

poetry. They have discovered, it seems, not only that it is of no earthly use, but that it actually does a great deal of mischief, induces us to disregard truth and admire falsehood, to indulge in exaggerated sentiment, and to weaken the authority of reason over passion and imagination. As to its positive evils, we believe we need not concern ourselves much: but there are many people who really seem to think that it must be acknowledged that poetry is of no use; and, consequently, that if at all to be tolerated in an industrious community, it ought to meet with no encouragement, and be treated with no respect. The short answer to this, is, to ask what is here meant by 'being of use,' and whether anything that gives *pleasure* may not properly be called useful."

Those who have read Currer Bell's "*Shirley*," may remember, as one of the characters of the tale—Mr. Yorke, a Yorkshire manufacturer. In many respects a cultivated man, "Mr. Yorke did not possess poetic imagination himself, and considered it a most superfluous quality in others. Painters and musicians he could tolerate, and even encourage, because he could relish the results of their art; he could see the charm of a fine picture, and feel the pleasure of good music; but a quiet poet—whatever force struggled, whatever fire glowed in his breast—if he could not have played the man in the counting-house, or the tradesman in the Piece Hall, might have lived despised, and died scorned, under the eyes of Hiram Yorke."

In American society, there is a very large proportion of Hiram Yorkes,—men who, in many directions, advance their country's interests, and are therefore very useful and very respectable in their day and generation, but who have neither the inclination nor the qualifications to become votaries of the Muses themselves, or to fill the place of generous and fostering patrons towards those upon whom the divine gifts of Poesy have been bestowed. The struggle to outdo the Old World in the building of clipper ships and splendid steamers, in the projection and completion of lines of railways and telegraphs, and canals, absorbs their whole attention and energies. America has caught the step, and is keeping pace with Europe in the march of material progress,—gaining not seldom an advantage in the race. And her efforts in this race—this peaceful warfare—are too earnest and exciting to allow many of her sons the time and opportunities to devote themselves entirely to pursuits which, though of a gentler cast, are quite as absorbing. But if America has not yet produced a great poem,—great, that is, in the sense in which 'Paradise Lost,' and the 'Faerie Queene,' are so called—she has given birth to many true poets. And in our next number we shall briefly discuss the merits of a few of them, and consider the claims of their poems to take high rank in the English literature of the present day.