

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

BY GLENDOWER.

OF all the monuments of human ingenuity and labor, I can think of none greater than the English Language. It is the language of a people peculiarly favored of Heaven, both in respect of the gifts of intellect and the period in which it has been their lot to flourish. Great were the natural powers of the Anglo-Saxon race, and greatly have they been developed. We see evidence of this in the rude yet sterling qualities of their early heroes, and their hardy struggles for national existence; we see it in their subsequent achievements in arms, in commerce, and in high philosophy; we see it in their foreign settlements, giving rise in one instance to a second independent, extensive, and liberally-conducted Saxon Empire, and that too by a revolution so singularly great and happy, that one might well consent to bear the disgrace of its origin for the sake of sharing the glory of its result—to be an *Englishman* with George the Third, that he might be a *Saxon* with Washington. And lastly, we see it in that complicate and most wondrous engine of civil power—the British Constitution:—a strange medley of antagonistic elements, resulting in a most compact and durable structure,—resisting all shocks from abroad, and by an inherent restorative power, overcoming every symptom of rottenness and decay within—holding together, and even yet advancing, an Empire whose convulsive forces would send any other constitution into broken and dishonored fragments.

If from these high exploits, evincing the superiority of the race, we turn to their language, we need not wonder that we find an object of unrivalled admiration. For here the spirit of the people has embodied itself. Here are laid up in an indestructible store-house the fruits of their national toil; here the results of that proud ambition which acknowledges no superior; of that depth of intellect which searches the hidden things of Nature; and of that vigorous imagination which sends forth conjecture into the regions of possibility, throws new beauty over the sensible world, and peoples, with forms of divinest excellence, the infinite and invisible.

The stranger, of another tongue, passing over the borders of English literature, finds himself ascending from the dreary plain below into a

paradise of all things pleasant to the sight, and good for intellectual food. There are trees dropping delicious fruit; flowers that ever bloom; birds of choicest song; and streams, now gently gliding, now leaping and sparkling in the sunbeams. Or we may liken the language to a vast reservoir, into which have been flowing for centuries the noblest truths of science, history, and song—*original* truths, from the minds of her own Shakspeares and Bacons, and *borrowed* truths, from every kindred and every age. At this golden fountain the learned of all lands now fill their little urns, and carry thence to the thirsty multitudes around them.

And if, as the more sanguine lovers of human progress would believe, the time is at length at hand, when the healthful influence of a pure religion, and the more general spread of knowledge, shall give stability to political institutions, and secure a uniform improvement of the social fabric; and when also the increased and most wonderful facilities for internal and foreign communications shall diminish national jealousies; beget a greater community of interests; restrain the inclination to war; enlarge and deepen the stream of popular sympathy; and finally, make of one blood all the nations of the earth: Then, it is a pleasing, and by no means fanciful, view of the future, to consider the English nation as the leader and prince of this great national brotherhood, and her language as becoming more and more enriched with thought; more and more enlarged in its vocabulary; more and more adapted to the infinite complexities of human emotion; more and more sufficient for the native, and more and more necessary for the foreigner; until, by the silent, yet iron law of usage, its subtle, colonizing sway, has superseded all the minor dialects of earth; restored again the breach of Babel, and enclosed all literature, from the Ganges to the St. Lawrence, in an universal Saxon-dome. But if any person deem us too confident as to the future perpetuity of empires, and prefer the gloomy dogma of those determined analogists who argue, from the natural growth and decay of plants and animals, a corresponding growth and decay in every social compact; and from the fall of admired Greece and Rome, infer the fall of all succeeding nations: we, nevertheless, can-