

consequently the poetic sense is to be laughed out of an age of high civilization.

Macaulay wrote at the close of the first quarter of this century, "As civilization advances, poetry almost necessarily declines. In a rude state of society, men are children with a greater variety of ideas. It is, therefore, in such a state of society that we may expect to find the poetical temperament in its highest perfection. In an enlightened age there will be much intelligence, much science, much philosophy, abundance of just classification and subtle analysis, abundance of wit and eloquence, abundance of verses, and even good ones, but little poetry." Without analyzing the weakness of the argument of necessity in this unholy alliance between the poetic sentiment and a crude state of society, it must be admitted that since the days of Macaulay with the progress of science, there has been a very noticeable decline in poetry. But if we follow this reasoning logically, the lower the degree of poetic temperament, the higher and more perfect will our civilization be. Are we prepared then to crush out this element entirely and regard it as barbarous that we may thereby attain our ideal civilization? Is it not possible that we have misconceptions regarding the poetic sentiment and a perfect civilization. We often labour under false notions in relation to our ideas of progress. The laws of progress appertaining to the accumulation of facts in the field of science belong to the domain of our intellectual nature, whilst progress in the departments of painting, music or poetry belongs and appeals to an entirely different part of our nature. School boys now in our Collegiate Institutes may solve with perfect ease problems that Newton never solved, but are we to infer that our great Newton was a child compared with the mathematicians of to-

day? Not at all. Greatness does not consist in the accumulated facts or in the mental attainments of routine. Thus when we speak of the civilization produced by the scientific influences of the age, we shall be wise to regard it only a phase of civilization, one of its factors rather than the sum total that enters into the culture and development of a typical man. Is the poetic sentiment anything we would like to preserve? What is it? Ruskin says, "Poetry is the suggestion, by the imagination, of noble grounds for the noble emotions." "I mean," he says, "by the noble emotions those four principal secret passions, love, veneration, admiration, joy, and their opposites, hatred, indignation, horror, grief." It may not be an easy task to construct a better definition of poetry. We may agree, at least, that it embraces all these, whatever more it may be. It will be observed that taking this view of the poetic sentiment, that it enters the domain of the activities of human life and is indissolubly associated with the moral nature. It can scarcely, then, be a ground of consolation, in boasting of our advanced civilization, to acknowledge that it is only consistent with a decline of such moral attributes as love and veneration. The arguments used by Macaulay to show that poetry is the product of the crude and simple child-life of the nation, are the same arguments that have been repeatedly urged against religion. We know that the modern intellectual crank is fond of parading his little pack of facts, and of speaking of religion as something only fit for simple, weak minds, and unworthy of a highly intellectual nature. Publishers seem ready to assert that of late years there has been a marked decrease in the demand for poetic literature, and consequently a decline in the poetic sentiment. If such is the case, then there is the greater