

man wandering about Greece, singing his ballads, and in his unconscious simplicity, he was raising to himself a monument more lasting than the pyramids, a cenotaph confined to no time or space, but which would rise spontaneously, wherever civilized man dwelt; and yet throughout this noble structure of undying verse, there is not one word of himself—not one clue by which we may discover his birth-place or his parentage.

Tradition tells us that a century or two ago, a poor young man, named Will Shakspeare, was obliged to leave his sweet country home, in consequence of a roguish, boyish feat of deer stalking; he went to London, and to earn the wherewith to support life; he performed low characters on the stage. Yet what a priceless legacy has this man, who tells us nothing of himself, left to the whole world! He was the exponent of the world, beneath whose magic pen all classes sprang to life; in his mirror every man can see himself, his friend, every body but Will Shakspeare; he never obtrudes his own thoughts and feelings, but the prism of his mind reflects all others. Again, if ever heroism descended from the saddle, and doffed the sword and helmet, then John Milton was a hero, coming out with opinions so contrary to those of his age, writing "Paradise Lost," without one word of himself, unless where he speaks in plaintive resignation of the sunbeams falling upon his eye, without his seeing them, but uttering no murmur, filled with the absorbing and glorious subject which he was pouring forth in god-like words. Long will such names be remembered as living not for themselves, but as raising and elevating the hearts of thousands.

The poetry that requires the most thought and reflection, is undoubtedly the ethical, that calls not only the fancy and imagination into play but the reasoning powers; it convinces at the same time it pleases. Perhaps the greatest ethical poem was the one written in the reign of Elizabeth, by Sir Thomas Davis, on the nature of the soul; but it is too abstruse for popular reading, and serves better as a work for study and thought. More than a century after Davis, came Pope, who takes the lead among modern ethical poets; the basis of his poetry is sound morality, the superstructure wit, a wit sentences and cutting, rather than suggestive; he was not the poet of nature, but of society; his own charmed circle, with their virtues and their follies, saw themselves reflected in his polished verse; he preferred the artificial to the natural; he possessed none of the enthusiasm of the poet, and yet from childhood "lisp'd in num-

bers," and verse flowed from his pen, formal and cut like the trees in his own garden, but smooth and regular; sarcasm gained added point, and flattery, a deeper meaning from his diamond pointed pen. From him the most venerable character received greater lustre; the cardinal virtues appear with an enlarged utilitarianism; Truth becomes condensed into axioms, generally remembered, such as these:

"Be silent always, when you doubt your sense,
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence."

"At every trifle scorn to take offence;
That always shows great pride or little sense."

"Words are like leaves, and where they most abound
Much fruit or sense beneath is seldom found."

And his works are filled with such sententious expressions, which convey concisely a world of meaning and good sense. He opened no new mines, but he gathered the ore, and fusing it in the furnace of his own genius, stamped it with fresh forms, and sent it forth to circulate in the world.

Pope was an indefatigable student; he wrote for his species, not himself; he applied closely to the improving and cultivating his powers. He had but little of the imaginative faculty, which is usually considered as peculiarly the poet's own, but his invention worked with alacrity in the train of his understanding; it never took the lead, but merely seasoned his strong mind. His intellect was vigorous, but his body weak, so that he lived a life of suffering and disease, that rendered him sensitive, and deprived him of much of the joy of existence. In poetry, emotions usually suggest thoughts, but in Pope, thought suggested emotions; he was armed, like the Grecian Pallas, when she sprang from the head of her Father, cap-a-pie, with a dark shield, but glittering spear. But Pope was not a faultless writer, even for his style; there is a lack of delicacy, a want of elevation of sentiment, which mars his best productions; many condemn him as sceptical, and have deemed him infected with the false philosophy of Bolingbroke, but in the "Essay on Man," which is considered as the exponent of his views, he argued, not so much from his own mind, as from the opinions of the times.

Perhaps no greater contrast, or better colleague to Pope in ethical poetry, can be found than Cowper; they make a delightful duumvirate, strikingly opposed, yet in many points similar; they are both social, both utilitarian; but Pope carries us into the world, Cowper out of it; Pope leads to history, Cowper directly up to God; Pope is full of useful and dignified action, Cowper commends devotion and social feeling to us. His was