

that grand opening sentence of his *Paradise Lost*, which, with all its eloquence and rotundity, borders closely on the blasphemous, being something between a playful imitation of the old Greek invocations, and a solemn prayer to the Almighty. Indeed, it may be said of Milton generally, that while his classical knowledge furnished him with abundance of ornament and elegant allusion, it often ran into pedantry, so that we find him looking at the facts and doctrines of the Christian religion through the spectacles of an old Heathen.

In like manner the great epic poet of the Romans, VIRGIL, often goes out of his way to imitate Homer, translating whole lines from him word for word, copying his exclamations and reproducing his similes, in a way which to a modern reader appears slavish, and not only uncalled for, but sometimes forced and inconvenient.

A reaction against fictitious tastes has set in among our modern poets, beginning with WORDSWORTH, based upon the axiom that a healthy mind will find a sufficient store of beauties in Nature as she presents herself to modern eyes, without pretending to look at her with the eyes of bygone generations—yea more, that Nature herself presents aspects more beautiful than the distorted likenesses of an Art which tries to flatter her.

It is charged against Wordsworth that in avoiding one evil he rushed into the opposite, and in his aversion to the unnatural and exaggerated, fell into the error of being weak and childish. This charge, however, cannot be brought against Tennyson, who is in some respects a follower of Wordsworth, and who, whatever may be his faults, has certainly the merit of rendering genuine modern sentiments into vigorous and elegant verse.

Wordsworth was the leader of a school who avowedly sought to depose false and conventional beauties, and restore Nature to the throne which they had usurped; but before