

of twenty-five or thirty people, set up such a furious cry that I was quite startled, and was above two hours before I could recover myself. These cries continue a long time, then cease all at once: they begin again as suddenly at day break, and in concert. It is this suddenness which is so terrifying, together with a greater shrillness and loudness than one would easily imagine. This enraged kind of mourning continued for forty days; not equally violent, but with diminution from day to day. The longest and most violent acts were, when they washed the body, when they perfumed it, when they carried it out to be interred, at making the inventory, and when they divided the effects.—You are not, however, to suppose that those who were ready to split their throats with crying out wept as much: the greater part of them do not shed a single tear through the whole tragedy."

COPIOUSNESS OF EASTERN DEWS.

JUDGES vi. 38. "And he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl-full of water."

It may seem a little improbable to us who inhabit these northern climates, where the dews are inconsiderable, how Gideon's fleece, in one night, should imbibe such a quantity, that when he came to wring it, a bowl-full of water was produced. IRWIN, however, in his voyage up the Red sea, when on the Arabian shores, observes, "Difficult as we find it to keep ourselves cool in the day-time, it is no easy matter to defend our bodies from the damps of the night, when the wind is loaded with the heaviest dews that ever fell. We lie exposed to the whole weight of the dews: and the cloaks in which we wrap ourselves are as wet in the morning as if they had been immersed in the sea."

EASTERN HOSPITALITY.

GENESIS xix. 2. "Turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go your ways."

The Eastern nations have always distinguished themselves by their great hospitality. The following instance, from TAVERNIER'S travels, is truly characteristic.

"We were not above a musket shot from Auna, when we met with a comely old man, who came up to me, and taking my horse by the bridle, 'Friend,' said he, 'come and wash thy feet, and eat bread at my house, thou art a stranger, and since I have met thee on the road, never refuse me the favour which I desire of thee.' We could not choose but go along with him to his house, where he feasted us in the best manner he could, giving us over and above barley for our horses; and for ourselves he killed a lamb and some hens."

EGYPTIAN ONIONS.

NUMBERS xi. v.—"We remember the onions which we did eat in Egypt freely."

"Whoever has tasted onions in Egypt," observes HASSELUQUIST, "must allow that none can be had better in any part of the universe. Here they are sweet, in other countries they are nauseous and strong: here they are soft, whereas in the north and other parts they are hard of digestion. Hence they cannot, in any place, be eaten with less prejudice and more satisfaction than in Egypt. They eat them roasted, cut into four pieces, with some bits of roasted meat, which the Turks in Egypt call *kobak*; and with this dish they are so delighted that I have heard them wish they might enjoy it in Paradise. They likewise make soup of them in Egypt, cutting the onions into small pieces: this I think one of the best dishes I ever eat."

DR. EDWARD BROWN, in his description of Larissa, in Thessaly, says, "the inhabitants use garlic in most of their dishes, and their onions are extraordinary, as large as two or three common sized ones with us, and of a far better taste: being sharp, quick, and pleasantly pungent, without any offensive smell.—Though I was no lover of onions before, yet I found these exceedingly pleasant. I asked a Chiaus, then with us, who had travelled through most of the Turkish dominions, whether he had any where met with as good onions as those of Thessaly, who answered me, that the onions of Egypt were better; which was the first time I sensibly understood the expression in the scripture: and ceased to wonder why the Israelites lingered after the onions of that country."

PHARAOH'S TASKMASTERS.

EXODUS v. 16.—"There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten: but the fault is in thine own people."

On the north of the river Karaj, the king is building a palace, surrounded by a fort, of a town which is to be called Sulimanieh, from the city of that name which was taken from the Courdish chief, Abdurakhman Pasha. The spoils of the captured city and country are to defray the expenses of its construction. The bricks which form the building are baked in the sun, and are composed of earth dug from the pits in the vicinity, which is mixed up with straw, and then from the form (or mould) in which they have been cast, are arranged on a flat spot in rows, where the sun hardens them. The peasants who were at work had been, as usual, collected by force, and were superintended by several of the king's officers, who with hard words, and sometimes harder blows, hastened them in their operations. Their fate resembled that of the Israelites, who no doubt were employed in the same manner in building for Pharaoh, and with the very same sort of materials. Their bricks were mixed up with straw; they had to make a certain quantity daily, and their taskmasters treated them cruelly if their task was not accomplished. The complaints which they made were natural, and resembled the language used frequently on similar occasions by the oppressed in Persia—"There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us make brick: and, behold, thy servants are beaten: but the fault is in thine own people." MORIER.

ORIENTAL LENGTHENED DEBAUCH.

ISAIAH v. 11.—"Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink: that continue until night, till wine inflame them!"

On the 15th of April, 1813, returning from a morning ride about seven o'clock, I saw, at about forty yards from the road

side, a party of well-dressed Persians seated on a carpet close to a rising ground in the plain, with a small stream of water flowing before them, and surrounded by their servants and horses.—I afterwards learned that this party was given by a colonel of the king's troops, and that they were in the height of enjoyment when I passed, for they were all apparently much intoxicated. We one day met a party in one of the king's pleasure-houses, under nearly similar circumstances: and we found that the Persians when they commit a debauch, arise betimes, and esteem the morning as the best time for beginning to drink wine, by which means they carry on their excess until night. This contrast with our own manners will perhaps give fresh force to that passage of Isaiah v. 11.—"Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink: that continue until night, till wine inflame them." MORIER.

For the Church.

REFLECTIONS ON RELIGIOUS POETRY.

In perusing a work of a religious poet, in whatever shape it may be laid before the public, from the sacred epic to the very humblest attempt at versification of a sacred tendency, there are two or three mental or rather natural criticisms that are obvious to every reader. The first we would assume to be, a summary of the merit of the piece so far as related to the beauty or harmonious flow of the numbers,—this being an unavoidable ordeal which the religious poet must undergo in common with every writer on whatever theme may his pen be employed. 2nd. The design, or if we may venture so to name it, the *plot*, of the work,—the machinery employed in its development, the characters presented to the eye in the progress of the narration, and the truth or coherence preserved in the arrangement of the author's individual creations—no matter how trivial may be the poetic effort, no matter how apparently simple and unassuming the texture of the design,—under this head must come every offspring of the muse. The 3rd, and without comparison the most important consideration which will employ the reflecting mind, will be the impression left on the heart and understanding when fresh from the perusal of the subject of its natural criticism. It is a prevailing idea that the present age has done but little towards adding to the poetic treasures of our language: the truth or injustice of which impression we shall not now attempt to analyze; we can but record our sincere conviction that the writers who have turned their attention to the composition of what passes under the name of 'Religious Poetry' have mainly contributed to give rise to such an opinion. Of late years it has become "fashionable" (we are sorry to use such a word in such a sense) to read, aye, and to write, 'sacred verses.' The class, playfully designated by Horace Smith as "the eighty thousand greatest living poets," has too willingly turned its mind to that species of writing: we attempt not to question the motive by which any one has been actuated; we will assume it good, oftentimes noble, but the effect produced on the reader, is of far greater importance. "Religious Poets" may, we think, be reduced to two distinct classes. The first we would characterize as consisting of those writers who are content with bringing man alone on the stage of their creation, with whom ordinary mortals act as the agents of accomplishing their designs and the vehicles for the expression of their various sentiments: to this class belong and ever should belong nine-tenths of the writers who select Religion for their theme. They may exhaust their fancy, be it as boundless as the least earthly genius that ever tenanted a mortal frame: in pouring through these legitimate channels the purest and noblest sentiments that can exalt or adorn our nature, let them display their characters in as bright a light as reason can allow to the least sinful of the children of Adam; let their failings be as little glaring and their worth as brilliant as can fall to the lot of that race on whom God looked and there was none that did good; let the thousand clouds that darken the soul of man throw on their spirit a shadow the lightest and most transient;—but never let the author who designs to exhibit a model of earthly perfection for the guidance of his fellow-mortals attempt to portray a character on which hath fallen no spot or stain. Reason denies the truth of his colouring; Religion whispers that he violates the decree of the Highest, who so oft from the thunder and the whirlwind hath pronounced the helplessness, the sinfulness of man.

There may be an hundred apologies suggested for the author who diverges from nature in the manner last mentioned. It may be said, that in his anxiety to depict the purity and loveliness of virtue, or to contrast in the deepest colours the vicious with those whom men call 'the just,' he hath touched with too fine a pencil the characters of his work, and in attempting to distinguish between those whom he holds up as models for imitation, and those whom he would paint in the opposite extreme of impiety and wickedness, he rises altogether above the level of the most upright, and shows us a purely ideal creation, dissimilar from those we meet in the ordinary walks of life, and pretending to a virtue of sanctity the wildest optimist would confess to be unreal, so far as experience or observation could guide him, and from which the Christian would turn with a just dread of even imagining a mortal, with all his earthly imperfections around him, clothed with a lustre which for the instant might captivate the eye but which the heart would as quickly reject as a false and meretricious glitter.

A writer of ordinary fiction indulging the licence of his tribe will sometimes sketch a character so strikingly, so utterly unnatural, that criticism instantly seizes on it and pronounces it spurious, and disjointed,—that the author must be ignorant of the ordinary lights and shadows of life to bring together so incongruous a mass of jarring qualities and materials in the composition of what he desires to exhibit as the hero, the philosopher, the patriot of his pages. The writer of 'sacred poetry' (fiction as well as the preceding) generally enjoys an immunity from this species of correction arising from the respect his fellow-men entertain for the subject he has selected. So far it may be well that criticism should pause ere it attacked with a virulent tooth those employed on a subject which would seem to protect by its own sanctity those ministering unto it; but this very immunity so seldom infringed, has induced the evil of which we complain,

and combined to injure the cause intended to be served. Under this class must also be ranked the authors, who with higher aim, tread a far more dangerous path;—we mean those who introduce into their productions the prominent characters in the sacred writings; who not content with ordinary agents, have recourse to the holiest of records for personages and incidents to form the groundwork of their too often flimsy superstructure.

In their defence it may be somewhat plausibly argued,—'they were but men,' members of the same family, with those whose use of their revered name is the subject of our complaint;—but what men? Men on whom the spirit of the Highest descended in direct intercourse,—men, who walked the earth as the chosen interpreters of the will of the Creator, from whose lips the words of benison, or the denunciations of divine wrath fell on the ear of nations, with souls fresh from the recent communion with the Deity, rife with the inspiration caught from the crystal fountains of heaven, and with eyes before whose vision yet floated the immortal shapes that gladdened them in the rapt hour of revelation,—that breathed forth the will of their God in language such as the world had never heard before, and such as in the thousands of years that have rolled away since the moment it was spoken hath never found its equal; yes, with the evidence of the fulfilment of their prophecies yet lingering on the earth to silence with its startling reality the sceptic or the scoffer. It is of the introduction of such names as those of our primæval apostles into the casual fictions of everyday literature that we complain. We have already stated that we questioned not the motives of their introducers; we have allowed them to be good and abstractedly deserving of commendation. It rests but to enquire, do the results answer the good ends we have presumed to have been in the view of the writers; or is the effect weakened by the very means taken to ensure its success? We will put the matter in a not unfair light: suppose a writer of religious sentiments and feeling to produce a poem in which some of the characters are confessedly taken from the Bible; they, of course, act, speak and reflect as the fancy of the author may be pleased to portray—incidents occur in which they play a prominent part—ordinary mortal agents are introduced with whom they are brought into collision, and with whose every day ideas and actions theirs will in all probability be strongly contrasted! Suppose we admire in a great measure the adroitness of the writer, his address in developing his plot, his power of pathos in delineating the sublime or the tender,—that our ear drinks in with pleasure the harmonious flow of his versification, the elegance or purity of his diction; still is the heart improved from the perusal of his work? are its long engraved impressions of those sacred characters thus introduced into the varying details of fiction, elevated to a nobler a loftier cast? are its dreams of heaven brighter? its faith strengthened? its lingering doubts or fears dispelled? in almost every instance we would unhesitatingly say, no. With the oldest and clearest recollections of life, the inculcation of our youthful faith, perhaps the greenest and most durable of childhood's memories, have those hallowed names of scripture been entwined; a veil of holy reverence seems thrown over them,—beautiful in its vestal simplicity, mystic in its half superstitious texture,—which screens them from the touch of each casual hand, and bares them only to the view of those stepping into the glorious temple where they lie enshrined,—the Holy Scriptures.

But how would our argument be strengthened if, as too frequently happens, the writer has failed in his versification, or blundered in the development of his story, by the introduction of unnatural incidents or absurd agents? What then will be the impression his work will create, when stripped of the gloss of graceful narration or the music of harmonious numbers? Ridicule will too probably be its portion; and the scenes hallowed by even the imaginary presence of sacred characters, may form the theme of the scornful jest or laugh of the open critic, or provoke a smile on the face of those who pity more than condemn, and who only breathe a sigh that human folly or presumption had tended to desecrate what the settled opinion of mankind had pronounced holy.

We now turn to the second class into which we divided the writers of Religious Poetry. It is far less numerous than the first; for the mind that would attempt the subjects of the first, would shrink back with awe at the idea of meddling with themes of a far mightier and more fearful essence.

Under this class we place those who introduce into their works the beings of the invisible world, the impalpable shapes that people the world of spirits; who attempt outfiguring to mortal comprehension the very Godhead itself, and with fearful daring, in the ardour of the excited imagination, attempt to lay bare the secrets of the holiest of holies. This class we are happy to say is not numerous: for the sake of Religion we rejoice there are but few to outstep the bounds of the visible world and the awful wilderness of space. We well recollect the deep impression left on our mind from a contemplation of one of Martin's pictures, in which the daring sublimity of the design was attempted to be carried out in the execution. It was "the Spirit of God moving on the face of the waters:" wild and dreary was the scene, equaling our darkest idea of the waves of Chaos, ere the word of the Omnipotent had bade light illumine its waste. So far all was grand, but the point on which the eye rested long enough to fix the object deep in the memory, was where the outline of a human figure clothed in mist and vapor, with dim and giant proportions flitted over the scene: this was the painter's outshading of "the Spirit of God moving over the face of the waters!" We should never care to look upon its like again.

There was one—there may have been others, but the universal voice of mankind hath said, there was one—who trod with a giant's, with a monarch's step, the wild path where few have dared to follow; who hath laid bare, as it were, the secrets of the invisible world; who hath "talked familiar" with the spirits and shadows that the belief of man hath named as the denizens of another sphere. The great first cause—the Triune mystery—the angels and archangels that waited by the throne of God—the spheres moving along in light and music—the morning stars shouting together for joy—the fall of man and the glorious scheme of his redemption,—such were the themes of earth's greatest minstrel; but the harp that breathed immortal harmony