

PREFACE.



T was in my earliest youth that the subject of this poem first occurred to me. For the theme, whatever natural qualifications I may possess have at least been matured by time, and enlarged by a culture more or less kindred to its nature during the years devoted to the completion of it. A new generation has, meanwhile, grown up around me, to whose notice the present edition of the poem is offered, with the most careful revision and correction which I have been able to give to it; not without the hope of a wider audience among the generations that succeed. Such a hope is natural to every writer who has done his best to ensure the elements of durability to his work; and if it be often an erroneous, it is never an ignoble one.

All that I can legitimately ask, in the present day, from the friendlier some amongst the many who are wholly unacquainted with this work is that, if they look into it at all, they will do so without hostile prepossession;—judging of it for themselves uninfluenced by the reports of those who would rather condemn without reading than read without condemning.