HOMES OF THE POETS.

A PAPER in Mr. D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature" upon "Literary Residences," is very amusing and curious; but it begins with a mistake in saying that "men of genius have usually been condemned to compose their finest works, which are usually their earliest ones, under the roof of a garret;" and the author seems to think, that few have realized the sort of house they wished to live in. The combination of "genius and a garret" is an old joke, but little more.

We know that any man who chooses to begin systematically with a penny, under circumstances at all favorable, may end with thousands. Suppose Shakespeare had done it; he might have built a house like a mountain. But he did not,—it will be said,—because he was a poet, and poets are not getters of money. Well; and for the same reason, poets do not care for the mightiest things which money can get. It cannot get them health, and freedom, and a life in the green fields and mansions in fairy-land; and they prefer those, and a modest visible lodging.

Chaucer had a great large house to live in,—a castle,—because he was connected with royalty; but he does not delight to talk of such places: he is all for the garden, and the daisied fields, and a bower like a "pretty parlour." His mind was too big for a great house; which challenges measurement with its inmates, and is generally equal to them. He felt elbow-room, and heart-room, only out in God's air, or in the heart itself, or in the bowers built by Nature, and reminding him of the greatness of her love.

Spenser lived at one time in a castle,—in Ireland,—a piece of forfeited property, given him for political services; and he lived to repent it: for it was burnt in civil warfare, and his poor child burnt with it; and the poet was driven back to England, broken-hearted. But look at the houses he describes in his poems,—even he who was bred in a court, and loved pomp, after his fashion. He bestows the great ones upon princes and allegorical personages, who live in state and have many servants, (for the largest houses, after all, are but collections of small ones, and of unfitting neighbourhoods too;) but his nests, his poetic bowers, his *deliciæ* and *amænitates*, he keeps for his hermits and his favourite nymphs, and his flowers of courtesy; and observe how he delights to repeat the word "little," when describing them. His travellers come to "little valleys," in which, through the tree-tops, comes reeking up a "little smoke," (a "cheerful signe," quoth the poet,) and

> To *little* cots in which the shepherds lie."

Milton, who built the Pandemonium, and filled it with

> "A thousand demi-gods on golden seats,"

was content if he could but get a "garden-house" to live in, as it was called in his time; that is to say, a small house in the suburbs, with a bit of garden to it. He required nothing but a tree or two about him, to give him "airs of Paradise." His biographer shows us that he made a point of having a residence of this kind. He lived as near as he could to the wood-side and the fields, like his fellow-patriot, M. Beranger, who would have been the Andrew Marvell of those times, and adorned his great friend as the other did, or like his Mirth (l'Allegro) visiting his Melancholy.

And here beloved Cowley, quiet and pleasant as the sound in his trees:—"I never had any other desire so strong, and so like to covetousness, as that one which I have had always,—that I might be master at last of a *small* house and *large* garden, with very moderate conveniences joined to them, and there dedicate the remainder of my life only to the culture of them, and study of nature; and there, with no design beyond my wall,

> "whole and entire to lie,
> In no unactive ease, and no unglorious poverty."

"I confess," says he, in another essay (on Greatness,) "I love littleness almost in all things,—a little convenient estate, a little cheerful house, a little company, and a very little feast; and if ever I were to fall in love again, (which is a great passion, and therefore, I hope I have done with it,) it would be, I think, with prettiness, rather than with majestical beauty."

Dryden lived in a house in Gerrard street (then almost a suburb,) looking, at the back, into the gardens of a Leicester House, the mansion of the Sidneys. Pope had a nest at Twickenham, much smaller than the fine house since built upon the site; and Thompson another at Richmond, consisting only of the ground-floor of the present house. Every body knows what a rural house Cowper lived in. Shenstone's was but a farm adorned, and his bad health unfortunately hindered *him* from enjoying it. He married a house and grounds, poor man! instead of a wife; which was being very "one-sided" in his poetry—and he found them more expensive than Miss Dolman would have been. He had better have taken poor Maria at first, and got a few domestic cares of a handsome sort, to keep him alive and moving. Most of the living poets are dwellers in cottages, except Mr. Rogers, who is rich, and has a mansion, looking on one of the parks; but then it *does* look upon grass and trees. He will have as much nature with his art as he can get.