

# CURSORY COGITATIONS UPON POETRY.

BY W. S.

"Poetry, thou sweet'st content,  
That e'er heaven to mortals lent;  
Though they as a trifle leave thee,  
Whose dull thoughts cannot conceive thee;  
Though thou be to them a scorn,  
That to naught but earth are born;  
Let my life no longer be  
Than I am in Love with thee!"

GEORGE WINZEL

If the hypothesis which has been entertained by the more amiable of the philosophical fraternity, and so ingeniously shadowed forth by N. P. Willis—that in precise proportion as we cultivate the intellectual germ within us in this nether world, will be graduated our sphere of enjoyment in the next,—have any more solid basis for its foundation than mere fanciful speculation, our obligations to the divine art of poetry will be infinite. For, above all other agents that contribute to the intellectual progress of mankind, this is pre-eminent for its connection with mental industry, and with the moral as well as intellectual advancement of our nature. By no other means are we so readily led into habits of reflection, as by the contemplations induced in us by the great poet, of whatever is beautiful and grand, of whatever partakes of the character of the tender, the passionate, and the pure, in the wide spectacle of nature and of man which surrounds us; nor can this end in itself, but must needs conduct to the loftiest subjects, and stimulate to the most intense and gravest efforts of meditation.

Untaught by the lessons of the poet, we are scarce regenerate from the earthly trammels that impede our intellectual organization in its upward aspirations to loftier spheres of action and of thought—even the wonders of the material world, in their ever-changing variety of aspect, are to us "a sealed book;" the mountain towering in wild sublimity, and the majestic cataract, the deep umbrageous wood, and the ever-flowing river,—all the sights and sounds of nature, under whatever circumstances or in whatever form they may be presented to us by the alternations of the recurring seasons, are but seen with the eye and

heard but by the ear—regarded only with reference to the earth-limited wants and desires of our nature.

"The philosopher teacheth, but he teacheth obscurely, so as the learned only can understand him; that is to say, he teacheth them that are already taught." It is not so with the poet; he is indeed, the right popular philosopher; there are none, at all initiated in the "mystery of letters," so unlearned that they cannot understand him, with intellect so darkened that they cannot reflect the light from his glowing page, or with heart so deadened to spiritual existence as to be wholly insensible to his power, whether manifested in the beautiful visions and melodious music he has filled the universe withal, or in the softening influences he insensibly exercises over every phase of social life. In our admiration of this "great gift of God to man," we favour no particular school or schools of poetry, after the fashion of which certain classes of our poets may have wooed the muse.

Referring not so far back as to *Homer*, *Spenser*, *Dante*, or *Petrarch*, over whose vivid and burning pages we are even sometimes guilty of a nod, but within a scope which may be indicated from the sublime numbers vibrating to the touch of him whose physical orbs seemed but darkened that his mental gaze might meet undazzled the soul-freed visions which were vouchsafed to him by the Eternal One, down to the muse of a later day, over which presides the ministering genius of Wordsworth and Coleridge, imparting to it the capacity to attune the human heart to a wider love and benevolence, and to a greater admiration of nature's loveliness, and deeper gratitude for the beneficence of nature's God, than as yet had been