

THE CASSET.

Devoted to Select Tales, Sketches from Biography, Natural and Civil History, Poetry, Anecdotes, the Arts, Essays, and Interesting Miscellany.

HAMILTON, JULY 14, 1832.

Music is a language of delightful sensations, far more eloquent than words; it breathes to the ear the clearest intimations; but how was it learned, to what origin we owe it, or what is the meaning of some of its most affecting strains, we know not. There are few who have not felt the charms of music and acknowledged its expressions to be intelligible to the heart.

So plainly we feel music touch and gently agitate the agreeable and sublime passions that it wraps us in melancholy, and elevates in joy—that it dissolves and inflames—that it melts us in tenderness, and rouses to rage; but its touches are so fine and delicate, that like a tragedy, even the passions that are wounded please; its sorrows are charming, and its rage heroic and delightful; as people feel the particular passions with different degrees of force, their taste of harmony must proportionably vary. Music then is a language directed to the passions; but the rudest passions put on a new nature, and become pleasing in harmony; let us add also, that it awakens some passions which we perceive not in ordinary life particularly. The most elevated sensation of music arises from a confused perception of ideal or visionary beauty and rapture, which is sufficiently perceptible to fire the imagination, but not clear enough to become an object of knowledge. This shadowy beauty the mind attempts, with a languishing curiosity to collect into a distinct object of view and comprehension; but it sinks and escapes like the dissolving ideas of a delightful dream, that are neither within the reach of the memory, nor yet totally fled. The noble charm of music then, though real and affecting, seems too confused and fleeting to be collected into a distinct idea.

Harmony is always understood by the crowd and almost always mistaken by musicians—who are, with hardly any exceptions, servile followers of the taste or mode, and who, having expended much time and pains on the mechanic and practical part lay a stress on the dexterities of hand, which yet have no real value, but as they seem to produce their collections of sounds that move the passions. The musicians of the present day are charmed at the union they form between the grave and the fantastic, and at the surprising transitions they make between extremes, while every hearer who has the least remainder of the taste of nature left, is shocked at the strange jargon.

If Shakespear, Milton or Dryden, had been born with the same genius and inspiration for music as poetry, and had passed through the practical part without corrupting the natural taste, or blending with it prepossessions in favor of the sleights and dexterities of hand, then would their notes be tuned to passions and to sentiments as natural and expressive as the tones and modulations of the voice in discourse. The music and the thought would not make different expressions: the hearers would only think impetuously, and the effort of the music would be to give the voice a tumultuous violence and divine impulse upon the mind. Such of our readers as are conversant with the classic poets, will see instantly that the passionate power of music we speak of was perfectly understood and practiced by the ancients; the music which the Greeks always sang, was the echo of the subject, which swelled their poetry into enthusiasm and rapture.

ENVY.—This evil may, as it frequently has been, be compared to a stubborn weed growing spontaneously and widely in the mind, and seldom yielding to the culture of true philosophy. No one can nurse it for the sake of the pleasure it affords, for it is proved to produce only shame, remorse, and perturbation to its possessor.

Envy is so base and detestable—so vile in its origin—and so pernicious in its effects, that the predominance of almost any other failing is to be desired. It is above all other vices, inconsistent with the character of a social being; because, it sacrifices truth and kindness, to very weak temptations. It is one of those lawless enemies of society against which poisoned arrows may honestly be used. Let it therefore be considered, that whoever envies another, confesses his own inferiority; and let those be reformed by their pride, who have lost their virtue.

It is no slight aggravation to the injuries which envy incites, that they are actuated against those who have given no intentional provocation; and that the sufferer is marked out for ruin, not because he has failed in any duty, but because he has done more than was expected he could.

"CONTROVERSY"—"Tis no uncommon circumstance in controversy, for the parties to engage in all the fury of disputation, without precisely instructing or truly knowing themselves, the particulars about which they differ. Hence that fruitless parade of argument, and those opposite pretences of demonstration, with which most debates, on every subject have been infested. Would the contending parties first be sure of their own meaning, and

then communicate their sense to others in plain terms and simplicity of heart, the face of controversy would soon be changed and real knowledge instead of imaginary conquest, would be the noble rewards of literary toil.

THE PRIZE.—We have not been able to obtain a compliment of uninterested gentlemen for a decision, in season for this number of the Casket. We hope to be able to give it in our next without fail.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—We would advise a "Critic" in his contemplations to turn his eye rather to praise-worthy than the blameable; that is, to investigate the causes of praise rather than the causes of blame. Though an uninformed beginner may in a single instance "happen to blame properly" it is more than probable, that in the next he may fail, and incur the censure passed upon the criticising cobbler.

We would drop a hint to "Cholera" from Dryden's Tables:—

"Better hunt in field's for heat a unbought,
"Than fee the doctor for a nauseous draught,
"The wise for cure on exercise depend;
"God never made his work for man to mend."

The comparison of human life to the burning and going out of a lamp, was familiar with Latin authors, as we know by the terms *scæce decrevit*. Plutarch explains the origin of this metaphor thus:—The ancients never extinguished their lamps, but suffered them to go out of their own accord, that it be the last crackle; hence a lamp just about to expire was said—*decrepitare*, to cease to crackle. Hence, metaphorically, persons on the verge of the grave, were called *decrepid* men.

In great matters of public moment, where both parties are at a stand, and both are punctilious, slight condescensions cost little, but are worth much. He that yields them is wise, inasmuch as he purchases guineas with farthings. A few drops of oil will set the political machine at work, when a tun of vinegar would only corrode the wheels, and cank the movements.

"Time," said Lord Plunkett, "is the great destroyer of evidence, but he is also the great protector of titles. If he comes with a scythe in one hand to mow down the muniments of our possessions, he holds an hour glass in the other from which he incessantly metes out the portions of duration that are to tender these muniments no longer necessary." In the celebrated trial of Rowan, Curran beautifully said— "You are standing on the scanty isthmus that divides the great ocean of duration; on the one side is the past, on the other is the future, a ground that, whilst you yet hear me, is washed beneath your feet."