

NOBILITY.

Who counts himself as nobly born
Is noble in despite of place ;
And honors are but brands to him
Who wears them not with nature's grace.

Then, be thou peasant, be thou peer,
Count it still more thou art thine own ;
Stand on a larger heraldry
Than that of nation or of zone.

Selected.

GENIUS.

WHAT is genius, and whereof does it consist, of what nature is it, and what was its origin, are questions apparently simple, but they are the same questions that have been discussed from the age of Plato, and the heathen philosophers to the present period of modern advancement and research. They are questions that have caused definitions, and conjectures and dissertations without number, and to the true understanding of which, the greatest minds of the time have devoted themselves in no small degree. The ancient Greeks hailed with admiration and reverence one endowed with extraordinary mental abilities, and attributed the gift to the superior qualities of his demon or protecting spirit. Plato says 'it is not by art that a poet sings but by power divine'; and Cicero likewise believed a genius to be under the entire possession of a god, by whom he was goaded to the pitch of madness, and his 'furor poeticus' differs in no material degree from Plato's divine frenzy, or the 'amabilis insania' of Horace. These definitions savour eminently of the supernatural, and strange as it may seem in this enlightened century, there yet remains in the minds of many the idea that a poet or any genius must indeed be a trifle mad, and in this they but unconsciously touch one of the modern scientific theories of the connection of genius with insanity. Shakespeare surely imagined this when he asserted,

"The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact,"

and Dryden approached still nearer in his oft quoted lines

"Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide."

With the mass, genius as it is thought a special gift is on this account deified and unapproachable,

while talent, honest, pains-taking talent, that deserves far more, is considered with a special grudge, that of envy. Genius, shout its sycophants and admirers, is that more than human faculty that can produce 'Iliads,' or strike off 'Paradise Losts' merely by intuition, and in accordance with those peculiar qualities that are its inseparable attendants. Genius is a god who deigns from his lofty throne to hold out the sceptre that "poor plodding talent" may approach and worship. Genius it is true is seldom recognized whilst it lives and walks the earth, but when once Westminster Abbey has received its noble dust, an admiring world cries out, how great he was, how supreme, how grand, and blindly fall upon their knees and do him reverence. It is the fashion to despise and overlook talent, for talent is common place, it may be seen on every side, and who would dare to erect an altar, or pay tribute to it, when Genius is at hand and commands, mark me, and make obeisance, for I alone am a god, and to be adored; and public opinion but too willing slaves, bow before their idol, regardless how often the plodding tortoise talent has distanced the fleet genius in the world's race for honour and distinction.

Since talent has been mentioned, the question would naturally arise, wherein is genius so greatly its superior? Where indeed? We can only say that genius is either talent abnormally perverted in one direction, and perhaps lacking in all others, or characterized by excessive industry, or flattered by opportunity, and redeemed by some originality quaintness or even deformity.

The inimitable Buffon has defined genius as "an infinite capacity for taking pains." Impossible we cry in a breath, why genius is a spontaneous outflow, an unceasing inspiration that unconsciously accomplishes the most difficult tasks, that with but a stroke of his brush can turn a sorrowful face to a smiling one, can chisel a Hermes or a Venus in a day, or dash us off a ballad or an ode while standing on one foot. If this indeed be our opinion we have but to glance at the long list of names to whom genius was but another term for the most unceasing toil and activity; and as the following facts, for a few of which I am indebted to an exceedingly interesting and instructive article in 'Temple Bar,' will abundantly show. Virgil spent seven years on the 'Georgics,' three on his short pastoral poems, and devoted twelve more to the