

over the sensual and cruel priestcraft which is even at the present day the curse of Asiatic nations.

There is a well known and oft quoted sonnet of Wordsworth's on the origin of these myths which wonderfully illustrates the connection of art with nature. The poet first depicts the peasant of Attica meditating on the diurnal course of the sun, its fresh and early dawn, its fiery mid-day career, its slow, splendid and apparently reluctant decline ; and then how by the easy process of a poetic imagination he likens this glorious orb to a youth in a fiery chariot ; how fancy soon invests this youth with a god-like attribute ; makes him the representative of light, heat and the life-giving principle ; the exponent of manly beauty ; the patron of the beautiful ; in his hand a lyre ; his rays metamorphosed to darts of fire from a silver bow. Such was that splendid creation of classic imagination, Phœbus Apollo. And then as the bright luminary disappeared, and forth came the moon with her attendant stars, how easy it seemed to the same luxuriant fancy to conjure up

"A blooming goddess and her nymphs."

This is an example of art derived directly from nature. Now let us go once more to poetry for illustrations of unnatural art forced to return to nature to make itself perfect. When the genius of Shakspeare had almost spent itself in depicting the varied phases of human life, it seems to have gone almost as a relaxation to the supernatural :—

" Each shade of many colored life he drew,
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new."

I speak not now of Banquo's ghost, or the shadow of the Majesty of Denmark, but of his most fantastic creations of fairy land, such as "The Tempest" and the "Midsummer Night's Dream." We shall find strong touches of human nature in his most imaginative beings. Take for instance Ariel revelling amid the storms of

"The still vexed Bermoothes,"

launching lightning and thunder on the tempest-tossed bark, saving every creature in the vessel, and then quietly grumbling like an overtaxed laborer about having done too hard a day's work for too little recompense. Take again Puck, endowed with every fairy attribute, but with a most mortal propensity for child-like practical jokes ; and last of all, Oberon and Titania, the fairy King and Queen, exercising a sway even over man's