

THE BEST BOON.

Of all the boons which God has bestowed on our apostate and orphan race, we are bound to say that the BIBLE is the noblest and most precious. We bring not into comparison with this illustrious donation the glorious sunlight, nor the rich sustenance which is poured forth from the storehouse of the earth, nor that existence which allows us, though dust, to soar into companionship with angels. The Bible is the development of man's immortality—the guide which informs him how he may move on triumphantly from a contracted and temporary scene, and grasp destinies of unbounded splendor—eternity his lifetime, and infinity his home. It is the record which tells us that this rebellious section of God's unlimited empire is not excluded from our Maker's compassions; but that the creatures who move upon its surface, though they have basely sepulchred in sinfulness and corruption the magnificence of their nature, are yet so dear in their ruin to Him who first formed them, that he bowed down the heavens in order to open their graves. O! you have only to think what a change would pass on the aspect of our race if the Bible were suddenly withdrawn, and all remembrance of it swept away, and you arrive at some faint notion of the worth of the volume. Take from Christendom the Bible, and you have taken the moral chart by which alone its population can be guided. Ignorant of the nature of God, and only guessing at their own immortality, the tens of thousands would be as mariners, tossed on a wide ocean, without a star to guide, and without a compass by which to steer. The blue-lights of the storm-fiend would burn ever in the shrouds; and when the tornado of death rushed across the waters, there would be heard nothing but the shriek of the terrified, and the groan of the despairing. It were to mantle the earth with more than Egyptian darkness; it were to dry up the fountains of human happiness; it were to take the tide from our waters and leave them stagnant, and the stars from our heavens, and leave them in sackcloth, and the verdure from our valleys, and leave them in barrenness; it were to make the present all recklessness, and the future all hopelessness—the maniac's revelry, and the fiend's delight, if you could annihilate that precious volume which tells us of God and of Christ, and unveils immortality, and instructs in duty, and woo's to glory. Such is the Bible.

Prize it, ye youth, and study it more and more.—Prize it, ye aged, for it guides to the New Jerusalem. Prize it, every one of you, as ye are intelligent and immortal beings—for "it giveth understanding to the simple."

MELVILLE.

REMARKS ON TIME.

Time and change are great, only with reference to the faculties of the beings which note them. The insect of an hour, which flutters, during its transient existence, in an atmosphere of perfume, would attribute unchanging duration to the beautiful flowers of the cistus, whose petals cover the dewy grass but a few hours after it has received the lifeless body of the gnat. These flowers, could they reflect, might contrast their transitory lives with the prolonged existence of their greener neighbours. The leaves themselves, counting their brief span by the lapse of a few moons, might regard as almost indefinitely extended, the duration of the common parent of both leaf and flower. The lives of individual trees are lost in the continued destruction and renovation which take place in forest masses. Forests themselves, starved by the exhaustion of the soil, or consumed by fire, succeed each other in slow gradation. A forest of oaks waves its luxuriant branches over a spot which has been fertilised by the ashes of a forest of pines. These periods again merge into other and still longer cycles, during which the latest of a thousand forests sinks beneath the waves, from the gradual subsidence of its parent earth; or in which extensive inundations, by accumulating the silt of centuries, gradually convert the living trunks into their stony resemblances. Stratum upon stratum subsides in comminuted particles, and is accumulated in the depths of the ocean, whence they again arise, consolidated by pressure or by fire, to form the continents and mountains of a new creation. Such, in endless succession is the history of the changes of the globe we dwell upon;

and human observation, aided by human reason, has, as yet, discovered few signs of a beginning—no symptom of an end. Yet, in that more extended view which recognises our planet as one amongst the attendants of a certain luminary; that sun itself, the soul, as it were, of vegetable and animal existence, but an insignificant individual among its congeners of the milky way;—when we remember that cloud of light, gleaming with its myriad systems, is but an isolated nebula amongst a countless host of rivals which the starry firmament, surrounding us on all sides, presents to us in every varied form; some as uncondensed masses of attenuated light; some as having in obedience to attractive forces, assumed a spherical figure; others, as if further advanced in the history of their fate, having a denser central nucleus surrounded by a more diluted light, spreading into such vast spaces, that the whole of our own nebula would be lost in it: others there are, in which the apparently unformed and irregular mass of nebulous light is just condensing, as it were, into separate systems; whilst many present a congeries of distinct points of light, each perhaps, the separate luminary of a creation more glorious than our own. When the birth, the progress, and the history of sidereal systems are considered, we require some other unit of time than even that comprehensive one which astronomy has unfolded to our view. Minute and almost infinitesimal as is the time which comprises the history of our race compared with that which records the history of our system, the space even of this latter period forms too limited a standard wherewith to measure the footmarks of eternity."—*Babbage's Ninth Bridg. Treas.*

JOHNSON AND MILTON.

BY ROBERT FLETCHER.

With an eye for no beauty, an ear for no music, a heart for no ecstasies, a soul in no unison with the sympathies of humanity, Dr Johnson was fitly doomed to be the giant drudge of the Della Cruscan school; a thunderer, and yet his own Cyclops, whose task it was to forge the bolts of destruction and whose glory to hurl them. Who that (and what numbers!) have formed their estimate of Milton's Prose works from his account of them, would have any idea of their real merits? If his report be fair and true, well might we exclaim with Manoah in the Samson Agonistes,

Oh! miserable change! Is this the man,
That invincible Samson, far renowned,
The dread of Israel's foes, who with a strength
Equivalent to angels walked their streets,
None offering fight; who single combatant,
Duell'd their armies, ranked in proud array,
Himself an army: now unequal match
To save himself against a coward armed
At one spear's length.

Johnson's life of Milton is a most disingenuous production. It is the trail of a serpent over all Milton's works. Nothing escaped the fang of detraction. Nothing in purity of manners and magnanimity of conduct, nothing in the sanctity of the bard, in the noble works, and yet nobler life, of the man, could shield his immeasurable superior from cowardly and almost savage malignity. He has treated his very ashes with indignity. He made himself merry with the mighty dead. He trampled, upon his memory and his grave. And who can deny that the traducer knew full well, that the heart of his countryman, then mouldering in the dust of death, had ever beaten high with the sublimest emotions of love to his country and to his God, and that the then powerless hand of our mightiest minstrel, could not be convicted of having ever penned a line which did not equally attest the purity of his motives and the splendour of his genius. But Johnson's misrepresentations and calumnies, have had their day; and inconceivably injurious though they have been to the honour of John Milton, sure we are that the time is fast approaching, yea now is, when the man as well as the poet shall be redeemed from obloquy—not by any interpretation of his opinions however honest, or estimate of his character however correct, nor even by the paregryic of his admirers however eloquent (and some of surpassing merit have lately been pronounced); but the great achievement shall be won by himself and by himself alone. With his own strong axe shall he hew down, not merely

his adversaries, but their errors. Let him but be heard. The charges against him are in all hands; here in this one volume is to be found their triumphant, but neglected, refutation.—*Introductory review to Milton's Prose Works.*

MONEY.

"Who," says Cobbet, in the third letter of "Advice to Young Men," is to tell whether a girl will make an industrious woman? How is the purblind lover, especially able to determine whether she whose smiles and dimples, and whose bewitching lips have bereft him of his senses: how is he to be able to judge, from any thing that he can see, whether the beloved object will be industrious or lazy? Why, it is very difficult." There are, however, certain outward signs, which, if attended to with care, will serve as pretty sure guides. First, if you find the tongue, I do not mean silence; I do not mean an absence of talk, for that in most cases is very good; but I mean a slow and soft utterance; a sort of sighing out of the words, instead of speaking them; a sort of letting the sounds fall out as if they were sick at the stomach. The pronunciation of an industrious person is generally quick, distinct, and the voice, if not strong, firm at least. Not masculine, as feminine as possible; not a croak nor a bawl, but a quick, distinct, and sound voice. Look a little also at the labours of the teeth, for those correspond with the other members of the body, and the operations of the mind.—Get to see her at work upon a mutton chop, or a bit of bread and cheese, and if she deal quickly with these you have a pretty good security for that activity, that stirring industry, without which a wife is a burden instead of help. Another mark of industry is a quick step, and a somewhat heavy tread, showing that the foot comes down with hearty good will. I do not like and I never liked your sauntering soft stepping girls, who move as if they were perfectly indifferent to the result.—*Phrenology by Robert Macknish.*

A BROTHER'S LOVE.

There is something transcendently virtuous in the affections of a high hearted brother towards his gentle and amiable sister. He can feel unbounded admiration for her beauty—he can appreciate and applaud the kindness which she bestows upon himself. He can press her bright lips and her fair forehead, and still she is unpolluted—he can watch the blush steal over her features when he tells her of her innocent follies, and he can clasp her to his bosom in consolation when the tears gush from her overloaded heart. With woman there is a feeling of pride mingled with the regard which she has for her brother. She looks upon him as one fitted to brave the tempest of the world, as one to whose arm of protection she can fly for shelter when she is stricken by sorrow, wronged or oppressed; as one whose honor is connected with her own; and who durst not see her insulted with impunity. He is to her as the oak is to the vine, and though she may fear all others of mankind, she is secure and confident in the love and countenance of her brother. Nothing affords man such satisfaction, and nothing entwines a sister so affectionately among his sympathies and interests as profound reliance on her virtue, and strong convictions of her diffidence and delicacy. As these two latter are far the most delicious qualities of a beautiful female, so are they the strongest spells for enticing away the affections of the other sex. A female without delicacy is a woman without principle; and as innate and shrinking perception of virtue is a true characteristic of a pure hearted creature, so it is the most infallible union between hearts that truly beat in response to each other. There is more tenderness in the disposition of woman than man; but the affection of a brother is full of the purest and most generous impulses; it cannot be quenched by aught but indelicacy and unworthiness, and it will outlive a thousand selfish and sordid attachments. A deep rooted regard for a gentle creature born of the same parents with ourselves, is certainly one of the noblest feelings of our nature, and were every other feeling of human nature dead save this, there would still a bright hope remain that the fountain of virtue and principle was not yet sealed.—*Philad. Album.*