

YOUTH.

BY LÆLIUS.

Hazlitt begins one of the finest Essays in his *Table-Talk*,—that “*On the Feeling of Immortality in Youth*,”—with the striking sentence: “No young man believes that he will ever die.” The sentence is as true as it is striking. All thought of Death as an enemy to whom he must one day surrender, is shut out from the mind of a healthy youth just entering upon manhood, and who is not in straitened circumstances; by the full, exuberant consciousness of increasing strength and constantly developing faculties. In the continual and unchecked enlargement of his powers of both body and mind is involved a secret sense of immortal vigour. Everything in the world around him seems to be expanding; and his capacities to enjoy the ever unfolding pleasures and beauties of life are growing with his growth. He yet knows nothing personally of decay and decrepitude. If his thoughts are sometimes turned by the changes of the seasons, by the fall of withered leaves and flowers, or by the death of friends to a consideration of the mutability and mortality of all earthly things, the regular beat of his full, strong pulse, and the buoyancy of his yet untamed spirit soon dispel any gloom thus cast upon his prospects. His view is fixed upon the future, over which the purple light of youth and love diffuses rays still more beautiful and glorious than are reflected by the happy present that surrounds him. If he is of a susceptible temperament and has refined and cultivated tastes, the very atmosphere is for him instinct with poetry, and all Nature ministers to his enjoyment. He sees everything through a soft and sweetly illusive golden haze. The affairs of life do not yet appear in those hard and cold real outlines which a closer contact with them will one day reveal to his sobered view. And in the anticipation of what he fully believes the coming years have in store for him he finds unmeasured delight.

*“Youth feasts star-crown’d in the halls of Jove,
 Hebe’s own hand commends the nectar rare;
 The Nine hymn round him, and the Queen of Love
 Twines her white fingers fondly in his hair.”*

If he is of a prosaic disposition, or of what men usually term a practical turn of mind, the mere sense of strength and vigour affords him its own peculiar pleasure. He longs for the time when he shall have the opportunity to put his powers to the test in the battle of life. But he has no just idea of what that battle really is. To him it seems to be rather a holiday tournament, in which the victors gaily bear off the prizes whose chief value consists in the applause and smiles attendant upon the bestowal of them, and in which the defeated still gain some credit and honour for their bravery and skill. It does not appear as that serious struggle we who have advanced somewhat in years know it to be, in which failure means disaster, poverty, despondency.