

ward voice and manifestation. The cathedral aisle sprung up and closed over the place of prayer, like an effort to grasp the infinitude of God. Christendom, feeling that the mere articulate speech of men was harsh when it took up the Holy Name, adopted melody as its natural language, and prayed upon the organ. But the first encroachment of the rationalistic spirit checked these creations of piety, and dragged genius from the altar. Religion could not look in the glass without discovering the secret of her beauty ; and too infirm to retain her simplicity, assumed the weeds of self-mortification. The Puritans pressed the fatal question what was the use of all these glorious symbols ; inasmuch as he who is a spirit can take no pleasure in material forms, and the Being whose presence swells the midnight heavens could see nothing fair in any temple made with hands. Art instantly took flight at the suggestion ; and the grandeur and harmony of religion showed themselves no longer in the forms of worship, but rather in the actual life, of this class of men. The minster beheld the rise of the conventicle ; and the solemn anthem was exchanged for the rude and shouting psalm. In these days, the rugged features of our forefathers' religion have been softened : art is invited back, not to plead with God, but to delight and benefit man, through whose senses it is thought well to act upon his soul. But neither is this kind of expediency productive of any thing great. It is critical, not creative ; it has no new ideas indeed to express ; merely the old methods to follow for fostering the piety of men ; and reaches therefore only tasteful imitation.

And as religious art in general, so sacred poetry in particular has its origin in the natural and its decline in the