

NEW DOMINION MONTHLY.

AUGUST, 1871.

A FEW NOTES ON EMERSON AND THE PANTHEISTS.

BY HENRY HEMMING.

Sympathy for one's kind is a precious jewel, and we have in Emerson one who affords us utterances of sympathy which, seen from an intellectual point of view, are certainly higher than the work of most modern writers of fiction, and yet, if we shall attempt to resolve them into a system, entirely unsatisfactory. Exaltation of Nature in all her changeful aspects—this is good, indeed, so far as it goes, because Emerson would eschew, if he knew how, all forms of perverted feeling in the world's social life, and does not seek to preserve and perpetuate them under the general head of Nature, as some others seem to have loved to do. This man endeavors to illustrate the life of the nations and of the ages. He ranges with a glad freedom over his own domain of excellence in ideal, being yet all the while too tolerant of that restless and imperious mentality which he sees around him, consuming unceasingly the brain and substance of the American people. We have to be grateful to any thinker, be he journalist or recluse, who, devoting his life to observation, makes the knowledge he thus attains available for the guidance of his fellow men. A benevolent impulse alone could promote such a course; least of all could it be improvised for the sake of gain. If such men ever seem to be triflers, they are, in their specialty, learned triflers. Timidity in action commonly makes ignorance its excuse, and it is something to lessen the

domain of ignorance, even where our teachings are not in themselves practical. The thinker's solitude has its fruits, though that solitude may be audibly lamented by himself for the violence that it does to his social instincts.

The British metropolis has a philosophy of its own, which, to do it justice, it has the wisdom to be constantly modifying. Its mental activity resounds with other chords, and we have been invited to look upon it of late by its literary expounders as a sort of mirror of human existence, and the poor over-burdened soul of it has certainly been vividly brought before us in the sensational tales of the day; for, as Carlyle says, "Novelists must be teachers, in some sort." It should be our business to see that they teach rightly; and, indeed, when we come to think of it, it is a somewhat excellent trait, this literary interest that a great people are taking in the too divided classes of which their social fabric is made up—individualizing them, as love will always do; and an influx of good feeling, such as this, may be but the stepping-stone to higher social attainments in the future, directed also from a higher source. Let us feel for the poor London of to-day, striving so hard to be practical in its dealings with the Augean Stable of misery that has come down to it as an inheritance from a miserable century. Something has been done in clothing; something in feeding and finding work, and in bringing the laborer