

must acknowledge who have read Young, Crabbe, Wordsworth. In one page Young has concentrated the whole argument for a God, so that if not *the best*, poetry is certainly a good vehicle of instruction. If not, why did our Saviour convey his precepts by poetic language, for the parables are only short poems, which convey the truth to the mind, in a most pleasing and impressive form?

Poetry improves and instructs us, by the nobleness of its ideas, and the beauty of its language; it refines the mind, and elevates the thoughts; poetry, and her sister arts, are the great purifiers from the dross of common life. Why has nature made everything beautiful, if not to gratify the eye, and ennoble, and elevate the taste?

But the adversaries of poetry ask what is the use of it? What does it prove?—To the first should be replied, that its use was the ascertainment of truth, the forming just principles, and the wholesome gratification of the taste. In this utilitarian, money-making, house-building, steam-boat running, railroad-laying, mob-rising, king-decrowning times, do we not need something to elevate our taste? We do these things as the means of living, not as the end of life. We do them to live, not live to do them. Again it is said poetry proves nothing. Are we wholly intellectual, wholly spiritual, that every thing must be proved? Then Babbage, the great machinist of London, who has invented a machine for solving logarithms, with perfect correctness, would have made a better man than any of us. No; we have a spirit, a soul that reveres, loves and fears; this, the highest portion of our being—this soul tells us what to do; our understanding tells us how to do it; but you cannot *prove* man into goodness, or *state* him into virtue.

We have virtue, but it is too little fostered, too little cultivated; it does not fill our hearts with delight, as it should; but Poesy lifts us out of ourselves, and shows us virtue embodied. Who can resist the effect of the description of Hector's virtue, his resistance of the entreaties of Andromache, and his going forth to do his duty to his father and his country? Who can read it, without loving his heroic virtue? Or what heart is so cold, as not to have been touched and elevated by the simple tale of that heroic boy, who had been so taught the noble lesson of obedience, that though the deck was burning under him, the blazing spars falling around, he would not desert the post entrusted to him, but stood manfully, till the sheeted flame became his shroud, the crackling of the blaze, his requiem! A man may be coarse and tyrannical in daily life, but

he must feel a glow of patriotism and generosity as he reads such accounts.

This much, and much more, has been said of the value of poetry, without comprehending in the remark, the instruction to be conveyed by it; every one who has read much, must acknowledge that the poet has cheered his solitude, soothed him in the reflux of business; the poetic description of home enjoyments has rendered his fireside more dear, his heart has gone heavenward with the choral strains of sacred poetry, and his feelings swelled with patriotism, at the loud pæans of victory; he has been kept by them in the company of the good and beautiful. Of course this can be said only of good poetry, and young persons should take a few leading authors, by whom to foster and quicken the poetic taste—the Iliad, the Odyssey, Collins, Pope, and Cowper; and having once read their works, should peruse them immediately again. The rhythm requires it, for the beauty and truth of the poet's thought cannot appear to him on a first perusal; the mind would be fructified, the taste cultivated, and the whole intellectual nature expanded by such a course.

There is at the present day, a great deal of miserable poetry, the ephemeral productions on the moment; our periodicals are deluged by poetasters, our book-stores heaped up, loaded with productions, whose only merit seems to be the magic letters on the title page, "just published." Hot-pressed books, with uncut leaves, that are seized upon and devoured eagerly, merely because new. Some of the writers of our day, like Hood, Tennyson, Bayley, and Barrett, may go down to posterity, as Bloomfield, Crabbe, and Shenstone, have come down to us, because they have placed their hand upon the human heart, and in their verse had counted its beatings, told its pulsations of love, and hope, and fear, and laid bare its marvellous workings; but most of them will sink into utter obscurity.

The prevailing fault of the poetry of the day, is an intense egotism, a bringing forward of the writer's own feelings, and individual circumstances; the celebrated writers of other days have been close thinkers, and earnest students, but neither thought nor study seems to be required to make a poet of the present time.

The pyramids have forgotten the date of their corner stone; and the very name of their projectors, for whom they were to be the enduring mausoleum, preserving the perfumed and embalmed body, is only dimly shadowed forth by the almost illegible hieroglyphics. At the very time they were being built, by a down-trodden and oppressed people, there was a poor blind