

serving it. Why should we anticipate the evil day, provoke an unequal conflict, before the strength of the reason is matured, destroy before we are compelled, the defence erected by Nature, the defence of innocence? Dr. Arnold's "Sermons," admirable as they are for earnest piety, plainness of speech, and searching insight into character, are not free from this blemish.

It is scarcely necessary, after what has been already said, to add, that books of mere amusement, without any pretensions at all to instruction, are not by any means to be left out of the list of children's books. The most ludicrous or impossible tale that ever ran riot among the marvels of Fairy-land, or the braggadocios of Munchausen,—a farce, to older readers, would require a law-maker more cruel than Draco to attempt to banish them. If older heads are not proof against the fascination of such stories, if it refreshes them to stroll among the bazaars of Bagdad, along the sunny banks of the Tigris, under a canopy of plam trees, with lamps like the stars of heaven glittering amid their dusky foliage,—“in the golden time of good Haroun Alraschid,” or to engage in the wars of the Genii, to battle with radiant powers of good against the wiles and machinations of dark rebellious spirits, or in a less arduous flight of fancy, to pace the silent shore, with its solitary inhabitant, the shipwrecked mariner, in all the majesty of independence, all the sadness of utter isolation, and with him to learn the strange joy of conquering necessity by invention,—if older readers find a pleasure in such things, and many do, much more are they the legitimate property of youth. The capacity of believing them thoroughly for the time, is one of the most luscious enjoyments vouchsafed by Nature to the young. Who would wish to wrest it from them, or dare to deny its usefulness? It is a truism to speak of “the bow that is never unbent,” or of the evil consequences from “all work and no play.” Immoderate carefulness,—ever toiling after some remote end, never pausing to enjoy the flower that blooms, by the mercy of Heaven, along the wayside, making a business even of pleasure, seldom, if ever, relaxing into the genial and graceful *abandon* of a southern clime, is confessedly a fault of the Anglo-Saxon character, and one bane of unhappiness in Britain at this time. Not the least deplorable result of this propensity,—not the least mischievous among the causes that encourage it are the dry compendia of “Useful Knowledge” which find favour in certain quarters; by gratifying a shortsighted importance for speedy and showy results—a shopkeeper's preference for small profits and quick returns. It is scarcely worth while, for the sake of a superficial mattering, to dwarf the imagination, disgust the natural appetite for knowledge, foster a complacent irreverence, dazzled by the parade of its own apparent proficiency, and substitute an artificial unprogressive precocity for the generous growth of time. There has been much of late years to expose the fallacy. We have seen paper constitutions survived by those who made them; and we may learn, that in the discipline of individuals, as of nations, the shortest way is not always the safest. The flowers, without sap or root, which a child culls, and sticks in the soil, to wither before nightfall; the dry bones, which lay withered and scattered on the plain of Chebar; the puppets on the stage which move their arms and legs with all the regularity of real life, are not more different from living flowers, living bodies, living men and women, than a mechanical aggregation of facts and figures is from real instruction. Mere empiricism is not true wisdom.

“Wouldst thou plant for eternity,” says Carlyle, “then plant into the deep faculties of man, his fantasy and his heart; wouldst thou plant for year and day, then plant into his shallow faculties, his self-love and arithmetical understanding.” And again,—“Soul must catch fire through a mysterious contact with living soul. Mind grows not, like a vegetable, by having its roots littered with etymological compost, but like a spirit by mysterious contact with spirit; thought kindles itself at the fire of living thought.” “Useful information,” however concealed under the thin and undignified disguise of “Philosophy in Sport,” is not real education; perhaps it is most objectionable in its serio-comic form; it is “neither fish nor flesh, nor good red herring.” Even in the hands of clever and agreeable writers like Miss Edgeworth or Miss Martineau, its wheels drag heavily. The greatest and best men have usually been the most thoroughly boys in their time. The ingenious substitute of what are called, in schools for young ladies, by name of “calisthenic exercises,” is but a miserable make-shift for the healthy excitement of a game, as “scientific dialogues” and “epitomes of history” are for the free and complete development of the whole being through the agency of works which address the imagination and the feelings, and thus prepare for the higher developments of reason.

Such old established favourites as the *Arabian Nights* need no apology at our hands, but, in connexion with the characteristics which we have been considering, it is obvious to remark that they hold their place among children's books, and in the affections of their readers, by no blind force of habit or merely unreasonable devotion. The very land of their birth, the nursery of the human race, is rich in associations akin to those of childhood, and the literature of that land is naturally such as to find an echo in every childish bosom. The faculty so strong in children, of simple wonder and awful curiosity, as yet un-

chilled by the cold breath of criticism, and the habit of self-conscious reflection,—which may enervate more than it enlightens, is pleased only, not cloyed, by those fantastic yet familiar tales that enrich the empty but capacious mind of the child with many a gorgeous scene and moving incident, both of a natural and supernatural kind. Regarded as mere amusement, such tales are probable—but this is not all. Though there be no moral formally appended to the fable, and administered, as it were, to efface its impression and dispel its meaning, yet perhaps, even in moral influence, Arabian Night and Fairy Tale may not be altogether wanting. There at least vice and virtue are not approximated by the disclosure of their secret workings, and of that almost invisible point from which they begin to diverge. There is no mistake about the Ogre and the Evil Genius—they are indisputably bad and detestable: evil is left, as it is, a fearful mystery, and referred for its immediate source to a personal though superhuman agency; nor is goodness dwarfed from its ideal stature to the dimensions of a little girl, who forbears to disremember her doll or play with a peevish spaniel.

A naked list of dates or other facts, with which the feelings have nothing to do, and in which, as yet, the understanding can recognize little or nothing, is a mere nonentity to the child. It sinks as a dead load into the memory, overtaxing the mechanical powers of retention, whilst it kindles not a spark of feeling nor generates a single genial thought. But let a child's ready sympathy be excited, let the travelled merchant of Bagdad unfold the secrets of his furrowed brow, and the solitary Crusoe detail, by what ingenious contrivances he has fenced out the wild beast from his own savage den, and barely kept soul and body together at the peril of both, in his lonely island, no danger will there be lest the adventures or devices of either should appear to the child too fanciful or minute. He finds no fault with the lavish exercise of supernatural power by friendly or malicious genius; where the marvellous, however absurd to older ears, is so plausible and consistent, so devoutly believed by the several characters of the story—no wonder is it that a child should welcome each new marvel with even heightened interest.

Again, the poetry in which childhood has been said to share so largely, though unconsciously, is not manifested in occasional outbursts of feeling on the active homage which a poet loves to offer to the beautiful; it is not something often banished, and continually overshadowed by the daily formalities of common life, sacred by the “dry light” of science, and the cold analysis to which thought and feeling are subjected in manhood; rather is it a constant stream of silent joy, beating with every pulse, and pervading every sensation. It has no voice of its own to raise, but all the more does it find in the flowers of Eastern language an expression of its own secret impulse; nor need any fear be entertained, lest a mind dieted on such imaginative food in childhood should grow up fantastic or superstitious. In the present state of society such a fear is groundless. The danger now-a-days, is all the other way; and let us beware how, in our fenced wisdom, we undervalue such a talent for appreciation of the marvellous—from from whom did modern science draw its light, and modern art and letters the originating impulse of its excellence, and the models which have provoked its imitative powers—from whom but that race, whose every stream and mountain was hallowed by its appropriate legend, and enshrined, as it were, the personal presence of its god or hero?

More than this, it may truly be said, and it is no new remark, that whatever is most exact, methodic, and elaborate in modern science, is but the mature development of a germ, which lay buried, as the seed in its parent soil, under the misty and confused imaginings of a younger age. No science has ever yet leaped forth, like Athens in her panoply, from the head of a Bacon or Descartes. Indistinguishably blended together, even when disentangled from that heterogeneous combination of childlike thought and feeling, the several sciences were long tinged, as it were, by the glowing wreaths of the retiring mist. Thus astrology was the forerunner of astronomy, alchemy of chemistry. Thus history emerged from the region of fable, under the paternal guidance of Herodotus, till its outlines grew clear and definite under the severe hand of Thucydides. The calm and thoughtful Sophocles was the legitimate descendant of the blind old bard, who sang “the mischief-working wrath of gods and heroes.” Plato and Aristotle were the disciples as well as the reformers of that philosophy, which had been stirring into life in the theogony of Hesiod, and was gradually refined and moulded into shape from the rude and chaotic cosmogony of Thales and Anaximander. The imagination of man is the precursor of his understanding. In the Delian Apollo, we may recognise a personification of the subsequent glories of science, art, and literature. Shall we strip him of his golden locks, lest they dazzle the sober eye of Reason? In Hephæstus, with his fickle consort, Aphrodite, we see the union of beauty and industry, dissolved, alas! at times, by the devastating god of war. So with the other myths. Not that they were invented to personify such notions, or designed to embody any preconceived truths but they serve to show that the beautiful fancies of an early age are not devoid of meaning. No. They are the heralds of that triumphal march of science which they serve so aptly to illustrate. In fact, the mythology of the Greeks