

occurred to several different writers, though none, up to this time, have acted upon it. Mr. Mill, for example, in his "History of Chivalry," published many years ago, says:—"A very amusing little volume might be made on the romance of flowers—on the tales which poetry and fancy have invented to associate the affections and the minds with plants, thus wedding the pleasure of the feelings and the imagination to those of the eye," etc.

Though we shall concern ourselves only with British plants, we shall by no means confine our attention to British superstitions. Were we to do so, a very narrow view indeed would be taken of the great subject of folk-lore. It is true that British superstitions alone are worthy of notice, but they are doubly so, when taken in connection with those of kindred nations. By extending our survey in this fashion, we shall obtain many new ideas concerning the common origin of the human race. Our observations may land us in the conclusion that the world is much smaller than we supposed; but it cannot fail to inspire in us a deeper and more enlightened interest in other nations, who, speaking a different language, have yet the same curious notions and odd practices as ourselves.

It is possible that to some the following notices of different plants may appear incomplete. It may seem to them that a great deal more might have been said, that more superstitions might have been given, that more speculation might have been ventured upon, that the writer has, in short, in many cases presented only the cream of the matter. To these objectors I reply with the maxim of La Fontaine—

*"Loin d'épuiser une matière,
On n'en doit prendre que la fleur."*

There is much, you must know, connected with every subject that is not worth preserving, and a subject thoroughly exhausted is often uncommonly exhausting to every one who has anything to do with it. Such a result as that of weariness ought to be avoided at any hazard. Were this made a rule what large and tedious works would the world be spared, and how much easier would it be to compass all necessary learning! My aim at the present moment—I avow it, and hope never to have a worse one—is to be interesting, and I should utterly fail in being so were I to rake together everything that has been written or said in connection with the business on hand.

But, whilst bent on securing attention by presenting the subject in its most engaging features, I trust it will not be found that I have sacrificed truth and accuracy for the sake of effect. It is a sacred duty, laid on every one who deals with such topics as the ancient superstitions and the old customs of a country, to deal honestly by his materials, and to present them to the public just as they come to his hand. Truthful writing, so far as it goes, is essential; without it the discussion is altogether valueless. To