

Eminent Literary Ladies.

No. 4.

For the Calliopean.

JANE TAYLOR.

JANE TAYLOR was born in London, Sept. 23, 1783; but her father, whose occupation as an artist permitted him to reside at a distance from the metropolis, removed to Lavenham, in Suffolk, about two years after this event. Amid the rural pleasures of a country residence, her naturally weak constitution became vigorous, and her buoyant spirits seemed to run wild amid the beauty and luxuriance of nature. Hand in hand with her sister, (who also became a poet) she would wander up and down the long walks of their garden, when not more than four years of age, chanting some ditty, which they had jointly composed. She thus formed, amid these scenes, those sensibilities of heart, and that taste for the beauties of nature, which fitted her for the deep feelings and lofty conceptions of poetry. Indeed most of our great poets have drawn their inspiration from the breathings of nature. Wordsworth, Scott, Byron, Burns, and Thomson, were playmates of nature from their youth, and "held mysterious converse with her soul." Though an active and playful child, she would sometimes stand for hours, musing with her own thoughts, and then retire to her little room to arrange them in verse. Sometimes, mounted on the kneading board, at the baker's, or seated beside the fireplace of a neighboring farmer, she would astonish a listening group by her childish effusions. But this never filled her mind with pride, (for she was exceedingly diffident) though it may have stimulated her genius. How many young writers have buried their talents in oblivion for want of early encouragement!

Her education was conducted entirely at home. Her parents, being well educated themselves, instructed her in the most useful branches of knowledge. Thus brought up, in the midst of intellectual conversation and domestic duties, she never forgot, in the pursuits of the literary lady, the occupations belonging to her sex. It was this combination of the literary and domestic, which peculiarly fitted her for becoming *the poet of the nursery*.

Her father having become minister of a dissenting congregation in Colchester, she removed with him to that place, when she was thirteen years of age. In her nineteenth year she made her first visit to London, where she formed those friendships and connections, which introduced her into the world of letters. Her first contribution for the press, entitled "The Beggar Boy," was inserted in the Minor's Pocket Book for 1804. In connection with her sister, she next published a volume of "Original Poems, for Infant Minds;" and afterwards another, of "Rhymes for the Nursery," which soon attained an extensive circulation, and established her literary reputation. She thus entered into a field, which, though the humblest in the whole province of literature, eventually proved to be one of incalculable importance. The excellent Dr. Watts was the only one who had hitherto written especially for the young; and when her poems appeared, characterized by a pleasing versification, a pious spirit, and a playful humor, almost every mother in England hastened to place them in the hands of her children. Would that every child in Canada was likewise possessed of these, instead of those silly and frightful stories, which tend to render it timid and superstitious through life. Cruelty, quarrelling, and idleness, are placed in such a light, as to create an almost irresistible dislike for them in the minds of the young. Children have generally a fondness for pleasing rhyme, and if such pieces as those of Jane Taylor were always placed in their hands, a correct and elevated taste might thus be formed in their minds, at a very early age.

In consequence of ill-health, she made a lengthy tour with her brother, along the coast of Somerset and Cornwall; during which she wrote a tale, called "Display;" which, together with many other able writings, of a miscellaneous character, made her favorite with the older as well as the younger portion of community. The shortness of her life, which terminated at Ougar, in 1824, in happiness and peace, prevented the world from receiving a more voluminous legacy from her pen; but it

will not willingly cast into oblivion that with which it has been blessed.

A striking contrast to Madame De Stael, was Jane Taylor. Retiring and unobtrusive in her disposition, she delighted more in the affectionate intercourse of the family circle and the retirement of the closet, than in the highest plaudits of the world. Her writings also, were mostly confined to an humbler sphere. She wrote for children in the nursery; Madame De Stael for the philosopher in his study. Each attained the highest excellence in her department, but the former undoubtedly did the most good. The one was guided through life by an enlightened piety, and spent all her energies in infusing the same spirit into the pliant and vigorous minds of the young. The other accomplished a great deal in a literary point of view; but in a moral one, was the author of much evil. The one lived and wrote for eternity, the other for earth. The one deserves to be ranked among the greatest benefactors of mankind, the other among its greatest writers. No wonder Jane Taylor, after reading the "Corinne, or Italy," of Madame de Stael, should address her with the following apostrophe—

"O woman, greatly gifted! why
Wert thou not gifted from on high?
What had that noble genius done—
That knew all hearts—all things, but one,—
Had that been known?"

"Love or Religion;" yes, she knew,
Life has no choice but 'twixt the two:
But when she sought that balm to find,
She guessed and groped; but still was blind.
Aloft she flew, yet failed to see
Aught but an earthly deity.
The humble christian's holy love,
O how it calmly soars above
These storms of passion!—Yes, too much
I've felt her talent's magic touch.
Return, my soul, to that retreat
From sin and wo—thy Saviour's feet!
There learn an art she never knew,
The heart's own empire to subdue."

JUNIA.

For the Calliopean.

KINDNESS.

"I AM resolved never to say anything intentionally, which will wound the feelings of another, for kind words and cheerful acts cost me nothing." Upon reflection, what a world of happiness presents itself to our view, through the medium of kindness towards our parents, our brothers, our sisters, and all others, with whom our different avocations may bring us in contact. We are all more or less gratified with the thought of having done right. Repentance does not disturb the equanimity of a mind, conscious of having performed a good act. Happiness which is the object of every person, (for we are not willing to believe that any individual courts misery,) is most effectually promoted by cultivating and cherishing towards all, those kindly feelings, which are the springs of kindly actions.

In speaking of kindness, I mean that which is not prompted by base motives, but springs from a heart well disposed towards its object—for alas! too often do we find under this garb of Paradise, the most abhorred ingratitude, ambition, envy, pride, and even hatred. To such a depth of degradation do the human passions descend, that even love, charity, and mercy, ("that droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven down on the earth beneath,") have not been left free from the use of foul purposes. But the truly good man, who makes happiness the object of his pursuit, never uses such unholy perversions, but always acts from pure motives. Such is woman's kindness, when old age requires the help of gentle hands and soothing words to make less burdensome the waning moments of mortality.

Thus, I have seen the daughter of a blind old man, whose palsied limbs were fast sinking to the dust, cheerfully administering to his wants, till his spirit fled from its tenement of woe. This was kindness.

W. M.

Hamilton, January 18, 1848.