

(ORIGINAL.)

## ACQUAINTANCE WITH THE GREAT.

BY A. R.

O blessed letters ! that combine in one  
 All ages past, and mark one line with all :  
 By you we do confer with who are gone,  
 And the dead-living unto council call !

DANIEL'S MUSEPHILUS.

THE story of the poor weaver contains an excellent moral, who, when accused of vanity, because he claimed acquaintance with a celebrated poet whom he had never seen, pointed to the shelf which contained his little library, and replied ; "There are his works, I have had them for many years, and have read them over and over, till I can repeat them all from beginning to end, and surely he and I must be pretty well acquainted by this time." Admit the claim of the weaver to acquaintance, and what a double force is there in the old maxim "that a man is known by the company he keeps !" Admit it, and how wide may be the range of our acquaintance ; an acquaintance not limited to the little circle in which we ourselves move, but wide as the extent of civilization, and stretching backwards to the remotest periods of history.

Admit it, and what becomes of complaints of dull and uncongenial society—of associates exclusively devoted to petty gains, and destitute of relish for all who are not, like themselves, of the earth earthy ? Admit it, and the humblest cottage may be irradiated by the wisdom and converse of the great, equally with the splendid mansion and the palace. There are great men around us every day, "warriors and statesmen, and prophetic bards." It may be they speak not to us in an audible voice, but there is a language which needs not to be articulated ; there is a mute eloquence which thrills the innermost recesses of the delighted spirit ; there is "society where none intrudes ;" there is a communion of soul with soul over which time and space have no power. There are thousands now living in quiet corners of the land—not a few acting in the whirlpools of business and anxiety, whose sympathies with the great master spirits of antiquity is no less real than if they had trod "the olive grove of Acadamé," and listened to the living voice of Socrates,

"Whom, well inspired, the Oracle pronounced  
 Wisest of men."

There are thousands for whom the rocky, though not unfruitful isle of Ithaca, is invested with all the charms of home, who can see the godlike hero consuming his heart in unaccompanied sorrow, on the sea shore, and hear him bewailing his cruel fate in all the melody of charmed words.

But turn to a very different age, and to a much more extended class of readers, and it will be easy to perceive the very same sympathy, manifested in a way equally unequivocal. Look at the tie which connects Sir Walter Scott to his readers. Is it not as close as the tie of common acquaintance ? Is it not rather an intimacy, a friendship, a relationship, founded on admiration and respect, and gratitude ? No wonder that Christendom bewailed the loss of such a man. No wonder that every man felt as if he had lost a personal friend. His unaffected simplicity, his kindness of heart, his never-failing fund of anecdote and tradition, his unwearied application, the very minutiae of his domestic arrangements, all are known almost as well as if he had been our next door neighbour ; nay, it needs but little effort of the imagination, as we look upon the last and best of the thousand portraits which the respect of the age has called forth, to bring up in living breathing form, the hale and vigorous, though somewhat antiquated gentleman, with his fine Scottish face and expanded brow, who, for so many years, was the life and soul of a highly cultivated circle in the metropolis of his native land.

It is said that friendship cannot exist along with a sense of obligation ; if the remark be true, certainly in regard to Sir Walter Scott we must plead an exception. Thousands felt themselves under the deepest obligation to him, who yet admired and loved him. How many a solitary and desponding heart has been irradiated by his cheerful and submissive temper ! How many slumbering souls have been awakened, and their whole powers of admiration and love called into action, if not into existence,