

(ORIGINAL.)

AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

BY D. F. M.

Man is ever the most interesting object to man, and perhaps should be the *only* one that interests.

Goethe's Wilhelm Meister.

— a minute narrative of his sentiments and pursuits—not with study and labour—not with an affected frankness—but with a genuine confession of his little foibles and peculiarities, and a good-humored and natural display of *his own* conduct and opinions.

Expositor.

An eminent author remarks, that the highest powers of mind are very often deficient in the only one which can make the rest of much worth in society—the power of pleasing. To this assertion, but few exceptions can be found. The possession of genius, by no means does away with the necessity of severe and rigid mental culture, although men of talent, who imagine themselves to be possessors of the *mens divinator* are apt to harbour this absurd idea. In all instances the early life of genius is a life of labour and intellectual privation. The richest soil requires the warm sun to beat upon it, and the rain to descend, in order that beauty may cover it, and vegetation abound. The noblest oak needs the dews to water, and the winds to cradle it, that the branches may spread forth their arms, and its top lift itself towards heaven. Strength and beauty to the limbs, expansion to the breast, and grace to the whole person, is not obtained by dull and listless inactivity. We have need to go forth, and breathe the vital air to shake off sloth, and train ourselves to gentle exercises—

“Like the young eaglet that its eyrie leaves
On unfledged wing, prone falls it to the earth,
Too weak to rise, till oft-repeated effort
Gives it strength, when lo! it boldly spreads
Its broad dark pinion fearlessly for flight,
And in the sun's bright blaze, with eye unblenched,
Soars upwards to the skies.”

The man of genius gains strength by intense and continued mental effort, to break through the bonds which the world and its fashions throw around him, and to enter the pure and cloudless realms of bright creation. For the more complete manifestation of the ideas of genius, the understanding needs to be thoroughly enlightened. The mind must be “freed from all the *idols tribus, specus foci, theatri*,” that is, freed from the limits, the passions, the prejudices, the peculiar habits of the human understanding, natural or acquired.” While, then, he is disciplining himself to produce artist-like creations, he is too liable to forget the vain formalities of the fashion-

able world—the etiquette of the day; and while there are many more flippant tongues than his in the parlour, many who can furnish amusement to pass away a listless hour, he is content to be esteemed dull, by the butterflies of society, if thereby he may pursue, undisturbed, such studies as he deems best calculated to bring into play those vivifying powers of the mind necessary in educating the rarest and brightest gems of intellect. When relaxing from the agreeable occupations of literature and philosophy, he is better satisfied with his own familiar fireside, or in intercourse with congenial minds. “A man of letters,” as Dr. Johnson observes, “for the most part, spends in the privacies of study that season of life in which the manners are to be softened into ease, and polished into elegance, and when he has gained knowledge enough to be respected, has neglected the minuter acts by which he might have pleased.”

As a poet, he cannot pursue his vocation when surrounded by the jarring noise and tumult of this life; when he sees around and about him the busy multitude engaged in mutual strife, for selfish and base ends. It is in solitude that creative genius frees itself from the thraldom of society, and surrenders itself to the impetuous rays of an ardent imagination. There is no fear of his joining in debasing occupations, or in trampling under foot the image of God, planted within him. But in order to occupy his mind with that train of reflection, which shall be useful and serviceable to other minds, with that intense reflection, which is the natural mood of the poet, he finds it indispensable to retire to the quiet of his own heart, to place in the back-ground the evil of his nature, and to contemplate the characters of goodness, inscribed within him. “He must live wholly for himself, wholly in the objects that delight him. Heaven has furnished him internally with precious gifts; he carries in his bosom a treasure that is ever of itself increasing; he must live wholly with this treasure, undisturbed from without, in that still blessedness, which the rich seek in vain to purchase with their accumulated stores.” As the lovely and lamented L. E. L., he forgets every thing in the