

nary scenes and incidents that had turned up around him. And neither does this detract from the merit of poets, any more than it does from the merit of painters, that their imaginary groups are generally made up of the portraits of living men. At all events the dignity of philosophy requires that the light of truth should be poured in upon this subject as far as may be, and the important interests of a purer system of mental training require it.

Adverting then to the principle that the emotions of the sublime and beautiful are awakened by presenting before the eye the objects of external nature, it is well known that original poets have not been so much reading as reflecting men. They have come forth and seen and given us their impressions of things. The poet Burns is reported by one of his own friends to have been so much in love with the appearances of natural scenery, that he has known him to stand for an hour together looking upon the corn-fields of his native land, and seeming to peruse as in a great volume, the features of the varied and noble landscape; and it is just this susceptibility of being impressed by the things without, that enters largely into what is understood by genius. There is perhaps not a human being possessing his faculties in a sound state, whose soul would not swell with emotion in beholding a noble river, such as the Niagara, rolling onward in silent majesty amid magnificent woods,—at one time spreading out its unruffled waters to the sun, like a glorious mirror,—at another time, rolling down the terrible rapids, or thundering in one vast volume over the awful precipice into the yawning abyss,—a scene of this stupendous kind awakens the souls of the dullest of men. All pronounce it to be most beautiful and magnificent; but the feelings of the man of genius needs not such a lavish display of nature's glories to awaken them. Whatever other powers characterise the man of genius, one thing is certain, he is a man of sensibility in the best sense. Hannah More has well expressed this in one of her poems:—

"Cold and inert the mental powers would be  
Without this quickening spark of Deity!  
To give immortal mind its finest tone,  
Oh, sensibility, is all thine own.  
This is the eternal flame which lights and warms,  
In song enchants us, and in action charms."

All the authors who have excelled in writing poetry, will be found, if their writings are examined, to have been possessed of this quality in no small degree. Gray's elegy, written in a country church-yard—a poem which is in most men's libraries, might be taken as an illustration of this; and as I should wish you to verify for yourselves the accuracy of our principles, I would recommend this poem to your careful perusal, as