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RELIGIOUS POETRY.

THE New Monthly Magazine for August has an article, entitled "the true spirit of religious poetry." We extract the following:—

There is always something offensive in religious poetry when you see the devotion, but not the benevolence—when the religion grows harsh and fierce; and you recognise the sectarian in the worshipper. It is this which, we confess, displeases us frequently in Cowper himself, the most popular of our devotional poets, and the more, because in him the bigotry is never majestic, and the rebuke sounds not with the dread and warning of grandeur which elevates the austerities of Young. In the one, we see the Clergyman of the Muses—in the other, the Apostle. It is too much the custom with those classes, among which religious poetry chiefly circulates to judge of the sacred spirit in proportion to the sanctity of the subject. But it is not unoften that the least deeply religious the mind of the poet, the more religious the theme, —and in many, the excess of veneration alone prevents that tempering with the Things of Holiness, which the irreverent seize with the most familiar indifference. It is this attention to the outward seeming of the theme, and carelessness of the pervading spirit, in our religious poets, which remind us of that Dosiades who also wrote sacred poetry, not caring whether the verses were worthy of the Gods, so long as they were written out in the shape of an Altar. In fact, whatever be the theme of the poet, there is no want of *veneration* in the true poetical character. No man can work out a Great Ideal, who does not habitually look upward; the desire to seek out the high—the lovely—the wondrous, is in fact to feed the twin inclinations, to admire and to revere. Perhaps the world never produced a great poet in whom this sentiment of veneration was not largely developed. But the sentiment is exceedingly complex, and manifests itself in a variety of shapes; we must be careful how we confound the sentiment of veneration with the sentiment of religion. Religion is but one branch of Veneration. In some minds the reverential habit betrays itself in dim and superstitious affection for the antique. Old customs, and bye-gone laws, have for them a religion of their own; the dreary legend—the monumental ruin awake the deepest source of their interest; they are the brooders over the Past, and their worship lies amidst the Gothic aisles and desolate arches of Tradition. It is in this channel that the great Author of Marimon and Ivanhoe mainly and palpably develops the ruling organ of his tribe. It is this which