

ON SONGS.

NO. III.—PRIMITIVE MUSIC.

Nulla reverabilis Arte, auctoritate, et studio, pernegat, pernegat, pernegat.
 Sit mea culpa licet; forsitan tamen Arte tuenda est.—R. SOUTHWELL, 1662.

—The soul-awakening gleam; fashion'd to a former art
 That struck, perchance the farthest cone—did seem
 Of Scotland's rocky wilds, did seem
 To visit me—and me alone.

Heureux un Art, dont l'histoire est l'Eloge.—GASSER.

We have had the *Geography of Plants and Flowers*—the beauties of Form and Colour have been traced from the faint tinge of the last flower which blooms on the Ocean-beach, to its highest splendour in the almost living blush of the Rose, and to where the russet Moss still seeks to climb and cover with its petrifying leaves the last recesses of the Mountains.

Philosophers have tried their skill in arranging their fellow creatures by the same laws. We have heard of the influence of the Northern Star. Hippocrates tells us the characters of men are like their countries—some *marshy* and *meadowy*, others *mountainous* and *woody*—he calculates their finer sensibilities by the rising of *Arcturus* or the *Pleiades*, whilst the profound and amiable Montesquieu, prefaces his estimation of human nature by an enquiry into the effects of heat upon an iron bar!—I have no wish to face an investigation which has embarrassed Theologians, Politicians, Moralists, and even Musicians—the question of *climate*. I will rather try to evade the *a priori* discussion and look to that power which Man possesses of overcoming the inferior laws of his nature—to that *Imagination* which like the *Winter-Carpet* of the Kings of Persia, perpetuates the verdure and delights of Nature amidst its annual ruin—to that *spark of divine fire* which, unmodified itself, modifies all things.

Yet throwing aside these material Theories, which, even if admitted, would involve us in the most extreme contradictions, we will not forget, in our tracing the *Geography of Music*, the influence of Nature—her terrors and her charms. Of all speculations of ancient learning, perhaps the most perfect and sublime is that of Plato, which regards the material universe as the created image of *Mind*, and consequently in sympathy with the soul of Man as an emanation of its original. There is indeed something in this idea, so simple—so sublime—so reasonable and attractive, that it appears to me a perversion of Intellect, or at least a depravity of Taste, to dwell for a moment on the grovelling enquiries of a Burke or an Allison. My subject forbids me to descend to these,—to examine the mechanism of the labyrinths of the *Ear*—or the mysterious prism of the *Eye*—it forbids me to ask whether the Lip analyses the sparkling Champagne and the generous Burgundy; or