

GENERAL LITERATURE.

ON WEARINESS OF THE WORLD.

BY MRS. JANE C. SIMPSON.

"Oh! for thy wing, thou dove!
Now sailing by with sunshine on thy breast,
That, borne like thee above,
I too might flee away, and be at rest!"

MRS. HEMANS.

THERE is one principle which holds good in every branch of knowledge—whether human or divine—that the more a man learns, the better he perceives how little he has learned and how much still remains behind. He who knows but a few things, may deem that he knows all things; but he who, in a certain sense, may be said to know every thing, is constantly alive to the conviction, that in reality he knows nothing. And there is no view we can take of the soul which reflects more dignity upon it than this—that all its own acquisitions could never be sufficient to reconcile it to itself, but still leave it weary, melancholy, and dissatisfied. Who ever lived, however distinguished by the birthright of immortal genius, endowed with the most commanding energies of intellect and the noblest sensibilities of heart, whose actual attainments kept pace with the aspirations of his mind?—nay, more, whose acquisitions did not seem to be always diminishing, though always increasing? It is an indisputable truth, and it is one which leads to the most momentous conclusions, that man conceives what he never sees, and longs for what he never tastes, and pursues what he never finds. He may go on for many years busied, and almost satisfied, with the study of a thousand objects which the variety of nature offers to every peculiarity of mental constitution; but the hour is on the wing which is to strip them all of their colours, and show to him that void in his own soul which is not to be filled up on earth. The thoughts of which time was wont to be the scene, now burst their bounds and wander ambitious through eternity; the affections, once lavished to profusion on the haubles of a thankless world, now rise in generous rebellion to seek a purer and a stabler resting place.

"Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, then would I fly away, and be at rest!" It needs not the Christian's trust or the Christian's rapture to prompt to the weary soul of man this pathetic prayer of the Psalmist; for every mind, and probably his most emphatically in which nature yet reigns to the exclusion of grace, must feel impelled, at many stages of his earthly journey, to pause and consider its own bitterness, with which no stranger can intermeddle. It may be at an earlier or a later period of life: yet the moment must come to every meditative spirit, when emptiness will appear legibly written on every attainable object, and man shall be in heaviness to discover that his desires are too vast, above his ability to realize them.

We can conceive some such child of humanity, to whom the light has not yet been revealed as it shines in a Saviour's love, seated alone on a summer evening on the brink of a mountain's brow. The landscape around is bright and luxuriant—so fair that, to a poetic eye it might seem as if creation had just sprung from the Almighty hand, when Eden's enchanted garden comprised the whole universe of man. Before him are flowing the waters of a magnificent river, whose bosom has caught a hundred images of beauty and peace. Vessels innumerable of every form and size,—the red, the blue, the white sail; the swiftly dashing oar; the fishing bark moored in idle repose; the giant ship gliding at slow and solemn pace in the full majesty of her outspread wings; trees fantastic in their diversity of shape and colour; the low thatched cottages of the peasant, with the loftier mansions of the gay and opulent; the village spire gleaming from the wooded eminence, and the long range of ancestral hills behind;—these and such as these all fling their quiet shadows upon the tide, and lend a double charm to the scene. But see! as the river advances, it widens in its course, till grove and town are lost in its extending waves, and the proud ocean receives the wanderer's tribute into its fathomless immensity. Turn we now for a moment to the spectator of these wonders in Nature's book; and touching his soul as with Ithuriel's spear, let us unravel the thread of his meditations. Our moralist is a man of intellect, sentiment, and taste. Long has he gazed upon

the fairy scene spread out beneath him, but he looks not on it now.—His eyes, which are rich and dark with that peculiar colouring caught from the mingling of servid fancy, lofty feeling, and profound thought, are fixed upon a line of fleecy cloud, whose golden fringe just marks the course of the departed sun. What are the ideas which lend such depth of meaning to his countenance, what are the emotions that fling such mournful interest around his reveries? The hour is come, when this soul, so choicely stored with all knowledge but divine, is startled with the involuntary conviction, that the mortal cannot cope with the immortal, and that the fading possessions of time are no match for the cravings of an eternal spirit. The mysterious language of nature *without* has awakened the whisper of sympathetic conscience *within*; and the busy pursuits of science and imagination, which have so long lulled her into silence, are unvalued or forgotten. A chain is broken, which by a thousand links, the world had weaved around the toiling pilgrim, and the soul, loosed from her prison of human wisdom, walks forth a new denizen of a higher life.

"Surely, yes, surely," exclaims the ransomed captive, "the gold for which I have toiled is but dust after all!" The deathless principle within me cries aloud for objects of ambition, deathless as itself. Its sublime capacities demand a larger theatre for their exercise; its deep and exalted affections require a purer atmosphere for their indulgence. Time is too short, earth is too small, creation is too fleeting and shadowy, to fill up the chasm of the mind's infinity! Oh! that yonder heaven, so beautifully variegated with the tints of parting day, would open even now its airy portals, and disclose to my view that ethereal land which lies beyond. And oh! above all, that I might be received even now, as the inhabitant of that blessed region, for *there* most certainly, and *there* alone, is the spirit's birth-place and its home!"

Such is the aspiration of the natural mind in this season of retirement. But alas! though a transient liberty has been given him from the world's bondage, it is not the glorious liberty of the children of God. He is free, indeed, in a certain sense, from much of the mist that obscured his intellectual and moral vision, but he is like a bird whose wings are clipped, that he cannot soar whither he would; and while the Christian, at such a moment, would have mounted on the eagle's pinion, and found a sure haven for his earth-sick longings in that faith which seeth what is yet invisible, the philosopher, saddened by the prospect of heights he cannot reach, is fain to return for refuge to that very cage of terrestrial vanities from which he had newly escaped. And thus it must ever be with those who, in their hours of weariness, would seek in their own strength to solve the secrets of Deity. When their wishes are the highest, then they are forced to feel that their powers are lowest; and when they would fain rise above the world, in dispassionate of its pursuits, they are but gathering new motives and new energies for the world's service.

The twilight is gathering round the hill, the landscape grows fainter in the deepening shadow, all the visionary, awakened from his unsubstantial dream, wends his way slowly to the city, with a mind more attuned than before to the anxious occupations of time, from the melancholy yet false conviction, that there is nothing else to which he can dedicate its homage. "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest!"

We have seen how this principle of weariness of earth, and all earthly good, may operate on the unregenerated soul, rendering it the sport of a meretricious excitement, which leads to none but most unsatisfactory conclusions. Let us now advert, by way of contrast, to the experience of the believer, when constrained, as he may often be, by the course of his mortal pilgrimage, to long and separation from the thousand vanities of this vain sphere. Every Christian has felt, in a greater or less degree, the influence of this mood of mind of which I speak; the same which frequently animated the master-bard of Israel—and the same also to which St. Paul gave expression in these memorable words, "Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

As long as the *is* in the world, whose desert is suffering and whose wages is death, the being whom Heaven hath enlightened to behold

the beauties of holiness must be often panting after that purity which, in idea, it loves to contemplate. A thousand incidents, in the common walk of our daily life, are ready, at every turn, to surprise us into ardent and mournful longings after a more exalted than human happiness.—Ourselves, our friends, our enemies, (if enemies we have any,) the whole mass of society around us, all sprung from the same creative hand, all condemned by the same righteous law, all groaning under the same heavy burden all travelling the same thorny wilderness, all destined to the same mysterious immortality; the life that now is, the judgment that *will* come, the eternity that *must* be;—surely in these the meditative and serious spirit must often find food for deep and solemn thought, till the weary and distracted pilgrim would fain throw off the coil of earthliness at once, and rise to that region where peace is perfect and everlasting.

But, perhaps, there is no time when the world and all its pursuits appear to the Christian's eye of a nature so wholly worthless, as when at the close of a sacramental communion season, he is called to descend from the mount of ordinances, and mingle once more with the common business of life. The solemn services of the sanctuary, abundantly blessed of God to the souls of his saints, have so exalted his affections, and purified his desires, that his mind is apt to recoil with sickening distaste from all that pertains to earth and its trivial yet necessary duties. Having been permitted to breathe, as it were, for a moment, the ethereal atmosphere of Jehovah's own paradise, the air of ordinary existence has no refreshment and no charm for him. Having had a glimpse, however transient, of that city which hath foundations, which the throne of the Almighty doth glorify, and the Lamb is the light thereof, even all the varied wonders of the lower creation to him appear dim and imperfect. Having been admitted in spirit for a space, however brief, into the general assembly and Church of the First-born—that innumerable company of the just made perfect, which are written in heaven, the very fellowship of his most pious brethren here below, to him seems tame and insipid. And above all, having found by the grace of the Lord, shortly though it may have been, that in His presence there is fulness of joy, and at His right hand, there are pleasures for ever more; he would gladly shut every terrestrial object from his sight, as intruding on the sanctity of that overflowing love which the Saviour alone ought to inspire.

"Oh! that I had the wings of a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest!" Such is the silent aspiration of the heart. Like Simeon of old, the just and the devout, when led by the Spirit, he embraced with adoring reverence the Lord's Church—the light of the Gentiles and the glory of his people Israel; the terror of our emotions embodies the prayer of joyful and perfected faith—"Lord! now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Or as Peter, upon his vision being opened to behold the transfiguration of the Redeemer, exclaimed, "Lord it is good for us to be here!" fain would he perpetuate the devotions of the sanctuary, and make even now the earthly temple in which he worships, in deed and in truth, the very gate of heaven!

But this can never be. We must descend from our elevation. The world has claims upon us, and to these religion itself demands our attention. We are not yet entitled to the constant employment of saints and angels. We are pilgrims in the wilderness, and we can but view the land of promise afar off. We are not yet privileged to pluck at will of its golden fruits, nor join in the ceaseless praise of the songs of Zion. We have many battles yet to fight; we have many victories yet to achieve; our Jordan is still to cross; we are still strangers and aliens from our Father's house. Yet, let us not faint, let us not despond. Our leader is before us, our mansions are prepared for us. A few years, and we shall enter through the gates into the New Jerusalem, and have right to the tree of life, and shall go no more out; but seeing his face, and having his name in our foreheads, shall serve him for ever in perfect peace before the throne of God and the Lamb.—*Scottish Christian Herald.*

Thou mayest as reasonably expect to be well and at ease without health, as to be happy without holiness.—*Old Proverb.*