

SATIRIC POETRY.



IN the appreciation and enjoyment of Art we have perhaps a greater blessing than in any other natural grace we possess. Art allures the soul upward to the brighter world of truth and beauty. By its subtle insinuations it has power to awaken in us the highest, noblest sentiments of our nature, and by repeating them, to create in us a permanent nobility.

All Art is imitative and the highest object of its imitation is man himself in his physical and mental nature. If it represents other objects than man, it is only through their bearing upon him that they have interest. The queen of all Arts is poetry. The other arts can imitate material man, and all the beauties of nature, but poetry alone possesses the royal power of picturing man's mental nature. It is not indeed as minute and definite in its delineation as the others, nor can it, presenting its images indirectly to the mind, be as vivid in its representations as those which appeal directly to the senses; but, if it has the definiteness of none it has the comprehensiveness of all. Although we cannot see the "lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea," or the "ploughman homeward plod his weary way," as though the scene lay on canvas before us, yet we perceive it little less distinctly, and along with it, what no other art alone could afford, we hear "the curfew toll the knell of parting day" and feel the "solemn stillness of the air."

Poetry is therefore the embodiment of all the Arts. Its object is the expression of the beautiful in language. To accomplish this, its primary aim must be to please, and through pleasure to instruct and elevate. Its subject must be particular, for we cannot perceive beauty in the abstract; and although it deals with the same subjects as science it does so for a different object and in a different manner. If it deals with a historical fact it must clothe it with special charms, the creation of the poet's imagination. If it undertakes primarily and principally to instruct, it oversteps the bounds of its province, and

to preserve its identity as poetry, it must introduce digressions and entertainments of its own in order to pronounce the shibboleth.

From this it would follow that that species of poetry known as the Satire is not poetry in the fullest sense of the term, because it is essentially didactic. It aims at the follies and vices of men, and tries by exposing them to the search-light of ridicule to show their baseness, and to turn popular sentiment against them. In treating of such abstract subjects it departs from the ideal of true poetry and has to make amends for so doing in another way. The one redeeming quality, aside from the charm of verse, upon which it relies in order to furnish the requisite amount of pleasure is its wit. And although it is banished from the company of the more exquisite orders of poetry, it constitutes a little realm of its own, and has a unique mission of its own. The satire has been one of the most effective instruments the world of letters has ever used for the correction of human morals, and if we compare it with other classes of poetry in reference to wholesome influence it will occupy no humble place in our estimation. From its infancy it has been the "terror and aversion of fools and knaves." The serious gravity of the Romans eagerly employed it in censuring public and private vices. And in modern history it has been the sting of literary men against personal rivals and enemies, as well as public foibles.

Satire is the name the ancient Romans gave to a species of poetry of which they may be said to be the inventors. It is interesting to trace the derivation of the name as it throws some light on its primary character. The word *Sature* was used in its substantive signification to denote a dish filled with a medley of ingredients, and hence the original Roman satire was probably a medley of lyric and dramatic representations; but the keen banter and the coarse jocularities of those unwritten productions bore little resemblance to the earnest carping criticism of later satire.

The first to deal with men and manners