

THE NOVA SCOTIA

New Monthly Magazine.

THE ESSAYIST AT HOME.

NO. I.

Of all fame the poet's is the most enduring. Not only, like the warrior and the statesman, does he raise his monument in the temple of his country's glory,—but he lives, or, when he is perhaps forgotten, his works continue to survive in the memories and the hearts of the people among whom he sung. "Let who will make the laws of a nation," said a great man, "I would compose its songs." And commensurately with the greater influence of the poet is the licence which is permitted him. His fancy, boundless in its nature, springs at once from the limits by which other men are confined, and returns laden with the rich treasures of the climes through which it has wandered. However distant the height to which it soared,—however extensively the gathered fragrance may be diffused, all centre in the land from which the lofty imagination sent up its aspirings. And this is well—it is the influence thus diffused that refines in the human mind much that is harsh and rugged,—exalts that which is noblest and pure,—assists to harmonize the whole, and to excite within the breast a longing after those objects which are worthiest of strenuous and untiring efforts. But there is another task—less lofty, it is true, at times—less distinguished, but far more toilsome and arduous: to keep alive those desires in the mind—to continue with it step by step in the march of improvement—to open to it, one by one; the sources of a pure and rational enjoyment. This task, difficult and grand, is left often to humbler hands, but does not therefore remain unaccomplished. An unknown or unregarded writer—he who earns his bread in the more low-

ly and laborious walks of literature—may be sending a kindly power into many a heart and many a family. He is forever debarred from the gorgeousness and splendour which deck the pages of the poet—he must deal with homely, though deep-felt truths. He may not let his fancy wander far—he must check the faint rising of enthusiasm. He may not fly to that which is beautiful and majestic, and thereby strive to call up a kindred feeling in our bosom; but, with great objects in view, he must discourse of them calmly, yet earnestly,—and endeavour, not so much to exalt our ideas of the importance and power of knowledge, (for that is the higher duty,) but rather to promote the sure and gradual *advance* of that spirit of reason and of knowledge, with whose progress the happiness and prosperity of a people must ever continue to keep pace. And, lastly, he may not rove, however pleasantly, in search of that which may suit his taste, nor seek to diffuse too widely at first the benefits which he hopes to bestow. His sphere—whether for example or application—should be closely confined to the people on whom he ought chiefly to inculcate his lessons. As his strength increases, it is true, both his sources and his influence will become more wide; but as, when the pebble is thrown into the stream, the eddying circles, at first small, become broader and broader,—so the labours of the essayist, however extensive hereafter, must ever, like those of charity, commence *at home*.

It is a *grateful reflection*, that we have escaped perseded ignorance by knowledge—but it is a