

## LITERATURE, &amp;c.

We continue our extract from the Review in Blackwood, of Mr Alfred Tennyson's Poem.

One of the saddest misfortunes that can befall a young poet, is to be the Pet of a Coterie; and the very saddest of all, if in Cockneydom. Such has been the unlucky lot of Alfred Tennyson. He has been elevated to the throne of Little Britain, and sonnets were showered over his coronation from the most remote regions of his empire, even from Hampstead Hill. Eulogies more elaborate than the architecture of the costliest gingerbread, have been built up into paenycrival piles, in commemoration of the Birth-day; and 't would be a pity indeed with one's crutch to smash the gilt battlements, white too with sugar as with frost, and begemmed with comfits. The besetting sin of all periodical criticism, and now-a-days there is no other, is boundless extravagance of praise; but none splash it on like the trowelmen who have been bedaubing Mr Tennyson. There is something wrong, however, with the composit; It won't stick, unseemly cracks deform the surface; it falls off piece by piece ere it has dried in the sun, or it hardens into blotches, and the worshippers have but discoloured and disfigured their idol. The worst of it is, that they make the bespattered not only feel, but look ridiculous; he seems as absurd as an Inage in a tea-garden; and, bedizened with faded and fantastic garlands, the public cough on being told he is a Poet, for he has much more the appearance of a Post

The Englishman's Magazine ought not to have died; for it threatened to be a very pleasant periodical. An Essay 'on the Genius of Alfred Tennyson,' sent it to the grave. The superhuman—nay, supernatural—pomposity of that one paper, incapacitated the whole work for living one day longer in this unceremonious world. The solemnity with which the critic approached the object of his adoration, and the sanctity with which he laid his offerings on the shrine, were too much for our irreligious age. The Essay 'on the Genius of Alfred Tennyson,' awoke a general guffaw, and it expired in convulsions. Yet the Essay was exceedingly well-written—as well as if it had been 'on the Genius of Sir Isaac Newton.' Therein lay the mistake. Sir Isaac discovered the law of gravitation; Alfred had but written some pretty verses, and mankind were not prepared to set him among the stars. But that he has genius is proved by his being at this moment alive; for had he not, he must have breathed his last under that critique. The spirit of life must indeed be strong within him; for he has outlived a narcotic dose administered to him by a crazy charlatan in the Westminster, and after that he may sleep in safety with a pan of charcoal.

But the Old Man must see justice done to this ingenious lad, and save him from his worst enemies, his friends. Never are we so happy—say, 'tis now almost our only happiness—as when scattering flowers in the sunshine that falls from the yet unclouded sky on the green path prepared by gracious Nature for the feet of enthusiastic youth. Yet we scatter them not in too lavish profusion; and we take care that the young poet shall see, along with the shadow of the spirit that cheers him on, that, too, of the accompanying crutch. Were we not afraid that our style might be thought to wax too figurative we should say that Alfred is a promising plant; and that the day may come when, beneath sun and shower, his genius may grow up and expand into a stately tree, embowering a solemn shade within its wide circumference, while the daylight lies gorgeously on its crest, seen from afar in glory—itsself a grove.

Put that day will never come, if hearken not to our advice; and, as far as his own nature will permit, regulate by it the movements of his genius. This may perhaps appear, at first sight or hearing, not a little unreasonable on our part; but not so, if Alfred would but lay our words to heart, and meditate on their spirit. We desire to see him prosper; and we predict fame as the fruit of obedience. If he disobey, he assuredly goes to oblivion.

Our critique is near its conclusion; and in correcting it for press, we see that its whole merit, which is great, consists in the extracts, which are 'beautiful exceedingly.' Perhaps, in the first part of our article, we may have exaggerated Mr. Tennyson's not unfrequent silliness, for we are apt to be carried away by the whim of the moment, and in our humorous moods, many things wear a queer look to our aged eyes, which fill young pupils with tears; but we feel assured that in the second part we have not exaggerated his strength—that we have done no more than justice to his fine faculties—and that the millions who delight in his will, with one voice, confirm our judgment—that Alfred Tennyson is a poet.

But though it may be a mistake of ours, were we to say that he has much to learn, it can be no mistake to say that he has not a little to unlearn, and more to bring into practice, before his genius can achieve its destined triumphs. A puerile partiality for particular forms of expression, nay, modes of spelling and of pronunciation, may be easily overlooked in one whom we must look on as yet a mere boy; but if he carry it with him, and indulge it in manhood, why it will make him seem silly as his sheep; and should he continue to bleat so when his head and beard are as grey as ours, he will be truly a laughable old ram, and the ewes will care no more for him than if he were a wether.

Farther—he must consider that all the fancies that fleet across the imagination, like shadows on the grass or the tree-tops, are not entitled to be made small separate poems of—about the length of one's little finger; that many, nay, most of them, should be suffered to pass away with a silent 'God bless ye,' like butterflies, single or in shoals, each family with its own hereditary character mottled on its wings; and that though thousands of those grave brown, and gay golden images will be blown back in showers, as if upon balmy breezes changing suddenly and softly to the AIR whence inspiration at the moment breathes, yet not one in a thousand is worth being caught and pinned down on paper into poetry; 'gently as if you loved him'—only the few that are bright with the 'beauty still more beautiful'—and a few such belong to all the orders—from the little silly moth that extinguishes herself in your taper, up to the mighty Emperor of Morocco at meridian wavering has burnished downage in the unconsuming sun who glorifies the wondrous stranger.

Now, Mr. Tennyson does not seem to know this; or if he do, he is self-willed and perverse in his sometimes almost infantile vanity (and how vain are most beautiful children!) and thinks that any Thought or Feeling or Fancy that has had the honour and the

happiness to pass through HIS mind, must by that very act be worthy of everlasting commemoration. Heaven pity the poor world, were we to put into stanzas, and publish upon it, all our thoughts, thick as motes in the sun, or a summer evening atmosphere of midges!

Finally, Nature is mighty, and poets should deal with her on a grand scale. She lavishes her glorious gifts before their path in such profusion, that Genius—reverent as he is of the mysterious mother, and meeting her at sunrise on the mountains with grateful orisons—with grateful orisons bidding her farewell among the long shadows that stretch across the heavens when sunset sinks into the sea—is yet privileged to tread with a seeming scorn in the midst imagery that to common eyes would be as a revelation of wonders from another world. Familiar to him are they as the grass below his feet. In lowlier moods he looks at them—and in his love they grow beautiful. So did Burns beautify the daisy—'wee modest crimson-tipped flower!' But in loftier moods, the 'the violet by the mossy stone,' is not 'half-hidden to the eye'—it is left unthought of to its own sweet existence. The poet then ranges wide and high, like Thomson, in his Hymn to the Seasons, which he had so gloriously sung, seeing in all the changes of the rolling year 'but the varied god,'—like Wordsworth, in his Excursion, communing too with the spirit 'whose dwellings is the light of setting suns.'

Those great men are indeed among the 'Lights of the world and demigods of fame;' but all poets, ere they gain a bright name, must thus celebrate the worship of nature. They do well, even the greatest of them, to trace up the brooks to their source in stone-basin or mossy well, in the glen-head, where greensward glads among the heather seem the birthplace of the Silent People—the Fairies. But in their immortal works they must show us how 'red comes the river down,' castles of rock or of cloud—long withdrawing vales, where midway between the flowery foreground, and in the distance of blue mountain ranges, some great city lifts up its dim-seen spires through the misty smoke beneath which imagination hears the hum of life—'peaceful as some immeasurable pan,' the breast of old ocean sleeping in the sunshine—or as if an earthquake shook the pillars of his caverned depths, tumbling the foam of his breakers, mast-high, it must be there, till the canvass ceases to be silent, and the gazer hears him howling over his prey—See—see!—the foundering wreck of a three-decker going down head-foremost to eternity.

With such admonition, we bid Alfred Tennyson farewell.

## LOVE.

The following passages on this delightful theme we extract from Sheridan Knowles's new and successful play, *The Hunchback*:

'O JULIA, I have ventured for thy love,  
As the bold merchant who, for only hope  
Of some rich gain, all former gains will risk.  
Before I asked a portion of thy heart  
I perilled all my own, and now all's lost.'

'A young woman's heart, sir,  
Is not a stone to carve a posy on,  
Which knows not what is writ on't—which you may buy,  
Exchange, or sell sir, keep or give away, sir:  
It is a richer, yet a poorer thing,  
Priceless to him that owns and prizes it,  
Worthless when own'd, not prized, which makes the man  
That covets it, obtains it, and discards it,  
A fool, if not a villain sir!

'Love me!  
He never loved me! if he had, he never  
Had given me up! Love's not a spider's web  
But fit to mesh a fly—that you can break  
By only blowing on't. He never loved me!  
He knows not what love is, or if he does,  
He has not been o'er chary of his peace,  
And that he'll find when I'm another's wife,  
Lost! lost to him for ever! Tears again!  
Why should I weep for him? Who make their woes  
Deserve them! I would have I to do with tears?'

'Love's a heedless thing,  
That never takes account of obstacles—  
Makes plains of mountains, rivulets of seas,  
That part it from its wish.'

'Love's cunning of disguises—spite of locks,  
Skin, vesture, it is she, and only she.  
What will not constant woman do for love,  
That's loved with constancy? Set her the task,  
Virtue approving, that will baffle her;  
O'er tax her offspring—patience, courage, wit—  
My life upon it.'

'What would you weigh 'gainst love  
That's true? Tell me with what you'd turn the scale—  
Yea, make the index waver? Wealth? A feather!  
Rank? Tinsel against bullion in the balance!  
The love of kindred? That to set 'gainst love,  
Friendship comes nearest to 't, but put it in,  
Friendship will kick the beam—weigh nothing 'gainst it.  
Weigh love against the world,  
Yet are they happy that have nought to say to it.'

IRISH ELOQUENCE.—It has been the habit of late years to scoff at Irish eloquence; but let the scoffers produce among themselves the equal of a thousand passages that still live in the records of the fallen parliament of Ireland. The meagre and affected style which has at length so universally pervaded the department of public speaking—parliament, bar, and pulpit—shrinks with natural jealousy from the magnificence and the native power of this great faculty of appeal to the understandings of all men alike, whose excellence was, that, at once enriched and invigorated by the noblest imagination, it awoke the reason not less than the feel-

ings, and even in its most fantastic decoration, lost nothing of its original strength. It was ornamented; but its force was no more sacrificed to its ornament, than the solid steel of the Greek helmet to its plumage and sculptures. Grattan and Curran in Ireland, Sheridan and Burke in this country, were among the most logical of speakers; their finest illustrations were only more powerful arguments. The gold and jewels of that sceptre which they waved over the legislature, with such undisputed supremacy, only increased the weight and substantial value of emblem.—*Rev. C. Croly.*

FROM THE DIAMOND MAGAZINE.

## THE POINT OF HONOR.

SOME years ago the writer of the present article happened to be stopping at the house of an elderly gentleman residing near Gravesend. His visit had lasted two or three weeks, when he chanced one day to express some surprise that his host should always attend a place of divine worship at Northfleet, when the church at Gravesend was so much nearer to his mansion. 'Perhaps, however,' said I, 'you do not like the preacher.' 'On the contrary,' replied the old gentleman, 'I admire him extremely; but were all the piety, logic, and eloquence of England's most celebrated prelates collected in one gifted individual, his sermon would not induce me to enter Gravesend Church.' 'Indeed! what can be the cause of such a singular antipathy—perhaps the building is damp, I know you are subject to rheumatism.' 'Did you Sir,' continued he, 'without noticing the latter part of my speech, perceive two white marble tombs near the gate?' 'Without any inscription?' 'The same; ten years ago the dust which moulders beneath those—his voice faltered, and for a moment he was silent, but he soon resumed in a firmer tone. 'It is a mournful tale, yet if you have no better occupation you would oblige me by listening to the relation, and give me your opinion respecting the conduct of the actors.' Having expressed a desire to hear the story the old gentleman thus began. 'Recall to your mind the most beautiful features of the most beautiful women that you ever met, and out of these different charms form, like Apelles of old, a model of perfect loveliness; animate this beau ideal with an expression where vivacity was tempered by dignity, where archness was tempered by tenderness, and perhaps you may be able to conceive some faint idea of Florence Gray. To these personal attractions add a mind full of talent, a heart overflowing with sympathy and romance, a temper that rendered herself and every one around her happy, and to crown all, a fortune of thirty thousand pounds. Alliances of the most brilliant description were proposed to her from all quarters. At every ball and assembly she was sure to be surrounded by a circle of admirers distinguished by their rank, wealth, and merit. A crowd of 'desirables' disputed the honour of laying their hearts and fortunes at her feet. 'Flattered, followed, sought, and sued,' had Florence been a little intoxicated by the incense that was daily offered to her—had she sometimes played the coquette—had she occasionally teased half a dozen sighing swains to death—who would not have excused her? Beauties are privileged despots, and if they sometimes abuse the 'right divine' which nature has conferred upon them, what can their poor subjects do but submit? The tyranny is one which no press can argue away, and which no revolution can overturn. But Florence was not even a coquette—she had early distinguished Reginald Verney by her favor, and from the time she had once owned her preference, her lover had never for a single moment any reason to doubt the sincerity and constancy of her attachment. He was a young man of considerable fortune, and I cannot better describe him than by saying that he was in every respect worthy of his mistress. In spite of Shakespeare's aphorism, the course of true love seemed for once to run smooth. Emboldened by sundry eloquent sighs and tender glances, Reginald at length ventured the sweet question, and Florence blushed consent. On both sides their friends approved the match. There was no obstacle to their happiness. Reginald pressed her so name the day. The words trembled on her lips; she began to speak, then stopped short, then laughed at Reginald's disappointment. At length, in an unguarded moment, a promise escaped her; it was instantly revoked, but too late, Reginald insisted upon its performance. A few days before the happy morning appointed for their union, Verney chanced to be dining at the table of his future son in law, Florence was at his side. The party had agreed to pass the evening at a concert at Rochester. While the dissent was prolonged until the carriage was ready; the conversation was turned upon a duel that had lately taken place. The whole neighbourhood was ringing with the deplorable event. A dispute had arisen at the theatre respecting a seat. One of the parties, a hot-headed young officer, who had just left a dinner party, behaved