

DESCRIPTIVE POETRY.



HOW little we really appreciate the charms of nature! We welcome indeed the spring with its agreeable sunshine and balmy air; we are refreshed when the cooling showers of summer lower the temperature and settle the dust; the leafy shade and the velvety grass beneath we do not fail to appropriate to our own pleasure; but this much is regarded evidently with as much relish by the patient kine that graze upon the hill-sides.

The love of nature is certainly a habit to be cultivated. It is the handiwork of God that declares His love, His power, and His glory. To commune with nature is to approach nearer to nature's God. To cherish a love of nature it is not necessary to worship her, nor to subsist in such a state of sentimentality that the meanest flower gives thoughts too deep for tears; nor should one, above all, as Bryant advises, "when thoughts of the last bitter agony come like a blight over the spirit, go forth unto the open sky and list to Nature's teachings," as he would approach the altar of a deity for consolation, but let him in such mood "list to Nature's teachings" as to the teachings of an apostle of Him who lightens the burden of the distressed. There certainly can be no harm in a moderate dilection for our natural surroundings; it can only make us more content with our lot, more grateful for our blessings and more devoted to the Author of them all.

A keen perception of the beauties of nature is the endowment of the poet. It is by the poet that her charms have ever been extolled and so description of nature has ever been one of the chief subjects of the poet and, we might also add, the excellency of his description, the evidence of his inspiration from the Muse.

There are two rather indistinct divisions of poetic description — subjective and objective. In subjective description we behold the scene through the mind of the

poet; we perceive not the outward appearance of the subject, but the inward impression upon the poet's soul. The poet, for instance, to whom the meanest flower that blossoms can give thoughts that lie too deep for tears, is quite apt to present his pictures subjectively. To such poets the most common-place objects are sources of inspiration — a solitary stump, an insect, a tuft of grass is sufficient revelation. This is rather beyond description proper. Objective description presents the object to our vision in its natural colors, as we would see it with our own eyes. It lies we may say, midway between subjective and scientific description. Described scientifically we are apprised of form, shape, size, color, species; subjectively it is rather the impression made by the object than the object itself that is set forth; while between these two lies the objective, by which we are made to conceive the scene as it really is but with all the beauties exposed—not too minutely detailed nor too heavily veiled with sentiment. As subjective description approaches the lyrical in sentiment, we will not here attempt to follow it, but in our limited space endeavor to take a slight consideration of that which lies within or approximate to objective description.

The keynote to description is happy selection of circumstance, in which respect it is similar to painting. A true artist with deft hand will trace a few significant, well selected lines, and lo! you have a faithful reproduction of the landscape before you. You might take the pencil yourself, if you were not an artist, and distribute twice as much coloring matter and many times as much labor and pains, and be unable to recognize your subject after the operation. It is the same with description, it catches the distinguishing features, it gives the colors of life and reality, it places the object in such a light that a painter could copy it. It particularizes the object described and marks it strongly, as it is particulars that give a distinct idea. This is the chief excellency;