

The Study of Poetry.

For the Calliopean.

THE present age is distinguished by the eminently "practical" character of its business and studies. In this respect, it claims, and deserves superiority over other times; notwithstanding that the spirit of modern enterprise is open to the charge of having a grovelling tendency. Indeed this is too obvious to be denied. It is evinced in the utilitarian standard to which every employment and action is referred, and the depreciation of pursuits of an opposite kind.

Chiefly, with a view to human wants and gratification, Inductive Philosophy continues to trace the limits beyond which scientific investigation may not advance. Things visible and comprehensible engage attention, whilst unseen and graspless influences are comparatively rejected as equally unsearchable and unimportant.

This practical tendency might be expected to produce a very manifest effect upon the estimate of such sentiments as Religion and Poetry, the sources of which cannot be traced nor investigated; but lie profoundly concealed in a region of mystery far beyond the reach of human intelligence, and to be dimly perceived only by the eye of faith or inspiration.

In our times, Ethics are becoming substituted for one of these, and criticism for the other. Admiration for piety and genius may not have abated apparently; but the proper spirit to appreciate them, no longer prevails. Casting a glance at the study and nature of poetry, we esteem it a consideration of great importance, that we trace, at least, an analogy between its subject and Religion, and consequently between the emotions they excite.

It is true that all are not poets, who assert the claim to be so called. Without attempting to decide what constitutes poetic genius, it may be assumed that every individual of mankind possess some trace of this high endowment.

The soul is conscious of a mysterious communion with the objects of external nature—its beauty and sublimity stir emotions deep and unutterable—the associations of certain places and scenes come home to our feelings with a strange intensity—the conviction can scarcely be resisted of the presence of a spirit kindred to ours, and holding intercourse with it. It is the spirit of poetry that produces these inexplicable impressions, which the bard perceives and embodies, and which nourish and sustain our tenderest affections and sublimest emotions. Patriotism itself, belongs rather to the combinations of art and nature, than to the mind—it is engendered by the poetry of one's native land, that murmurs in its woods and waters, and clings around its grave stones and altars. The poetry of every land is peculiar; for it is the spirit of its scenery and the genius of its people. The bard, by a high intuition, has a far deeper insight of the nature of things than ordinary men; he feels the elements a part of his being; he invokes the secret influence, whose all pervading presence makes man and nature kindred. No matter where or in what eye, his soul is the concentration of what was in and around him—the works of Homer and Virgil are truly their *remains*. These are all that is imperishable of the heroism of their respective ages, and the sublimity of their genius, with the grandeur of scenery unutterably glorious and the splendor of skies forever effulgent.

It is probable that the holy seers of prophecy, were endowed with a high degree of the same inspiration that has prompted poets of all ages. The sublime revelations of sacred writ afford the grandest subjects, alike for faith and poetry. No doubt, if the noble author of *Manfred* had participated in that divine principle, which "is the substance of things not seen," and had experienced its glorious hopes, his strains would have emulated the holy psalmody of Scripture.

We incline to question the propriety of language often employed, when "the creations of the poet's fancy" are spoken of, as if the poetry were *made* the mere elaboration of genius, like the baseless fabric of a vision; instead of the voice of Nature speaking through her interpreter, and the very essence of truth itself. As well might it be said, that the man of science constitutes the system which he perceives. The poet has a far higher office than the philosopher—for, looking through forms and phenomena, he perceives and embodies the *impressions* of

the universe—the high prerogative of man alone, of mortal creatures, to perceive—the still, small voice of God.

So grand is poetry, and such its effects, that it is especially calculated to correct the irreligious cupidity of a practical age. But is it not greatly neglected? How many are there, prepared to dispute the palm for elegant accomplishments, to whom the pages of Milton present no sublimity, and Nature is voiceless and charmless? How many are there, skilled in the wisdom that ministers to selfish and sensual desires—frivolous and dissipated—who have lost all appreciation, if they had even been taught it, for even Scripture itself—the hallowed inspirations of *Silva* and *Sion*—to whom the paltry scenes of thoughtless mirth on earth, where folly and flattery attend upon vanity, have more attractions than all that can be said or sung of the pleasures of *Paradiso*?

SIMEON.

Toronto, October, 1847.

For the Calliopean.

Rest for the Weary.

Yea! there is rest for the weary soul,
Worn with the toils of life;
Rest, where no floods of anguish roll
O'er bosoms, wreck'd in strife.

Rest,—where the voice of the Syron's song,
Luring to vain pursuit,
Beguileth not an unwary throng,
Who follow her flying feet.

Rest,—from the load of cank'ring care,
Bowling the spirit down;
And the breath of affection meets not there
With a cold, a blighting frown.

Rest,—from that dark deceit and guile,
Betraying the fondest trust,
Which teacheth the brow to wear a smile,
While the spirit writhes in dust.

And more,—a rest from the war within,
From ambition's goading hand,
From wounded pride,—from the guilt of sin,
A perfect rest,—in that better land.

IDA.

The Mother—a Guardian Angel.

THE following touching remarks are from an Italian work:—

"A mother teaching her child to pray, is an object at once the most sublime and tender that the imagination can conceive. Elevated above earthly things, she seems like one of those guardian angels, the companions of our earthly pilgrimage, through whose ministration we are incited to good, and restrained from evil. The image of the mother becomes associated in his infant mind with the invocation she taught him to his 'Father who is in heaven.' When the seductions of the world assail his youthful mind, that well remembered prayer to his 'Father who is in heaven,' will strengthen him to resist evil. When in ripper years he mingles with mankind, and encounters fraud under the mask of honesty; when he sees confiding goodness betrayed, generosity ridiculed as weakness, unbridled hatred, and the coldness of interested friendship, he may, indeed, be tempted to despise his fellow-men; but he will remember his 'Father who is in heaven.'"

"Should he, on the contrary, abandon himself to the world, and allow the seeds of self-love to spring up and flourish in his heart, he will, notwithstanding, sometimes hear a warning voice in the depths of his soul, severely tender as those maternal lips which instructed him to pray to his 'Father who is in heaven.' But when the trials of life are over, and he may be extended on the bed of death, with no other consolation than the peace of an approving conscience, he will recall the scenes of his infancy, the image of his mother, and with tranquil confidence will resign his soul to his 'Father who is in heaven.'"