No substitute contemptible methought
For Eve's meandering rills,) uprose full soon
A mound of mossy turf, that when complete,
I call'd an altar: and with simple faith—
Ay—and with feelings of adoring love
Hallowing the childish error—laid thereon
Daily my floral tribute—yet from prayer,
Wherewith I long'd to consecrate the act,
Refraining with an undefined fear
(Instinctive) of offence: and there was doubt
Of perfect blamelessness (unconscious doubt)
In the suspicious, unrelaxing care
With which I kept my secret. All's not well,
When hearts, that should be open as the day,
Shrink from inspection. So by slow degrees
I grew uneasy and afraid, and long'd
To cast off the strange burthen—and at last
Ceasing my visits to 'the sacred grove,'
I soon forgot, absorb'd in fresh pursuits,
The long neglected altar—till one day,
When coming winter, with his herald blasts
Had thinn'd the covert's leafiness, I saw
Old Ephraim in his clearing progress pause,
And strike his spade against a mossy heap,
Wash'd low by autumn's rains, and litter'd round
Among the thick strewn leaves, with spars and shells,
And broken pottery, and shrivell'd things,
That had been garlands.
'This is Missy's work,'
Quoth the old man, and shook his head, and smiled—

'Lord bless her! how the child has toil'd and moil'd
To scrape up all the rubbish. Here's enough
To load a jackass!'
Desecrated shrine!
Such was thy fate, demolish'd as he spoke;
And of my Idyl the concluding page."

Ephraim, the old gardener is a well-drawn character, and so is Priscilla his wife. The picture of their household is painted with infinite spirit, and to the very life. Wilkie would be pleased with it—nor do we know that Miss Bowles's pen is not almost equal, in such portraiture, to his pencil, as it used to be long ago, when the great master chiefly busied himself with the shows of humble life. Of all the many articles of choice furniture, and rarities not correctly included in that term, the most attractive to Carry's

"Rapt soul, settling in her eyes,"

was a Cuckoo Clock! To our mind there is in the passage descriptive of the sudden and permanent passion for this rare device, the most vivid evidence of the poetical character, while to our heart the close is the perfection of the pathetic.

"But chief—surpassing all—a cuckoo clock!
That crowning wonder! miracle of art!
How have I stood entranced uncounted minutes,
With held-in breath, and eyes intently fix'd
On that small magic door, that when complete
Th' expiring hour—the irreversible—
Flew open with a startling suddenness
That, though expected, sent the rushing blood
In mantling flushes o'er my upturn'd face;
And as the bird (that more than mortal fowl!)
With perfect mimicry of natural tone,
Note after note exact time's message told,
How my heart's pulse kept time with the charm'd voice!
And when it ceased made simultaneous pause
As the small door clapt to, and all was still.

"Long did I meditate—yea, often dream
By day and night, at school-time and at play—

Alas! at holiest seasons, even at church
The vision haunted me,—of that rare thing,
And his surpassing happiness to whom
Fate should assign its fellow. Thereupon
Sprang up crude notions, vague incipient schemes
Of future independence: Not like those
Fermenting in the youthful brain of her
Maternally, on fashionable system,
Train'd up betimes i' the way that she should go
To the one great end—a good establishment.
Yet similar in *some sort* were our views
Toward contingent power. 'When I'm a woman
I'll have,' quoth I,—so far the *will* and *when*
Tallied exactly, but our difference lay
Touching the end to be achieved. With me,
Not settlements, and pin-money, and spouse
Appendant, but in unencumber'd right
Of womanhood—a house and cuckoo clock!
Hark! as I hang reflective o'er my task,
The pen fresh nibb'd and full, held idly yet;
What sound comes clicking through the half-closed door,
Distinct, monotonous? 'Tis even so;
Years past, the pledge (self-plighted) was redeem'd;
There hangs with its companionable voice
The cuckoo clock in this mine house.—Ay, *mine;*
But left unto me desolate."

One quotation more we have room for, equal, so we think, to any thing of the kind in our modern poetry.

"Then—most happy child!
Most favour'd! I was sent a frequent guest,
Secure of welcome, to the loveliest home
Of all the country, o'er whose quiet walls
Brooded the twin-doves—Holiness and Peace:
There with thine aged partner didst thou dwell,
Pastor and master! servant of thy Lord,
Faithful as he, the labours of whose love
Recorded by thy pen, embalm for aye
The name of Gilpin heir'd by thee—right heir
Of the saint's mantle. Holy Bernard's life,
Its apostolic graces unimpair'd,
Renew'd in William's, virtuous parish priest!

"Let me live o'er again, in fond detail,
One of those happy visits. Leave obtain'd,

Methought the clock stood still. Four hours past noon,
And not yet started on our three mile walk!
And *six* the vicarage tea hour primitive,
And I should lose that precious hour, most prized,
When in the old man's study, at his feet
Or nestling close beside him, I might sit
With eye, ear, soul intent on his mild voice,
And face benign, and words so simply wise,
Framed for his childish hearer. 'Let us go!'
And like a fawn I bounded on before,
When lagging Jane came forth, and off we went.
Sultry the hour, and hot the dusty way,
Though here and there by leafy skreen o'erarch'd—
And the long broiling hill! and that last mile
When the small frame wax'd weary! the glib tongue
Slackening its motion with the languid limbs.
But joy was in the heart, howe'er suppress'd
Its outward show exuberant; and, at length,
Lo! the last turning—lo! the well-known door,
Festoon'd about with garlands picturesque,
Of trailing evergreens. Who's weary now?
Sounding the bell with that impatient pull
That quickens Mistress Molly's answering steps
To most unusual promptness. Turns the lock—
The door uncloses—Molly's smiling face
Welcomes unask'd. One eager, forward spring,
And farewell to the glaring world without;
The glaring, bustling, noisy, parch'd-up world!
And hail repose and verdure, turf and flowers,
Perfume of lillies, through the leafy gloom
White gleaming; and the full, rich, mellow note
Of song-thrush, hidden in the tall thick bay
Beside the study window!
The old house
Through flickering shadows of high-arching boughs,
Caught gleams of sunlight on its time-stain'd walls,
And frieze of mantling vine; and lower down,
Train'd among jasmines to the southern bow,
Moss roses, bursting into richest bloom,
Blush'd by the open window. *There she sate*,
The venerable lady (her white hair
White as the snowy coif,) upon her book
Or needlework intent; and near at hand
The maiden sister friend (a life-long guest)
At her coarse sempstresship—another Dorcas,
Unwearying in the work of charity.

"Oh! kindest greeting! as the door unclosed
That welcomed the half-bold half-bashful guest;
And brought me bounding on at half a word
To meet the proffer'd kiss. Oh kindest care!
Considerate of my long, hot, dusty walk,
Of hat and tippet that divested me,
And clinging gloves; and from the glowing cheek
And hot brow, parted back the clustering curls,
Applying grateful coolness of clear lymph,
Distill'd from fragrant elder—sovereign wash
For sunburnt skin and freckled! Kindest care,
That follow'd up those offices of love
By cautionary charge to sit and rest
'*Quite still* till tea time.' Kindest care, I trow,
But little relish'd. Restless was my rest,
And wistful eyes still wandering to the door,
Reveal'd 'the secret of my discontent,'
And told where I would be. The lady smiled,
And shook her head, and said,—
'Well! go your ways
And ask admittance at that certain door
You know so well.' All weariness was gone—
Blithe as a bird, thus freed, away I flew,
And in three seconds at the well-known door
Tapp'd gently; and a gentle voice within
Asking 'Who's there!' 'It's *me*,' I answer'd low,
Grammatically clear. 'Let *me* come in.'
The gentle voice rejoin'd; and in I stole,
Bashfully silent, as the good man's smile,
And hand extended, drew me to his chair;
And there, all eye and ear, I stood full long,
Still tongueless, as it seem'd; love-tempering awe
Chaining my words up. But so kindly his,
His aspect so benign, his winning art
So graciously conforming; in short time
Awe was absorb'd in love, and then unchain'd
By perfect confidence, the little tongue
Question'd and answer'd with as careless ease
As might be, from irreverend boldness free.
True love may cast out fear, but not respect,
That fears the very shadow of offence.

"How holy was the calm of that small room!
How tenderly the evening light stole in,
As 'twere in reverence of its sanctity!
Here and there touching with a golden gleam

Book-shelf or picture-frame, or brightening up
The nosegay set with daily care (love's own)
Upon the study table. Dallying there
Among the books and papers, and with beam
Of softest radiance, starring like a glory
The old man's high bald head and noble brow—
There still I found him, busy with his pen—
(Oh pen of varied power! found faithful ever,
Faithful and fearless in the one great cause)—
Or some grave tome, or lighter work of taste
(His no ascetic, harsh, soul-narrowing creed),
Or that unrivall'd pencil, with few strokes,
And sober tinting slight, that wrought effects
Most magical—the poetry of art!
Lovely simplicity! (true wisdom's grace)
That condescending to a simple child,
Spread out before me hoards of graphic treasures;
Smiling encouragement, as I express'd
Delight or censure (for in full good faith
I play'd the critic), and vouchsafing mild
T' explain or vindicate; in seeming sport
Instructing ever; and on graver themes
Winning my heart to listen, as he taught
Things that pertain to life.
Oh precious seed!
Sown early; soon, too soon the sower's hand,
The immediate mortal instrument withdrawn,
Tares of this evil world sprang thickly up,
Choking your promise. But the soil beneath
(Nor rock nor shifting sand) retain'd ye still,
God's mercy willing it, until *his* hand,
Chastening as fathers chasten, clear'd at last
Th' encumber'd surface, and the grain sprang up—
But hath it flourish'd?—hath it yet borne fruit
Acceptable? Oh Father! leave it not
For lack of moisture yet to fall away!"

We have now reached the close of the "Birth-Day," and of this number of Maga, which we are confident will be felt to be a delightful one, were it but for our profuse quotations from this delightful poem. It has already had a pretty wide circulation; but in a few days hence it will have been perused by thousands and tens of thousands, in our pages—and by and by the volume itself will find its

way into many a quiet "homestead" seldom visited by books. The plan of the poem might be extended so as to include another season—or age of life. Yet it is now a whole; and we believe that it is best it should remain in its present shape. Let us hope ere long to have another volume.

ARIA.

(SOTTO VOCE.)

(Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, 1831.)

We used to spend the opening year in the country—but for a good many seasons have been tied to town by fetters as fine as frostwork filigree, which we could not break without destroying a whole world of endearment. That seems an obscure image—but it means what the Germans would call in English—our winter environment. We are imprisoned in a net of our own weaving—an invisible net—yet we can see it when we choose—just as a bird can see, when he chooses, the wires of his cage, that are invisible in his happiness, as he keeps hopping and fluttering about all day long, or haply dreaming on his perch with his poll under his plumes—as free in confinement as if let loose into the boundless sky. That seems an obscure image too; but we mean what Wordsworth says, that the prison to which we doom ourselves is in truth no prison at all—and we have improved on that idea, for we have built our own—and are prisoner, turnkey, and jailer all in one, and 'tis noiseless as the house of sleep. Or what if we declare that Christopher North is a king in his palace, with no subjects but his own thoughts—his rule peaceful over those lights and shadows—and undisputed to reign over them his right divine.

The opening year in a town, now, answers in all things to our heart's desire. How beautiful the smoky air! The clouds have a homely look as they hang over the happy families of houses, and seem as if they loved their

birthplace;—all unlike those heartless clouds that keep *stravaiging* over mountain tops, and have no domicile in the sky!—Poets speak of living rocks, but what is their life to that of houses? Who ever saw a rock with eyes—that is, with windows? Stone-blind all, and stone-deaf, and with hearts of stone; whereas who ever saw a house without eyes—that is, windows? Our own is an Argus; yet the good old Conservative grudges not the assessed taxes, his optics are as cheerful as the day that lends them light, and they love to salute the setting sun, as if a hundred beacons, level above level, were kindled along a mountain side. He might safely be pronounced a madman who preferred an avenue of trees to a street. Why, trees have no chimneys; and, were you to kindle a fire in the hollow of an oak, you would soon be as dead as a Druid. It won't do to talk to us of sap, and the circulation of sap. A grove in winter, bole and branch—leaves it has none—is as dry as a volume of sermons. But a street, or a square, is full of "vital sparks of heavenly flame" as a volume of poetry, and the heart's blood circulates through the system like rosy wine.

But a truce to comparisons; for we are beginning to feel contrition for our crime against the country, and, with humbled head and heart, we beseech you to pardon us—ye rocks of Pavey-Ark, the pillared palace of the storms—ye clouds, now wreathing a diadem for the forehead of Helvellyn—ye trees, that hang the shadows of your undying beauty over the "one perfect chrysolite" of blessed Windermere!

Our meaning is transparent now as the hand of an apparition waving peace and goodwill to all dwellers in the land of dreams. In plainer but not simpler words (for words are like flowers, often radiant in their simplicity—witness the lily, and Solomon's Song,) contributors, and subscribers, and readers, all, we wish you a happy new year, in town or in country—or in ships at sea!

A happy new year!—Ah! ere this ARIA, sung *sotto voce*, reach your ears, (eyes are ears, and ears eyes,) the week of all weeks will be over and gone, and the new year will seem growing out of the old year's ashes!—

For the year is your only Phœnix. But what with time to do has a wish—a hope,—a prayer? Their power is in the Spirit that gives them birth, and there they are immortal—for spirit never dies. And what is spirit but the well-head of thoughts and feelings flowing and overflowing all life, yet leaving the well-head full of water as ever—so lucid, that on your gazing intently into its depths, it seems to become a large soft spiritual eye, reflecting the heavens and the earth! And no one knows what the heavens and the earth are, till he has seen them there—for that God made the heavens and the earth we feel from that beautiful revelation—and where feeling is not, knowledge is dead, and a blank the universe. Love is life. The unloving merely breathe. A single sweet beat of the heart is token of something spiritual that will be with us again in Paradise. "O, bliss and beauty! are these our feelings"—thought we once in a dream—"all circling in the sunshine—fair-plumed in a flight of doves!" The vision kept sailing on the sky—to and fro for our delight—no sound on their wings more than on their breasts—and they melted away in light as if they were composed of light—and in the hush we heard high-up and far-off music—as of an angel's song.

That was a dream of the mysterious night; but now we are broad awake—and see no emblematical phantoms, but the mere sights of the common day. But sufficient for the day is the beauty thereof—and it inspires us with affection for all beneath the skies. Will the whole world, then, promise henceforth to love us—and we will promise henceforth to love the whole world?

It seems the easiest of all easy things to be kind and good—and then it is so pleasant! "Self-love and social are the same," beyond all question; and in that lies the nobility of our nature. The intensest feeling of self is that of belonging to a brotherhood. All selves then know they have duties which are in truth loves—and loves are joys—whether breathed in silence, or uttered in words, or embodied in actions—and if they filled all life, then all life would be good—and heaven would be no more than a better earth. And how may all men go to heaven? By

making for themselves a heaven on earth, and thus preparing their spirits to breathe empyreal air, when they have dropped the dust. And how may they make for themselves a heaven on earth? By building up a happy HOME FOR THE HEART. Much, but not all—oh! not nearly all—is in the site. But it must be within the precincts of the holy ground—and within hearing of the waters of life.

Pleasures of Imagination! Pleasures of Memory! Pleasures of Hope! All three most delightful poems—yet all the thoughts and all the feelings that inspired them—etherealized—will not make—FAITH! "The dayspring from on high hath visited us!" Blessed is he who feels the beauty and the glory of that one line—nor need his heart die within him, were a voice to be heard at midnight saying—"This New-Year's day shall be thy last!"

Singing? One voice—one young voice—all by its sweet, sad, solitary self, singing a Christmas Hymn! Listening to that music is like looking at the sky with all its stars!

Was it a spirit?

> "Millions of spiritual creatures walk unseen,
> Sole or responsive to each other's voice,
> Hymning their great Creator."

But that singer, like ourselves, is mortal; and in that thought, to our hearts, lies the pathos of her prayers. The angels, veiling their faces with their wings, sing, in their bliss, hallelujahs round the throne of heaven; but she, a poor child of clay, with her face veiled but with the shades of humility and contrition, while

> "Some natural tears she drops, but wipes them soon,"—

sings, in her sorrow, supplications to be suffered to see afar-off its everlasting gates—opening not surely for her own sake—for all of woman born are sinful—and even she—in what love calls her innocence—feels that her fallen being does of itself deserve but to die! The hymn is fad-

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ing—and fading away, liker and liker an echo, and our spirit having lost it in the distance returns back holier to the heart-hush of home!

Again! and with the voice of a lute, "One of old Scotland's songs so sad and slow!" Her heart is now blamelessly with things of earth. "Sad and slow!" and most purely sweet! Almost mournful although it be, it breathes of happiness—for the joy dearest to the soul has ever a faint tinge of grief! O innocent enchantress! thou encirclest us with wavering haze of beautiful imagery, by the spell of that voice awaking after a mood of awe, but for thy own delight. From the long dim tracts of the past come strangely-blended recognitions of wo and bliss, undistinguishable now to our own heart—nor knows that heart if it be a dream of imagination or of memory. Yet why should we wonder? In our happiest hours there may have been something in common with our most sorrowful—some shade of sadness cast over them by a passing cloud, that now allies them in retrospect with the sombre spirit of grief; and in our unhappiest hours there may have been gleams of gladness, that seem now to give the return the calm character of peace! Do not all thoughts and feelings, almost all events seem to resemble each other—when they are dreamt of as all past? All receive a sort of sanctification in the stillness of the time that has gone by—just like the human being whom they adorned or degraded—when they too are at last buried together in the bosom of the same earth.

We are all of us getting old—or older; nor would we, for our own parts—if we could—renew our youth. Methinks the river of life is nobler as it nears the sea. The young are dancing in their skiffs on the pellucid shallows near the source on the Sacred Mountains of the golden East. They whose lot it is to be in their prime, are dropping down the longer and wider reaches, that seem wheeling by with their silvan amphitheatres, as if the beauty were moving mornwards, while the voyagers are stationary among the shadows, or slowly descending the stream to meet the meridian day. Many forget

"The torrent's smoothness ere it dash below!"

and are lost in the roaring whirlpool. Under Providence we see ourselves on the river expanded into a sea-like lake, or arm of the sea—and for all our soul has escaped and suffered, we look up to the stars in gratitude—and down to the stars—for the water too is full of stars as well as the sky—faint and dim indeed—but blended, by the pervading spirit of beauty, with the brighter and bolder luminaries reposing on infinitude!

And may we even have a thought now of the labours of our leisure—of but small avail perhaps for others' instruction or delight, yet blameless at least—and not altogether without a salutary influence on our own life, thus sometimes saved from "thoughts that make the heart sink," and to our own imagination enveloped in no unlovely light—such as from clear or clouded moon sleeps quietly or fitfully on a river seeming subdued by the radiance, and forgetful of all its own native noise. Maga surely is no ungentle being—and her countenance at this moment wears something of the sweetness of Calypso's smile. We have begun again, you see, to turn over the leaves of old Homer. Yet we confess it is with sadness—for Sotheby, the accomplished, the kind, the good, and the venerable, is dead—and at the thought

"Drops a sad serious tear upon our playful pen."

Our commentaries on the Iliad were approved by him the noblest of all its translators—his praise was far pleasanter to us than ours could be to him—and shall be treasured up among our most friendly remembrances of the gifted spirits with whom we have held converse here below, and who have now gone to their reward. In the Iliad, Homer's genius was said by Longinus to resemble the rising—in the Odyssey, the setting sun. And the image is as true as it is magnificent; for who can say—when lost in gazing on the luminary—or thinking of him in the East or in the West, in which season and which region he is the more beautiful and sublime? It is gratifying to us to know that along with us thousands have studied Homer—who, being no Greek scholars, had read before with un-

aroused spirits. Nor have we not been cheered by the commendations of not a few of the most illustrious in classical literature in all the land. Fair fields lie yet before us, and we shall take many a travel yet through the god-haunted regions of old heroic Greece. The Greek drama! And from the high passions kindling or expiring there, we shall find sweet relief among the shepherds of Sicily—and with the Theocritus list to them piping among the rocks all a summer's day.

Some of our friends seem to think that our articles on the Greek Anthology are at an end—but it is not so; and like a flush of flowers they will be seen brightening the banks and braes of spring. Thanks in thousands to our numberless contributors won by the novel beauty of those lovely little poems. But oh! would they but in their kindness think how impossible 'tis for us to return upon our steps, however rich the region, when so many sweetest spots are wooing us to their untrodden dews! Let them precede us as guides through the yet unvisited scenery before us—if they will—or accompany us as new companions; but pleasant as are their presents, we fear we cannot accept them, when composed of the same flowers we ourselves have gathered, and have woven into many a garland of no transient bloom. What has become—it has been asked by many—of our promised papers upon Spencer? We have feared to enter haunts of Faëry, and have remained long sitting on the edge of the wood of wonders. Erelong we shall venture in; but have you not been charmed with the Hindu Drama? And remember though the world of poetry is boundless, not so our numbers, and that our promises must wait their accomplishment in the fulness of time, which they continue to brighten as it sails by on dusky wings. Now and then a few of the feeble—nay, one or two of the strong—long to persuade themselves that sometimes our articles are—too long! So, no doubt, thinks a wren or a tom-tit, perched between an eagle's wings, as in high far flight he soars the sky or sweeps the sea. But there lies the secret of our success; avail yourselves of it all ye who can; but never could we have gained the ascendency it is universally acknowledged

we possess over so many strong monthly competitors, and so swayed the mind of our country, but by such putting forth of our own power and that of our noble coadjutors, without whom we could not have won and worn the crown; and by the same means by which we have ascended our throne will we keep it—and seated firmly there, look graciously around us upon the flourishing Republic of Letters.

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