

MEDICINE OF NATURE.

BY DR. PARIS.

It becomes us, before we decree the honours of a cure to a favourite medicine, carefully and candidly to ascertain the exact circumstances under which it is exhibited, or we shall rapidly accumulate examples of the fallacies to which our art is exposed. What has been more common than to attribute to the efficacy of a mineral water those fortunate changes of constitution that have entirely, or in great measure, arisen from salubrity of situation, hilarity of mind, exercise of body, and regularity of habits, which have incidentally accompanied its potation? Thus the celebrated John Wesley, while he commemorates the triumph of "sulphur and supplication" over his bodily infirmity, forgets to appreciate the resuscitating influence of four months' repose from his apostolic labours; and such is the disposition of the human mind to place confidence in the operation of mysterious agents, that we find him more disposed to attribute his cure to a brown paper plaster of egg and brimstone, than to Dr. Fothergill's salutary prescription of country air, rest, asses' milk, and horse exercise. The ancient physicians duly appreciated the influence of such agents; their temples, like our watering-places, were the resort of those whom medicine could not cure; and we are expressly told by Plutarch that these temples, especially that of Esculapius, were erected on elevated spots, with the most congenial aspects; a circumstance which, when aided by the invigorating effects of hope, by the diversions which the patient experienced in his journey, and perhaps by the exercise to which he had been unaccustomed, certainly performed many cures. It follows, then, that in the recommendation of a watering-place, something more than the composition of a mineral spring is to direct our choice. The chemist will tell us that the springs of Hampstead and Islington rival those of Tunbridge and Malvern; that the waters of Bagnigge Wells, as a chalybeate purgative, might supersede those of Cheltenham and Scarborough; and that an invalid would frequent the spring in the vicinity of the Dog and Duck, in St. George's Fields, with as much advantage as the celebrated spa at Leamington: but the physician is well aware that, by the adoption of such advice, he would deprive his patient of those most powerful auxiliaries to which I have alluded, and, above all, lose the advantage of the *medicina mentis*. On the other hand, the recommendation of change of air and habits will rarely inspire confidence, unless it be associated with some medicinal treatment—a truth which it is more easy and satisfactory to elucidate and enforce by examples than by precept. Let the following story by Voltaire serve as an illustration:—

"Ogul, a voluptuary, who could be managed but with difficulty by his physician, on finding himself extremely ill from indolence and intemperance, requested advice.

"Eat a basilisk stewed in rose-water," replied the physician. "In vain did the slaves search for a basilisk, until they met with Zadig, who, approaching Ogul, exclaimed, 'Behold that which thou desirest! But, my lord,' continued he, 'it is not to be eaten; all its virtues must enter through thy pores; I have therefore enclosed it in a little ball, blown up, and covered with a fine skin. Thou must strike this ball with all thy might and I must strike it back again, for a considerable time; and by observing this regimen, and taking no other drink than rose-water for a few days, thou wilt see and acknowledge the effect of my art.'

"The first day, Ogul was out of breath, and thought he should have died from fatigue; the second he was less fatigued, and slept better; in eight days he recovered all his strength, Zadig then said to him, 'There is no such thing in nature as a basilisk; but thou hast taken exercise and been temperate, and hast therefore recovered thy health.'

But the medical practitioner may, perhaps, receive more satisfaction from a modern illustration; if so, the following anecdote, related by Sydenham, may not be unacceptable:—

"This great physician, having long attended a gentleman of fortune, with little or no advantage, frankly avowed his inability to render him any further service, adding, at the same time, that there was a physician of the name of Robinson, at Inverness, who had distinguished himself by the performance of many remarkable cures of the same complaint as that under which his patient laboured, and expressing a conviction, that if he applied to him he would come back cured. This was too encouraging a proposal to be rejected. The gentleman received from Sydenham a statement of his case, with the necessary letter of introduction, and proceeded without delay to the place in question. On arriving at Inverness, and anxiously inquiring for the residence of Dr. Robinson, he found, to his utter dismay and disappointment, that there was no physician of that name, nor ever had been, in the memory of any person there. The gentleman returned, vowing eternal hostility to the peace of Sydenham; and on his arrival at home, instantly expressed his indignation at having been sent on a journey of so many hundred miles for no purpose.

"Well," replies Sydenham, "are you better in health?"

"Yes, I am now quite well; but no thanks to you."

"No," says Sydenham; "but you may thank Dr. Robinson for curing you. I wished to send you a journey with some ob-

ject of interest in view; I knew it would be of service to you. In going, you had Dr. Robinson and his wonderful cures in contemplation; and in returning, you were equally engaged in thinking of scolding me."—*Paris's Pharmacologia*.

For the Pearl.

DEATH.

Oh Death thou art an universal king—
All to thy iron sceptre bow the knee;
'Tis true some fear thee as a shadowy thing,
But I have seen thy face and felt thy sting,
And thou art more than shadowy form to me.

I've seen thee pictured forth with crown and dart,
Outstarting from the sepulchre's deep shade;
Piercing—through bridal gear—the young wife's heart;
Leaving the living to sustain the smart,
The widower lonely sorrowing o'er the dead.

I trace thy trophies in the charnel heap,
I read thy conquests in the storied urn—
Plumes that are floating—banners that sweep
Above the tombs of those that silent sleep—
From these the triumphs of thy state we learn.

Sometimes we view thee on the horizon's verge
Of our own social circle—tall and grim,
Then at our very feet thou dost emerge,
And on our hearths and in our homes—the dirge
Of death is heard, the deep funeral hymn.

Thy spectral form now stalks where princes reign,
And gem-crowned heads to thee in homage bend,
Then stooping o'er the mother's knee—where pain
Her infant offspring binds—no tears restrain
Thy stroke—thou smitest and its sufferings end.

No velvet covering richly dight, to thee
Prevents a ruthless stroke where nobles lie.
The pallet—though of straw—where poverty
Lingers in wretchedness and misery,
Alike thou visitest—for all must die.

Alone thou art in equal combat met,
Where the good man—whose heart from earth is riven,
His firm repose on Christ "the rock" hath set:
He finds, with hopes matured and joys complete,
The vale of Death—the vestibule of Heaven.

Oh Death thou art an universal king—
All other earthly sceptres bow to thee,
Yet the time comes when mortal suffering
Shall in our bosoms leave no more its sting.
Heaven shall disclose joy's everlasting spring,
Even death shall die—and time shall cease to be.

SELF-COMMUNION.

WRITTEN FOR THE HULL MECHANICS' INSTITUTE.

By Ebenezer Elliott.

Young Men! Poets, it is said, know nothing. What, then, can they teach? Nothing, of course, if the saying is true; but, assuming to be teachers, they may choose subjects on which something may be said by people who know nothing; and in this way, I believe, much business is done. I may be wrong in my opinions on that something, or that nothing, which is called poetry; but I have endeavoured to be right; and what I shall say to you on this occasion is my own, or made such by reflection, for I take no man's opinions on trust. I come then to tell you what poetry is—not what that word is—for, not having learned Greek, I don't know; and, if I tell you anything about poetry but what you have already felt to be true, I am unfit to address you on the subject: for what is poetry—what can it be—but the heart speaking to itself? This principle of *earnest self-communion*—on which all composition purporting to be poetry must stand, or, wanting it, fall—I now purpose to elucidate and confirm by examples; because it has been asserted by a great philosopher,* that poetry has no fixed principles—as if any thing could exist without them; because a great living poet,† whose example refutes his theory, declares, if I understand him, that poetry is distinguished from prose by being written in verse, or, in other words, that verse is essential to poetry; and because the history of modern poets, as such, is the history of the revival of poetry in Britain, their distinguishing characteristic being poetry, or earnest common sense—whereas, some of their predecessors often wrote that dullest commonplace which common sense laughs to scorn. Now, this effect must have had a cause; for, as the earth could not move an inch, as a watch could not go at all, in opposition to the indisputable will of God, as declared in his mechanical laws—so *only on the axis of its principle* can move the universe of poetry, representing the Most High in the heart of man.

When a poet, ceasing to commune with himself, addresses others, he may be eloquent, but he is no longer poetical, unless he forget his audience; and, in that case, he is addressing himself, and not others. I never read a poet, from John Milton to Robert Nicol, who does not, negatively or positively, exemplify the principle that poetry is self-communion. Almost every page of Byron's "Don Juan" exemplifies it in both ways, and the writings of Moore too often in one way only. I think I shall be able to shew you why it is, that some ostentatious men of the

highest talent cannot write a word of genuine poetry, while honest, modest, unpretending men utter it to their hearts every day of their lives.

But I must now bespeak your merciful consideration. I am not an actor; I came to read, not to impersonate. Unluckily, too, or luckily perhaps, I am told, by my fireside critics, that I do not read poetry, but sing it to a bad tune. I can, however, give reasons for the faith that is in me. Why should hymns be written, if they are not to be made sensible to the ear? It is hard to deprive the poet of its music, often the only thing the poor fellow has of his own.

"Glory to God, and the Empress! Ismail is ours!" Thus wrote Suwarrow to his petticoated master. "Powers Eternal! such names mingled!" says Byron. "These are the most tremendous words, since Mene, Mene, Tekel, and Upharsin, that ever were written of swords." And who that remembers the impious dispatch, does not utter this sentiment in his soul? *It is true poetry*; but when Byron goes on to say, as he does immediately afterwards, "that what Daniel read is short-hand of the Lord's;" and "that Suwarrow wrote his dispatch as a polar melody, and set it," etc., he may be witty, but for a moment he ceases to be a poet, and becomes a mere vain man, seeking the applause of others, with a misgiving in his bosom that he does not deserve it. Not so, when he continues, "I will teach the stones to rise against earth's tyrants." He then is again a poet—he puts his head into his pocket, and lets his heart speak.

"When the dance gaed through the lighted ha'"—and, "though this lady was fair, and yon lady was braw, and that lady the toast of a' the town," poor Burns said in his heart, "Ye are na Mary Morrison," the words he uttered were of the very essence of poetry, because his heart spoke them to himself.

When a husband, already widowed in soul, bends over the bed of the dying mother of his children, and, without uttering a single audible syllable, addresses to her every mournful and endearing epithet, his heart is conversing with itself—that is to say, with God, in the depths of our nature; and his feelings are poetry, because there can be no insincerity, no reserve about them, no possible misgiving, no starting back from the open arms of Truth. They are poetical as the reply to them—the last wordless heart's look of the dying.

Orators sometimes unconsciously become poets. O'Connell was a great poet when Stanley said to him, "I love Ireland as well as you do," and the "man of men," pausing a moment, replied, "I check myself—I will not utter another burning word; he who loves Ireland, cannot hate me. Let our hearts shake lands."

There is a passage in one of Scott's novels, which finely exhibits the poetry of the heart, struggling with circumstance, and controlled by that feeling of deference which power and rank command: it is that passage in which Jeanie Deans implores the Queen of George II. to intercede with him for the life of her sister Effie.

"How did you travel up from Scotland, young woman?" said the Queen to Jeanie.

"Upon my foot mostly, madam."

"What! all that immense way on foot! How far can you walk in a day?"

"Five and twenty miles, and a bittock."

"I thought I was a good walker; but this shames me sadly."

"May your Ledyship never hae sae weary a heart, that ye canna be sensible o' the weariness o' the limbs! I would have gone to the ends of the earth to save the life of John Porteous, or any other man in his unhappy condition. He is dead, and gane to his place. But my sister—my poor sister Effie—still lives, though her days and hours are numbered. She still lives, and a word of the King's mouth might restore her to a broken-hearted old man, who never forgot to pray that his Majesty might be blessed with a long and prosperous reign, and that his throne, and that of his posterity, might be established in righteousness. O Madam, if ye ever kenn'd what it was to sorrow for and with a sinful and suffering creature, whose mind is sae tossed that she can neither be called fit to live or die, have some compassion on our misery! Save an honest house from dishonour, and an unhappy girl, not eighteen years of age, from an early and dreadful death. Alas! it is not when we sleep soft and wake merrily ourselves—that we think on other people's sufferings. Our hearts are waxed light within us then, and we are for fighting our ain wrangs and fighting our ain battles. But when the hour of trouble comes—and seldom may it visit your Ledyship!—and when the hour of death comes, that comes to high and low—and long and late may it be yours!—oh, my Ledy, then it is nae what we hae done for oursels but what we hae done for others, that we think on maist pleasantly. And the thought that ye hae interfered to save the poor thing's life, will be sweeter in that hour, come when it may, than if a word of your mouth could hup the whole Porteous mob at the tail of a tow."

This is poetry and eloquence—the heart and the head—the soul's self-communion, and the mind addressing another.

Perhaps there is nothing in the world so poetical as the love

* Adam Smith.

† James Montgomery.