

ary—the yearning—are all emanations from the principle—the vague internal impress of something great and high, “above the visible diurnal sphere.” It is this

that people space  
 With life and mystical predominance.  
 Delightfully it dwells 'mong fays, talismans,  
 And spirits; and delightedly believes  
 Divinities, being itself divine.  
 'The intelligent forms of ancient Poets,  
 'The fair Humanities of old Religion,  
 'The Power, the Beauty and the Majesty.

It follows not, therefore, that the Religious Poet has most strongly within him the governing source of Religion itself,—the love—the worship—and the awe—which belongs to the word REVERE. And Shakspeare in whom veneration is unceasingly pre-eminent—indulges less of what in the daily sense is termed “religious” feeling than almost any English writer equally voluminous. But easy indeed is it to trace the sacred shadow that rested on that vast mind; and dull must be the sectarian who would trace more of the supernatural awe—Religion in its large sense—in Blair's Poem of the Grave, or Addison's Hymn on Providence, than in the gloom of Hamlet or the dreary grandeur of Macbeth.

In that Poetry, however, more especially and commonly called Religious—poetry devoted to the praise and worship of the Deity, to the triumphs of revelation, the conditions of human life, the prospect of the grave, and the victory over death, England is peculiarly rich. It may, however, be observed, that many of our most beautiful writings of this class are but little known, and among the neglected fragments of our earliest poets lies the music of some of the purest, the tenderest, the most solemn out-breathings of a religious heart. The habits and manners indulged by the poets of our ancestry, were indeed especially suited to that soft and solitary contemplation, which is the nurse of the religious spirit. The quiet of the country life, the early rising, what time “the great sun begins his state”—the then thinly peopled greens and hollows, the frequent bell of the old church service, the Gothic spire, and dim aisle—so creative, in the soul, of the shadowy, the aspiring, and the definite—the very fashion of the houses, with the long fear-provoking gallery, and the gloomy room with its deep sunk windows—the private chapel to the baronial house, the quaint dial on the smooth green, with its impressive motto—were all subservient to that grave and visioned mood in which the moral thought of this life, and fore-dream of the next, steal with a luxurious melancholy over the heart. These lesser and more subtle causes aided the main reasons, viz. the yet scarce-conquered influence of the monastic spirit, and the paucity of lighter literature, in tingeing with a religious dye the writings of our more tender and contemplative authors, from the reign of Elizabeth to that of Charles the Second. Nor in verse alone is this noticeable; the religious spirit deeply impregnates the majestic prose of that period; an order of prose, be it said, immeasurably above that which has succeeded it; and it is with a sort of wonder that we remember how often we are told, gravely told, that Addison and