

there are still two important limitations prescribing its perfection. Description should not be too elaborate. If too many features are added it loses the charm of simplicity. Yet neither should it be too meagre in its circumstances lest it be indistinct. There are, it is true, many restrictions to the art, but the greater is the merit when the work is well executed, and accordingly, description is the most characteristic equipment of the poet.

The most representative specimen of descriptive poetry in our literature is *The Seasons* of James Thompson. Description of nature is ordinarily not attempted in great lengths; it is usually employed as a background, a theatre for more interesting scenes of human action. But in the series of poems in question the author has undertaken to make nature itself the main subject. He paints the four seasons of the English climate, and paints them strongly and beautifully. He was enamoured of the beauties of nature himself, and while he described them properly he felt their impressions with strong sensibility. These impressions he transmitted to his verse, and it is impossible to read any one of them without recalling the feelings of that particular season.

Although Thompson is about the only poet who has attempted an extended work essentially descriptive, yet many others, in fact nearly all others, have given us elegant descriptions of nature. Among these William Cowper has attained some distinction. During his boyhood and early youth, he led a quiet life amusing himself with the flowers and landscape—just the life in fact for imbibing that instinctive love of nature which revealed itself later in his poems. *The Task*, a humorous, graceful reflective poem, includes some pictures of outdoor life that cannot be surpassed for truth and picturesqueness.

Goldsmith, although he was more a poet of tenderness and warm-heartedness, has, nevertheless, executed some excellent descriptions, and while literature lasts, readers will linger over his sketches of scenery, his descriptions of the natural peculiarities of various countries, and over the beauties of the picture *Sweet Auburn*. The last mentioned does indeed furnish some fine delineations of scenery, as :

“ The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighboring hill,
The hawthorn bush with seat beneath its shade.”

In these lines we cannot help noticing that his warm heart was too much absorbed with love for fellowmen to devote himself to nature. He describes the scene with reference only to its bearing on the people of whom he is speaking. Again he contrasts with this pacific scene the desolation wrought by the spoiler's hand :—

“ No more the glassy brook reflects the day
But choked with sedges works its weary way ;
Along the glades a solitary guest
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest ;
Amidst thy desert walks the lapwing flies,
And tires their echoes with unvaried cries.”

John Keats was a man of peculiar temperament. His imagination was so luxuriant, his thoughts so subtle and rapid that it has been well said that his writings are adapted chiefly to those who are themselves of a poetical temperament. He was an admirer of nature, and with such an imagination could not fail to pay her some worthy tribute. In these few lines of his *Address to Autumn* he has grouped a pretty picture :

“ Where are the songs of spring ? Ay, where are they ?

Think not of them : Thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue ;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river-sallows borne aloft,
Or sinking as the light winds live or die ;
And full-grown lambs bleat loud from hilly bourn,
Hedge crickets sing ; and more, with treble soft,
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft,
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.”

There is not perhaps another English poet concerning whose merits there has been greater difference of estimation than William Wordsworth. Some regard him as our greatest lyric writer and describer of nature ; others decry him as cold and apathetic, with no heart for mankind at all. However this may be he is generally known to be a great devotee to nature—perhaps indeed he was too much absorbed in nature to care for his fellow-men. His devotion to external nature amounted to a passion ; his perception of its most minute beauties was exquisitely fine, and his portraits of landscapes and figures were so distinctly outlined as to impress them on the mind almost as vividly and