

but incisive spirit—the theorising and constructive tendency—all are the same in the two compositions, the theological and the literary. It is singular enough that in our last article, before we had seen the critique referred to, we spoke of the ‘*Eccce Homo*’ as the sort of prose counterpart of “*Paradise Regained*,” and of the latter as characterized by much of the indefiniteness of the former as to its theological opinions. We do not agree with some of the criticisms in that fine Essay on Milton. There is perhaps too much theory, or the theory is not always just. There is a fine classification of the poets of the very age we are considering, and which may take in the poets of every age. There are the Wit-poets—such as some of those we have already specified—Suckling, Wither, Herrick, Waller, Dryden, Earl of Dorset, Rochester, &c., &c. Then there are the Art-poets, such as the dramatists of the Elizabethan age, Milton himself, though Milton is rather referred to a third class—the bards or the prophets. The bard and the prophet belong to a higher class, to which surely Shakspeare may be exalted, even though he wrote dramas. To the bards Professor Seeley assigns Spenser, to the prophets Milton. The term bard is very indefinite, and not so appropriate: the term prophet is more so; and certainly, if ever there was a “*Vates*” Milton was one. He was first the bard according to Seeley, and latterly the prophet: “He begins as bard and ends as prophet.” Wordsworth was a prophet: Byron and Scott and Southey and Coleridge, we suppose, were bards, or at least Art-poets; and Tennyson, and indeed most of the poets of our own day, are in Professor Seeley’s further classification, “the monks of the religion of Art:” they are Art-poets exclusively, devoted to poetry for its own sake. Seeley’s remarks upon this last phase of the poetic life are admirable, and we could wish we had space to transfer them to our pages. This, it will be seen, is a very comprehensive and discriminative classification. We do not so much accord with the theory of Milton’s poetry—that while his earlier productions are to be classed with the works of Spenser, his later poems are the antique—the classic—the Grecian ideal revived:—they are according to Seeley, the “English Renaissance.” “He (Milton) is still, as much as ever, an ideal poet. He presents to us, not the world as it is, but grander and more glorious; human beings in a state of perfection or angels, and if also devils, yet sublime devils. But the ideal is no longer the ideal of his own age. Nothing in habitual English life, nothing in the European life of a thousand years past, suggested the order of things presented in these poems. Yet the ideal is not original. He does not initiate us into a new mystery, as Wordsworth into the mystery of nature or Goethe into that of Art. In his quarrel with the age he falls back upon antiquity. He revives the ancient world. His poems are the English Renaissance.”

But, again, while Milton is a Greek, he is also, it would seem, a Jew. “In this renaissance,” says Professor Seeley, “there is no taint of Paganism. Under the graceful classic forms there lies the sternest sense of duty, the most ardent spirit of sacrifice.”

Now, all this seems to partake more of the character of theory than of true criticism. It is an example how strong the love of theory is