

THE STUDY OF SCIENCE.

IN the first place, science adds immensely to the interest and happiness of life. It is altogether a mistake to regard science as dry or prosaic. The technical works, descriptions of species, etc., bear the same relations to science as dictionaries to literature. Mackay more justly exclaims :

Blessings on Science! when the earth
seemed old,
When Faith grew doting, and our reason
cold,
'Twas she discovered that the world was
young,
And taught a language to its lisping
tongue.

Occasionally, indeed, it may destroy some poetical myth of antiquity, such as the ancient Hindoo explanation of rivers, that "Indra dug out their beds with his thunderbolts, and sent them forth by long continuous paths." But the real causes of natural phenomena are far more striking, and contain more real poetry, than those which have occurred to the untrained imagination of mankind. Botany, for instance, is by many regarded as a dry science. Without it one might admire flowers and trees as one may admire a great man or a beautiful woman whom one meets in a crowd; but it is as a stranger. The botanist, on the contrary—nay, I will not say the botanist, but one with even a slight knowledge of that delightful science—when he goes out into the woods (whether they present the delicate tracery of winter, the tender green of spring, the richness of summer, or the glory of autumn) or into any of those fairy forests which we call fields, finds himself welcomed by a glad company of friends, every one with something interesting to tell. Dr. Johnson said that, in his opinion, when you had seen one green field

you had seen them all; and even a greater than Johnson, Socrates, the very type of intellect without science, said he was always anxious to learn, and from fields and trees he could learn nothing. It has, I know, been said that botanists

Love not the flower they pluck, and
know it not,
And all their botany is but Latin names.

Contrast this, however, with the language of one who would hardly claim to be a master in botany, though he is certainly a loving student.

"Consider," says Ruskin, "what we owe to the meadow grass, to the covering of the dark ground by that glorious enamel, by the companies of those soft, countless and peaceful spears of the field! Follow but for a little time the thought of all that we ought to recognize in those words. All spring and summer is in them—the walks by silent scented paths, the rest in noonday heat, the joy of the herds and flocks, the power of all shepherd life and meditation; the life of the sunlight upon the world, falling in emerald streaks and soft-blue shadows, when else it would have struck on the dark mould or scorching dust; pastures beside the pacing brooks, soft banks and knolls of lowly hills, thymy slopes of down overlooked by the blue lines of lifted sea; crisp lawns all dim with early dew, or smooth in evening warmth of barred sunshine, dinted by happy feet, softening in their fall the sound of loving voices." Even if it be true that science was dry when it was buried in huge folios, that is certainly no longer the case now; and Lord Chesterfield's wise wish that Minerva might have three graces as well as Venus, has been amply fulfilled. . . .