

PREFACE.

haps, belongs as much to the personality of the poet as to his compositions. Some of the sonnets seem to have been written with a readiness approaching improvisation, and while they manifest considerable skill in construction and expression, they, here and there—even though gift and culture belong to them—show an absence of reflection and of self-restraint, as if the composer were, at times, submerged in the exuberance of a perfervid imagination.

The range and variety of the subjects upon which he has written are surprising; he has exploited the organic and inorganic kingdoms, has explored the great depths, and, to give diversity to his theme, he has borrowed from the void and formless infinite, and:

“Meanwhile, whate’er of beautiful and new,
Sublime or dreadful in earth, sea, or sky,
By chance or search, is offered to his view,
He scans with curious or romantic eye.”

Though he has taken the liberty to think for himself and write for others, it will be noticed that few have excelled him in diligence and application or have obeyed more implicitly the canons of authority which define the rules governing the composition of a sonnet.

The sonnet, to arrive at maturity, ought to embrace only one general idea, which should be capable of indefinite elaboration. In finish and grace of expression, the Latin poets—Spanish, Italian, Portuguese—are superior to the English. By reason of the richness, buoyancy, and elasticity of their languages, the Latins have been able to express more elegantly and