

Fireside Musings.

NO. I.

THE above title has been applied to the following, not without some serious misgivings as to its propriety. Musings I intend that they shall be—good honest musings, dreamy and wandering, fitful, necessarily egotistic, and devoid of any show of regularity or arrangement; but the blithe compound, “fireside,” has cost me a deal of trouble. A fireside, in the strict sense of the term, I have not; and, as I am a stickler for terms, I feel compelled to limit its application here by a few qualifications, in order to nip in the bud any false impressions that might arise therefrom. The word *fireside* carries with it a domesticity which is altogether gratuitous and uncalled-for in the present instance. It sounds as if it were a family affair—a common privilege, and hints unmistakably at children. Now these ingredient meanings I utterly discard and expunge. I will have none of them. Oh! fire of mine, imprisoned in a merry little “Franklyn” (strange misnomer!) thou laughest at no indiscriminate crowd. No dread female hand, armed with fretting poker, worriest thy gentle ribs till thou roarest with an angry flame. Before thee no squalling brats disport themselves with contorted limbs and idiotic babblings. No casual visitor—no unwelcome guest, spitteth upon thee. Thou livest and diest with a peaceful evenness of temper—with a grave, seemly resignation—not fretted and worried to death as other fires be. Thy very ash is dear to me in its unalloyed purity—free from every admixture of cinder or other mongrel or uncertain substance.

How many quiet hours hast thou to me beguiled with thy gentle monotony of sound, thy fantastic shapes and daring resemblances of the mundane! How often have I watched some fair profile rise from amid the chaos of thine embers, and, passing into a horrible grotesque, “grin a ghastly smile” and return to nothingness! With what an interest have I viewed the panoramic changes of thy miniature landscape!—the glowing and gleaming mountains “brought to nought,” the landslips, the volcanic eruptions, the fiery ravines, and weird passes o’erhung with toppling crags “fringed with fire!” But I am wandering.

NO. II.

I would, for the sake of my own peace of mind, that my intellectual conscience were a little more obtuse. Through time it has acquired a disagreeable habit of doubting the fitness of everything—of picking at imaginary shortcomings and flaws, and of finessing and hair-splitting to a (to me) painful degree. It is easy to dispose of a deadly error; its flagrancy invites castigation: but a venial tiny little wrong which shades itself almost imperceptibly into the right—that requires a

delicate hand for its eradication. This holds true in literature as well as in morals.

NO. III.

The naming of the children of the brain, is often the occasion of much wrangling between the father Reason, or Judgment, and his slighty partner for life, Fancy. The former sometimes gains his point, although the oftener *compound* the matter, which is indeed the only proper course; but in whichever way the difficulty is terminated, madame invariably makes good her claim to the feminine privilege of the last word. So far, the pair sustain the conjugal relationship, but alas! in the parental, either my simile or human nature must fail, for, contrary to good family government, our *soi-disant* paterfamilias undertakes the nursing and bringing, and taming, too, of the crude, half-savage younglings; while Fancy dreameth away her days in luxurious inactivity, and her nights, when her staid partner is asleep, in riotings and wantonness.

But yet, with all her faults, madame is a splendid creature. Without her, the world would be barren of all loveliness in our eyes.

NO. IV.

It is the part of novices to be excessively communicative. They are ever finding what is vulgarly called “mares’ nests,” full of all manner of novelties; and not content with the internal satisfaction resulting from a brilliant discovery, they cannot rest satisfied until they have published the good news to the world.

“Come rejoice with us,” they say, “for we have found, not indeed that which was lost, but that which never before was found.” “We have seen a new thing, and, in spite of Solomon, we will make the sun to shine upon it.” I, although not quite a novice in this department, yet am scarcely weaned from the teats of knowledge; certainly I am entrammelled by the long clothes of ignorance and doubt. Therefore bear with me and my discoveries. I have on hand a phoenix or two, and some other *rara avis*, which I will exhibit in a future number.

Popular Superstitions and Popular Delusions.

SECOND ARTICLE.

VARIOUS objections have been taken to the views I expressed in my first article on the above subject.

First.—That, admitting the Highlanders to be quite as superstitious as I have represented them,—nevertheless myself being one,—it was unseemly to expose the foibles of my own countrymen.

A second objection is, that I have apparently denied the possibility of the spirit of