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ADDRESS TO SPRING.

'Tis the sweet voice of spring,
As o'er each woodland hill, and sunny vale,
'Tis wafted on the balmy southern gale;
Hark! in the whispering breeze, a gentle song
Of softest melody is borne along!
'Tis the sweet voice of spring.

Telling of joy and love,
It lingers fondly o'er the few young flowers
That peep abroad in life's young sunny hours,
And hovers o'er each budding forest tree,
(That wakes from winter's sleep to summer's glee.)
Telling of joy and love.

Warmed by the balmy air;
The rill, that late in frozen sleep was bound,
Feels the soft breath, and hears the joyous sound;
And, waking from its cold and icy sleep,
Again foams wildly o'er the rocky steep,
Warmed by the balmy air.

In the bright hours of spring
When the sweet lustre of the sun's mild ray
Beams o'er the earth, and winter flees away,
Oh! there is nothing half so dear to me,
As the wild songster's early melody,
In the bright hours of spring.

Bentley's Miscellany.

HABITS AND OPINIONS OF THE POETS.

BEATTIE.

DR. BEATTIE had one peculiarity which often made his friends smile—the object of his supreme aversion was the crowing of a cock! So well was this understood that, in his latter days, the lads attending Aberdeen College, when they wished for a holiday, used to watch the professor as he approached his class-room and throw down a cock in his path! The noble chanticleer would flap his wings, and perhaps emit his favourite *solus cum sola*, when the querulous author of "The Minstrel," arrested in his progress as if by the sting of a serpent, turned on his heel, and shrank back into his house. There was no class or lecture that day. This morbid feeling even found its way into Beattie's poetry. In the midst of some of the finest stanzas of "The Minstrel" we are startled at finding the following anathema.

"Proud harbinger of day,
Who scared'st the vision with thy clarion shrill,
Fell chanticleer! who oft hath rest away
My fancied good, and brought substantial ill!
O to thy cursed scream, discordant still,
Let harmony's eye shut her gentle ear:
Thy boastful mirth let jealous rivals spill,
Insult thy crest, and glossy pinions tear,
And ever in thy dreams the ruthless fox appear."

Was ever chanticleer so lectured before? The crowing of the cock is almost as poetical as the singing of the lark or the nightingale. It is associated in our minds with the fresh and healthy simplicity of nature—with the innocence of childhood, and the rural charms of a country life. We think of old Chaucer and his tale of the "Nun's Priest;" of his thrifty widow, whose homestead boasted a splendid chanticleer, that clapped his wings, and sang upon his roost before the matin-bell was rung.

"High was his comb, and coral-red withal,
In dents embattled like a castle wall.
His bill was raven-black, and shone like jet,
Blue were his legs, and orient were his feet;
White were his nails, like silver to behold,
His body glittering like the burnished gold."

There is a picture, "glittering like the burnished gold," and worthy the brilliant pencil of a Jan Steen or Cuypp! Then, the "buried majesty of Denmark" vanished at the crowing of the morning cock, as Marcellus and Bernardo watched upon the platform—another poetical association added to "fell chanticleer." When Milton enumerates the attractions of a rural birth and liberty, he pictures the dappled dawn, the lark, the sweet-brier, and the vine; but he does not forget another feature in the rustic scene.

"The cock, with lively din,
Scatters the rear of darkness thin."

"The life of man," says Jeremy Taylor, the Shakspeare of divines—"the life of man comes upon him slowly and insensibly. But as, when the sun approaches towards the gates of the morning, he first opens a little eye of heaven, and sets away the spirits of darkness, and gives light to a cock, and call up the lark to Matins, and by-and-bye he gilds the fringes of cloud, and peeps

over the eastern hills, thrusting out his golden horns, like those which decked the brow of Moses when he was forced to wear a veil, because himself had seen the face of God; and still, while a man tells the story, the sun gets up higher, till he shows a fair face and a full light, and then he shines one whole day, under a cloud often, and sometimes weeping great and little showers, and sets quickly—so is a man's reason and his life."

Having thus buried the ridiculous idiosyncrasy of Beattie under a mass of authorities, let us see how he himself describes a morning in summer.

"But who the melodies of morn can tell?
The wild brook babbling down the mountain side—
The lowing herd—the sheepfold's simple bell—
The pipe of early shepherd dim descried
In the lone valley—echoing far and wide
The clamorous horn along the cliffs above—
The hollow murmur of the ocean tide
The hum of bees, the linnet's lay of love,
And the full choir that wakes the universal grove."

"The cottage curs at early pilgrim bark—
Crown'd with her pail the tripping milkmaid sing—
The whistling ploughman stalks afield—and, hark!
Down the rough slope the ponderous wagon rings—
Through rustling corn the hare astonish'd springs—
Slow tolls the village-clock the drowsy hour—
The partridge bursts away on whirling wings;
Deep mourns the turtle in sequester'd bower,
And shrill lark carols clear from her aerial tower."

This is a noble description, fresh as morn itself, and steeped in Parnassian dews. The landscape is Scotch, little idealised. There we have the wild brooks and mountains, shepherds in the lonely valleys, and the ocean murmuring among creeks and bays at the feet of ruined castles. The "clamorous horn" pertains more to merry England, and we must assign to it also the "ponderous wagon" and the "village-clock." The small Scotch carts and shellies are the reverse of ponderous, and a Scotch village is generally a very ragged, unsightly collection of houses. The laird builds his mansion within his policy, or grounds, away from his cotters, and from the shoemaker, tailor, and blacksmith; and the retired Scottish gentry generally settle down in villas adjoining towns. An English village—clean, neat, white washed cottages, with handsome houses here and there, each with his garden and green-painted rails, the village pump and pond, common, and old trees, and venerable church, sun-dial, and clock—presents a scene of quiet, comfort, and happiness that cheers and elevates the heart to witness. See it in a May morning, when the hedges, and orchards, and roadsides, are all one flush of blossom, and every twig and bush are rife with birds, and what scene can be more lovely? The system of inclosures has, in many instances, narrowed the range of the poor man's enjoyments, but there is at present a strong desire among the rural aristocracy to remedy this evil, and to revert to a better state of things. The Scottish peasantry are in a much worse condition; their landlords, ambitious of vying with the English squires, and of residing part of the year in the south, too often rackrent their tenants to accomplish this object; and the tenants, in their turn, screw down the price of labour to the lowest scale of existence. The soil is admirably cultivated; patient toil, and perseverance, and skill, have surmounted the difficulties presented by nature; yet the life of a poor Scotch cotter or labourer is really a scene of constant privation and ill-rewarded toil. Beattie, therefore, in drawing his native landscape, coloured it with the hues of imagination, and bathed its gloomy shadows in sunshine. Like Thomson, he looked on this goodly frame, the earth, with unqualified transport and delight; he saw in it the materials of poetry and of happiness, and, like the prophet whose lips were touched as with a coal of fire from the altar, he breaks out into a burst of inspired enthusiasm, the highest he ever reached.

"O how canst thou renounce the boundless store
Of charms which Nature to her votary yields!
The warbling woodland, the resounding shore,
The pomp of groves, the garniture of fields—
All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even,
All that the mountain's sheltering bosom shields,
And all the dread magnificence of heaven;
O how canst thou renounce, and hope to be forgiven?"

It must have been the recollection of this stanza, and a few more of the same strain, in the "Minstrel," that prompted Lord Lyttelton to pay Beattie one of the finest compliments ever paid to his genius. "I read your 'Minstrel' last night," says the accomplished peer, "with as much rapture as poetry, in her noblest, sweetest charms, ever raised in my soul. It seemed to me that my

most beloved minstrel, Thomson, was come down from heaven, refined by the converse of purer spirits than those he lived with here, to let me hear him sing again the beauties of nature, and the finest feelings of virtue, not with human, but with angelic strains."

To place Beattie, even by implication, above Thomson, is absurd. Lord Lyttelton, however, had seen only the first part of "The Minstrel," (the second was not published till some years afterwards,) and the first part of "The Minstrel" is as superior to the second as the first canto of the "Castle of Indolence" surpasses the concluding portion. The conception of his hero, Edwin, in which Beattie bodied forth his own early feelings, was well suited to the meditative nature of his genius. It is just sufficient to impart something of human interest and sympathy to the poem, without interfering with that love of description and abstract speculation most congenial to the poet. He wanted buoyancy and invention to have carried his hero into a life of variety and action. As it is, when he finds it necessary to continue Edwin beyond the "flowery path" of childhood, and to explore the shades of life, he calls in the aid of a hermit, who schools the young enthusiast through half the canto, on virtue, knowledge, and the dignity of man. The appearance of this sage is happily described.

"At early dawn the youth his journey took,
And many a mountain passed and valley wide,
Then reach'd the wild where, in a flowery nook,
And seated on a mossy stone, he spied
An ancient man; his harp lay him beside.
A stag sprang from the pasture at his call,
And, kneeling, lick'd the wither'd hand that tied
A wreath of woodbine round his antlers tall,
And hung his lofty neck with many a floweret small."

The progress of art and freedom, in embellishing life, and restraining violence and rapacity, is then sketched; and the poet paints with much force the triumph of reason and philosophy over superstition.

"In the deep windings of the grove no more
The hag obscene and grisly phantom dwell—
Nor in the fall of mountain stream, or roar
Of winds, is heard the angry spirit's yell—
No wizard mutters the tremendous spell,
Nor sinks convulsive in prophetic swoon—
Nor bids the noise of drums and trumpets swell,
To ease of fancied pangs the labouring moon,
Or chase the shade that blots the blazing orb of noon."

"Many a long lingering year, in lonely isle,
Stunn'd with the eternal turbulence of waves,
Lo, with dim eyes, that never learn'd to smile,
And trembling hands, the famish'd native craves,
Of heaven his wretched fare; shivering in caves,
Or scorch'd on rocks, he pines from day to day;
But science gives the word; and, lo, he braves
The surge and tempest, lighted by her ray,
And to a happier land wafts merrily away!"

The character of Edwin gives a charm to the poem. It is a beautiful vision of purity and romantic seclusion—a being that might have existed in the golden age of the poets, before Astrea, the last of the celestials, had left the earth. Bred in obscurity, in shepherd life, among the mountains of the north, Edwin was "no vulgar boy."

The muse unfolded her treasures to him in solitude, and when knowledge was imparted to him, and philosophy and science dawned on his mind, nature still claimed his first and fond regard, and from her beauties, variously compared and combined, he learned to frame forms of "bright perfection." It is perhaps fortunate that "the Minstrel" was left a fragment; the poet had not strength of pinion to keep long on the wing in the same lofty region; and Edwin would have contracted some earthly soil in his descent. The dramatic faculty was wanting in Beattie; he could not have invented a succession of incidents, characters, scenes, and adventures—he was still the professor in his robes.

In his minor poems he works with the same materials. His "Retirement" displays another Edwin, "a pensive youth," musing among hoary cliffs and woods, and paying his early vows to solitude.

"Thy shades, thy silence now be mine,
Thy charms my only theme;
My haunt the hollow cliff, whose pine
Waves o'er the gloomy stream,
Whence the scared owl on pinions gray
Breaks from the rustling boughs,
And down the lone vale sails away
To more profound repose."