

world, but the subject which interests his imagination. Poetry is to him its own exceeding great reward : it soothes his afflictions, and multiplies and refines his enjoyments.

It is not surprising, then, that such men oftentimes possess no friend capable of giving the world an exact picture of the *inward springs and relations of their characters*. Very seldom do we find that the character of one engaged in preparing materials for the intellectual culture of man, and who scarcely holds with others "communion sweet and large," is so venerated and perfectly comprehended, that what is there delineated can be mirrored forth with that earnestness and simplicity which usually characterize the relations of those who unfold their own inward and outward experience. Occasionally, it is true, gratitude for favours conferred, or admiration for lofty genius, may exert over some mind a spell sufficient to excite all its efforts in setting forth and ennobling the character of a great man. The writer may be in that happy state, "when one cannot understand, how, in the woman whom he loves or the author whom he admires, any thing should be defective." Yet what appears fair to look at will not unfrequently be found to be filled with unavoidable inaccuracies.

It is rare to meet with one, who, in the calm spirit of philosophic insight, can understand a character in all its details and peculiarities, can transform himself, as it were, into the feelings of a master mind, and attain that intimate presence with a special object, which an artist must long continue in if he intend to effect any thing approaching to perfection. For such a purpose, there is need of a clear-sighted, open-hearted man, one who has himself trodden the solitary path of mental inquiry, and in the delineation of character "shall manifest, not so much his literary skill as his own beautiful nature, which can take in every object, in all its greatness and purity, and reflect it back like a clean, spotless mirror.

In such a manner alone, with the earnest inquiry wherein they excelled, and how they reached that excellence, should the characters of such men be examined. The work should not be approached in the spirit of detraction or calumny, with the desire to become acquainted with their infirmities, to know how far the lustre of their high natures was dimmed, to see in what they failed : the object and aim of all inquiry should be, what have they accomplished ? have they been stimulated by the desire to advance the interests of mankind by hastening on the bright-day of intellectual refinement ? Do we find in all their labours this one object—the elevation of man ?

Such, then, being some of the many difficulties to be encountered by those who enter upon the perilous path of authorship, who is so well able, and with such superior hopes of success, to go forward and prosper, as he who is thoroughly acquainted with his own successive stages of youth. It may be true

that most men are unacquainted with themselves ; still, if such know not their own inward and outward endeavours, is it reasonable to expect that others shall ? From the harmonious combinations of their faculties to promote the intellectual advancement of mankind, they have themselves participated in the benefit. Their efforts have been to render the existence of man one of complete harmony, and the influence attendant upon such endeavours has returned into their own bosoms, increased and purified, to shine forth again with redoubled brilliancy.

If such renovating duties suffice not for self-experience, this kind of knowledge will fail of ever being attained. But such is not the case. They do know better than any other the origin of their intellectual endeavours, and are usually capable of distinctly exhibiting it. They know the point at which they have aimed, and can point out to others wherein they have failed, and how far they have succeeded. They are acquainted with the particular history of each period of their literary career, the feelings and opinions which have held sway over them, and the interests and passions which have caused their intellectual activity to converge to one point.

How pleasing, as well as improving, such a self-record of deep and earnest feeling of a deservedly great man, of his high aims, his enlarged views, and the energetic manner in which he accomplished his duty, is, may be seen in the faithful and fascinating autobiography of the lamented Galt. What ecstacy of feeling, in beholding the gradual development and upward growth of genius, to see, one by one, errors cast off and excellencies developed, the idols of the understanding laid aside, and the noble truths of reason embraced—this, too, amidst the many vicissitudes of his chequered career.

We are aware that the first productions of great minds are, very frequently, their weakest ; that they afterwards conceal the imperfect and irregular efforts of their youth as unworthy of their maturer fame ; and in no case can contemporary genius be better employed than in supplying the vacancy occasioned by the scrupulous nicety of the autobiographer. Not one but delights to trace their upward course ; not one but could be profited by such an exercise.

We very naturally desire to become acquainted with the circumstances in which these men have been placed ; the difficulties to which they have been subjected ; the influence, too, which these have had in the retarding or promoting of their mental development, and the unfolding of their creative art. If they have explored the broad view of truth with its countless rills, issuing from the purest fountains, adding their mite to the vast expanse of waters, not for the purpose of gratifying selfish curiosity, but with the noble wish to guide others to the head-spring of genius, where the mind may truly feel sublime delight, they are to be held in the highest