

friends to a common cause, or as children of the same family around the same consecrated fireside. Literature is not confined to a party, her instructions are limited to no sect, nor is her language that of narrow minded bigotry. She stretcheth out her hands to every one whose eye brightens at her approach, and leads him to her green pastures, and her quiet waters. It is profanation, therefore, for any to enter her sacred enclosures, with unholy passions ranking in their hearts, to tread down the "never blossomless" flowers which breathe the sweet fragrance to her lowly minded disciples. The war cry of party and the fierce struggles of political ambition, are not fitting for the retreats of the muses :

"Here twilight is, and coolness : here is moss,  
A soft seat, and a deep and ample shade,  
Drink, pilgrim here : Here rest ! and if thy heart  
Be innocent, here too shalt thou refresh  
Thy spirit."

Personal prejudices and animosities are still more injurious and disgusting ; we may smile, indeed, at the well meant effort of friendship to rescue from the Lethæan gulf, the prosing, leaden dullness of a friend, but there is nothing in this which calls forth the deep reprobation which waits on the snarling and disappointed libeller. The wise critic will avoid both political or personal friendships or antipathies. It is his business to give an impartial decision. He must examine thoroughly, weigh cautiously, and decide honestly. His premises must be rational, his deductions legitimate, his conclusions justly applied. He is not to rest content with giving bare opinions, but must shew also how his opinions were arrived at, and how sustained. He must not lay down a dogma, and then quote those passages, and those only, which can be twisted so as to support it ; he is to exhibit both defects and beauties, to shew not a single feature only, but the whole countenance. It is his duty to censure with severity where a lighter reprehension would not be effectual, especially when morality may be attacked, or the peace of society undermined for interested purposes. In these circumstances he would be deaf to the outcries for prevented representation, as well as to the groans of those who consider themselves attacked without just cause. His business is to proclaim the truth as he believes it, to shew by quotations fairly made, that his praise is merited and his censure not misapplied. At the same time he must be careful not to confound, or mistake for general principles or standards of criticism, the rules dictated by his own fancy or habits of thought, his prejudices or his ignorance. When he has so determined, when he is satisfied, that there is just ground for condemnation, he should proclaim his sentiments openly and with freedom, even when the author he condemns may be one of the idols of the age. Paying all due respect to the public voice, he is not on

this account to let popular delusions escape unexposed. At all times willing and anxious to discover truth, not afraid, on proper occasions, to avow it, ready to suffer for it, if need be, and never ashamed of it, he should speak honestly, openly and with candour. In what is called Retrospective Reviewing, there is not so much necessity for these high qualifications. The task of the Retrospective Reviewer is comparatively an easy one. He sits not down to pass judgment on a work hot from the press, unknown as yet to the public. His business is, therefore, not so much to direct and lead public opinion, as to follow its decisions, at least in some degree. Public curiosity has been gratified, excitement has passed away, and the sober second thought of the community can be ascertained and pointed out. There is less danger too, of being swayed by personal or party feelings, for it is impossible to look back with the same degree of excitement and interest to persons and topics which are in the past, and perhaps partially forgotten. Time is the great leveller, and rivalry and personal contention, if not swallowed up, are yet softened and rendered less dangerous by thoughts of the past. Errors which we once cherished with the fondness of a first love, time may have exploded, or worn away by his invisible but powerful influence ; rivals once feared, may be now in the grave, or we ourselves may be so changed as to look back with surprise at the jealousies and contentions which once disquieted us.

The Retrospective Reviewer has another great assistance, in having before him at once, all, or nearly all an author's works ; and is thereby enabled to form an opinion as to his general merits or demerits. He is not called on to predict, from an inspection of the bud, the quality and kind of fruit likely to be produced. As the traveller, in the sunny regions of Spain, beholds on the same tree the opening blossom, the crude fruit, and the ripe golden orange, so the Retrospective Reviewer has at once before him, the full history of an author's advancement, in the glittering production of his youth, and the maturer and more substantial fruit of age and experience. He writes, therefore, with more confidence, and the more so because he can address his readers in relation to works they have themselves seen, and whose merits they have decided upon. He does not say, "Take this for granted"—"you will find such and such blemishes or beauties"—but he can appeal to the opinions which his readers have already formed. "Did you not find such and so many beauties ?" "Did you not feel yourself shocked at this, or amused at that ?" In a word, he is not introducing a new acquaintance, but speaking of an old friend, or it may be repeating the warnings, or giving vent to the feelings of disappointment and distrust, which his reader had felt long ago. It is true, that when the Reviewer happens to speak in slighting or condemnatory terms of one, whom his