

in his innocent amusements is not very likely to turn out the worst scholar in his class. Still we cannot but remark that your zeal should rise in its fervour in proportion to the importance of the duties. But to return: let no man deceive himself in thinking that he can act powerfully on his fellow-men *if his heart be cold to them*, and if he be indifferent to his subject. I say coldness of heart, for this is the evil which mars so much good, as it sufficiently accounts for that coldness of manner which spoils the *medium* betwixt mind and mind. It has often been matter of chagrin and astonishment to the accomplished speaker—accomplished in all respects but in one—how his elaborate and highly polished address produced no other effect than a cold compliment to his taste and scholarship. It could produce nothing more: it wanted earnestness, it touched not the heart. A wax figure may be perfect in all its parts, artistically an object of taste, but never can be an object of love, for it wants the warmth and beauty of life. But then, remember, it must be true natural life, not the galvanised life of an affected earnestness, which is even more hideous than the stiffness and coldness of death. And it might be well for certain persons to consider that imitation, which has in it the vileness of falsehood, and has always a hard task to perform, has none harder than when it attempts to pass off the false for the true in earnestness. As this is not very difficult to detect, so it is peculiarly offensive. Nor is it unworthy of remark, that in the mysterious communion of mind with mind all ordinary forms of language can but imperfectly, without the aid of earnestness, unfold the more subtle meanings and the more exquisite feelings of the soul. This is indeed the grand interpreter of what lies deepest in the human heart; for it not only throws out nicer shades of meaning than mere words can utter, but starts in the bosoms of those you address trains of thought and emotion beyond the power of a cold expression of language to awaken. It is not the mere words spoken by a general at the head of his army, *when the decisive moment has come*, but the burning earnestness of soul with which they are uttered that touches as an electric spark ten thousand bosoms in a moment, and makes the most ordinary soldier an invincible hero. But this is just as true, although not so strikingly seen, in all the other relations of life in which the mind of one man is brought effectively to bear on the minds of others.

It were a great mistake, however, to suppose that earnestness can only exert its influence on other minds, when aided by voice, look and gesture. If written thought is greatly to interest and move the heart, it must be thoroughly imbued with earnestness. This is indeed the chief quality which makes that striking difference betwixt the productions of men mere-

ly of talent, and the far higher productions of men of genius. That it is at least an essential element in every work of genius, no one will doubt. In addressing the scholars of a literary institution, it is unnecessary to do more than merely hint that this is one of the grand excellencies in the choicest productions of the Greek mind. It is singular with what readiness you forgive all the credulity of Herodotus, as you listen with delight to the old historian telling you with childlike simplicity all that they said to him in Egypt and elsewhere: you see that he so earnestly believes all that he states that you have no heart to cross-question him. But, while a simple earnestness is a prominent characteristic in all the higher productions of Grecian genius, it is seen in none in such beauty and force as in the more ancient pieces of the drama. Most critics are now agreed that the best of the Greek tragedies cannot on the whole be compared to many pieces of the same sort of composition in the English tongue. Ancient Greece had enough to be proud of, although she produced no Shakspeare. Yet how easily do you overlook the awkwardness of the plot, and barrenness of incident, and the innumerable absurdities of the Greek drama, as you get entranced with the deep wail of earnestness that breaks on your ear from the heart of every speaker in the piece. You must go to the Book of Job, or other portions of the Bible, to find anything more grandly earnest than you find in some of the Greek plays. One ceases to wonder that a people who had earnestness of soul to produce and relish such works could dare, as they did, to bar the Strait of Thermopylae and to fight and gain the battle of Marathon.

But, indeed, is not simple earnestness the very soul of all good poetry? A poem may want many graces which the philosophic critic may desiderate, and the want of which he laments; but, if it wants earnestness, it requires not the eye of the critic, but only the sincere heart of the simplest reader, to detect its deficiencies and disown it as worthless. Even the most ordinary theme becomes interesting when the strings of the poet's lyre are struck by the throbbings of his heart. Hence those prosaic themes celebrated by Cowper are listened to by persons of the most finished taste with exquisite delight. His earnest soul enlivens and beautifies all that it touches. You listen, believe and are charmed, for you instinctively feel the warmth of a heart greatly sincere, as it comes into contact with yours. This might be still more forcibly illustrated by referring you to a poet of a far higher order of genius than even Cowper, a poet whose name is never heard by the ear of a Scotchman in the most distant land to which he may wander without a glow of national pride, yet never uttered by any man of piety without a painful sigh. Whether Burns took for his subject—for you perceive it is to him

I refer—the moral beauties of a cotter's fireside, an unhoused mouse on a winter day, or a mountain daisy torn up by the plough, his earnest soul threw such touches of beauty into his theme as have charmed right-hearted men in all parts of the world. Much good writing may assuredly be produced by cold-hearted men of mere talent and learning, but let no man attempt to write poetry unless he be terribly in earnest. If this gives to prose one of its highest excellencies, poetry has no excellence without it. Earnestness, like charity, brings into view many hidden graces, while in composition it conceals a multitude of sins.

But, if this quality of mind be such a powerful aid to written and spoken thought, it is an auxiliary not less powerful to the performance of those actions which demand much self-denial and severe and long-protracted labour. It is the man who prosecutes an object with untiring ardour who may hope to succeed. Indeed energy of character holds out the prospect of success in any undertaking which in the nature of things is possible. Nor has it been seldom that the energetic have achieved what to the feeble and vacillating is impossible. But, although the energy that can bear the tear and wear of severe and long toil implies considerable strength of all the mental faculties, yet you can hardly over-estimate the importance of ardent zeal in producing and sustaining it. If you are to be successful and useful, you must lay your account by many difficulties, which must be calmly met and resolutely overcome in life. Hope to the young is of unspeakable value; but let it not paint the journey of life as a smooth path, along which you are to be borne in a half-dreamy repose, and at every stage of the road gain your object by faint wishes and fainter efforts. Our world with its numberless confusions and miseries from folly and sin demands from all who would either reform it or pass through it with safety, not only sound principles but much energy of character. Indeed no great discovery has ever been made, no beneficial change wrought out in the conditions of society, but by earnest and energetic labourers. Copernicus, Tycho Brahe and Kepler were all ardent pioneers in that science which the great and earnest genius of Newton perfected. Arkwright and Watt made their wonderful mechanical discoveries by an ardent investigation of various principles of science, and laborious experiment in the application of these. Men half-asleep may dream of discoveries, but it is the man fully awake who makes them. No poet, "with eye in fine frenzy rolling," was ever more in earnest than the experimental philosopher probing nature for another of her precious secrets.

But the truth of this general view acquires its most luminous illustrations when we turn to those men who have been the