

Greek student, this strange dreamer, from the repose of an invalid's chair determined to work out for herself some of the problems of life and sing their answer to the world. It seemed a bold and perilous undertaking, especially for one removed from the ordinary ways of men, and shut up to the companionship of books and the play of unrestrained imagination. But it was not made in a spirit of mere empty egotism. Miss Barrett felt, as consciously as the old Hebrew seers, "the burden of the Lord;" and believing that she had a Divine word to speak to mankind, she had no thought of death till her task was done. In the absorbing passion of her work she could resign almost without a pang the gifts of physical health, and feel no envy as she heard the carriage-wheels of pleasure beneath her prison-wall, since her soul was riding triumphantly in the chariot of God.

It is scarcely possible to over-estimate the value of this spirit of heroism in the earlier career of the poetess. If we consider the usual effects of years of pain and weakness, we shall be better able to appreciate one of the most remarkable triumphs in the annals of literature. Not that Miss Barrett, is absolutely uninfluenced in her work by the conditions under which it was conceived and brought to perfection. Most of her earlier poems reveal a sensitive, delicate nature shut out from the vision of this world, and introduced to a more vivid realization of that other world from which sickness has passed away. Sometimes they are vague and ethereal, and the reader would almost tire the winged Pegasus if he attempted to soar into that nebulous region of her thought,—

"When for earth too fancy loose,  
And too low for heaven."

But the remarkable fact is not that we should discern at times the trembling hand and the eyes raised longingly to heaven, but that there should be so little trace of that morbid self-analysis or bitter repinings with which weaker minds, under far less provocation, would have been sure to inflict society. Sydney Smith describes a friend of his as having his intellect "improperly exposed;" and there are a great many instances of similar indelicacy in certain kinds of poetic literature. It is to be feared that women must take their share of blame for this fault, which frequently assumes a religious form, so that, if any one had the bad taste or uncharitableness to examine its main features, he would be obliged to conclude that goodness, on the whole, was rather unhealthy and by no means adapted for a person who seemed likely to linger for some time upon this side