

One soother and softener, too, Heaven has placed  
 By our sides on the earth, like a flower in the waste,  
 That sheds its still odours, and sweetens the gale,  
 That breathes o'er the dim brow all rugged and pale,  
 Smoothing off every wrinkle that care has plow'd o'er,  
 And breathing the warm hue of health there once more !  
 Ah ! when Nature has touch'd with her spirit the face,  
 And moulded each movement to frankness and grace,  
 And nested her brood of kind thoughts in the breast,  
 What a creature is woman !—how blessing and blest !  
 What a halo of love o'er her image is cast,  
 That plays round the present, and brightens the past !  
 How she tempers man's turbulent spirit to bear,  
 And makes the home heaven which is given to her care !

But you see I am nibbling at subjects too high,  
 So, to check it at once, I must bid you good-bye.

N. R.

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ON NOVEL-WRITING AND POETRY.

THERE is no peculiarity which so much distinguishes modern literature, as the minute and faithful pictures which it gives of human nature and of society, in every conceivable situation, and in all their endless varieties. Perhaps novel-writing may claim a large share of credit for the strong and steady light which has been thus thrown on the most obscure conditions of life, and on the most secret workings of the human character. Novel-writers may be considered as the light-troops, which penetrate those intricate thickets and defiles that could not be approached by heavier and more regular forces : or their mode of surveying human nature may be compared to that of a foot-passenger, in a beautiful country, who wanders at his ease through its closest recesses, and discovers many new views of nature, and many unexplored beauties, which are unknown and inaccessible to the traveller who never leaves his gilded chariot. The novel-writer presents human nature in undress. He takes her by surprise, in her most engaging, because unstudied, attitudes and expressions. He is not hampered by any artificial rules, as to poetic dignity, in subject or language. His maxim is, "*Nil humanum a me alienum puto.*" Whatever lies within the compass of human nature or probability, and is calculated to find its way to the human heart, is fairly within the reach of his exertions. He may change the scene, at plea-

sure, from the palace to the cottage—from the humorous to the pathetic—from the ludicrous to the sublime ; or he may alternate and intermingle, in one scene, characters and incidents possessing all these different qualities, and his readers will be only the more delighted and astonished at the splendid melo-drama which he thus makes to pass before them. One would almost think that this mode of writing had been invented for the very purpose of escaping from all restraints, except those which the unsophisticated feelings of human nature might impose upon human genius, and of proving that mankind could not fail to be interested, even in defiance of artificial rules, by talents that could pursue and depict human character, with unconquered versatility, in its most evanescent features, and its quickest fluctuations. Many great writers have verified separate parts of this description ; but there is only one who has appropriated the whole, by embracing, within the grasp of his mighty and versatile genius, the wide range of nature and imagination. He is the confessor of past ages, who reveals to us, with pardonable treachery, their secret feelings, sins, and frailties ; and has woven them into many a tissue of anecdotes and adventure, that throws far more light on the interior mechanism, and true progress of former times, than those abstracts of public events, and splendid achievements, or crimes, which

alone the dignity of the historian permits him to detail.

Novel-writing, independently of its own peculiar fascinations, has contributed greatly to increase the materials for poetry; and has given it infinitely more variety and effect, by widening the range of those human characters which it professed to represent, as well as of those persons to whom it is addressed. It has disclosed to us those hidden sources of interest and attraction, which exist more or less in the lowliest individuals, and the most obscure conditions, whenever human interests are at stake, and human passions, or human energy, are called forth. The freedom of the novelist from all trammels, has given him boldness to achieve unexpected discoveries, as to the almost boundless variety and extent of interest arising from the delineation of human nature, in all its different aspects; and he is led to draw his portraits fresh from nature, with the same air of bold and graceful negligence in which he observed the originals. From this source, poetry also borrows a more natural tone, and imbibes a spirit of greater vigour and variety. Those conventional rules, which had limited its efforts to a certain class of characters, and prescribed to it a monotonous stateliness of style, from which it was accounted bad taste to deviate, have been gradually disregarded; and it now professes (though under far greater restraint) to delineate, like novel-writing, every scene in nature, every feeling of the human heart, and every variety of human character, which can excite interest. Not only great events and striking adventures, but the quiet and unvaried scenes of private or domestic life,—the visions of philosophical retirement,—the feelings, habits, and pursuits of the humblest society,—in short, every class and condition of life, have thus become the sources of poetical interest. For it is no paradox to assert, that there is food for poetry in the humblest bosom where human passions dwell; wherever there is a spark of amiable or honourable feeling, that feeling can kindle the sympathy of others; and it is the poet's task to adapt it for this purpose. It is the triumph of

his art, to extract the genuine ore of fancy and feeling, from the dross of low and sordid passions with which it may be encrusted in actual life; and the more extensively he can practise this art, in every department of human character, the more abundant will be the store of materials that he accumulates, and the more universal and permanent will be the sympathy that he excites among different classes of society, by the adaptation of his efforts to their various feelings and conceptions. In thus attempting to widen the dominions of poetry, many extravagances have been committed, and many subjects and characters introduced, totally unsusceptible of poetical interest. But the general result has been, to increase, in an incalculable degree, the resources of the poet, and to bestow upon poetry a vigour, variety, and extent, which have scarcely any perceivable limit, amidst the diversity of human events, and the endless fluctuation of human passions.

These united results of novel-writing and poetry have given to one quality, which is the life and soul of both—viz. poetical pathos—a much more natural, and consequently more durable sort of interest, than it formerly possessed. By the causes which have been now mentioned, the sphere of human sympathy is diversified and enlarged. A medium has thus been contrived, through which the different classes of society become mutually familiarized with each other's characters, habits, and pursuits. There is a much greater store, also, and a greater variety of poetical character than before, through the introduction into poetry of characters drawn from the middling and lower classes of society. Their lives probably furnish more incidents than those of the higher classes, because they are liable to greater vicissitudes; their characters are more marked, being brought out in greater vigour and diversity, by the overruling, and frequently various circumstances of their condition, than those whose situation is more uniform, and less exposed to the operation of chance; they are not so much shrouded, as those who are in a higher class, after one artificial model; and, as their

feelings and passions are more energetic than those of the higher classes, so the expression of them is more unrestrained and impetuous. It is easy, therefore, to conceive, what has been fully proved by experience, that these classes furnish the best materials for poetical or dramatic effect, and the richest store of original character. There is something, too, both new and uncommon to the higher classes, in the "annals of the poor," and in the simple feelings that they call forth, which render the pathos connected with their failings and misfortunes more touching than in characters drawn from higher life. It may, likewise, be observed, that, by a free communication, and liberal sympathy with the feelings and characters of all the different classes in society, the characters of the higher classes themselves become bolder and more original. In this country, where there is a free interchange of sentiment, in real life, between the different ranks of the community, and a thorough familiarity with each other's characters, derived from actual experience, as well as from description, the higher orders have acquired, chiefly by that means, a character much more manly and unsoftened, than in those countries where they form a class separate from the people, and impose on each other, in the progress of false refinement, a standard of character and manners, equally remote from nature and from popular feelings. The free selection, therefore, of characters for poetry and novel-writing, from all the different classes of society, not only increases the actual store of characters, but renders those characters in higher life, which had been always considered as legitimate subjects of delineation, more available for the purposes of description and effect than they ever were before. In this way, the stores of poetical pathos become richer and more diversified; and poets, having a wider range than they had before, are not so much tempted to give way to refinement and extravagance of feeling, but borrow largely from the pathos of nature, in whatever character or condition of life it may appear. Accordingly, we see that the humble ranks of life often afford the most pathetic scenes to the

novelist and the poet. Crabbe, the statistical poet of humble life, introduces, perhaps, into his Dutch paintings of village-character, too much minuteness of detail, and too many incidents and traits of character, that are tedious, because they have little meaning or interest; but his pathos, when he is pathetic, goes directly to the heart, from its simplicity; and the very details which he connects with it, give it as permanent a place in our memory like something real which we have witnessed. The magical art of Goldsmith and Campbell, without violating the probabilities of humble and domestic life, adorns their most obscure and their loveliest scenes with beautiful colours of virtue and enthusiasm, which we cannot bear to think delusive, and points out to us the enchantments of which even the ordinary course of life is susceptible, and which we would fain persuade ourselves, from their seductive descriptions, that it had sometimes realized. The Lake School of Poets, in spite of all that childishness, and that perverse attachment to mean or trivial objects, which often make them ridiculous, when they intend to be pathetic, have unquestionably given a poetical interest, that was never felt before, to simple, and even infantine affections—to the feelings of the humblest characters—or to emotions springing up amidst retirement, without incident or dramatic interest to recommend them; and this great triumph they have achieved, either by reporting such incidents and feelings with the most severe simplicity, as they took place in nature, or by throwing around them the splendid illusions of fancy, so that they appear to be connected with a race of beings not of this world. But natural pathos has probably reached still greater perfection in novels, because the familiarity of their descriptions domesticates us, as it were, more completely than poetry can do, in the most touching scenes of humble life, and brings them directly to our hearts, by a boldness of detail, which could not be attempted, according to the received notions of poetry. The only aim of the novelist is to affect us by

a representation of nature. His style is susceptible of the utmost sublimity and pathos; but he is also free to descend, without any breach of propriety, to the utmost simplicity and plainness. The style of poetry, on the other hand, is elevated, by custom, above that of prose. The best poetry, certainly, is that which carries away our attention entirely from the style, by force of thought or feeling, and splendour of fancy. But such an object cannot be obtained by neglecting the style. On the contrary, our attention is forcibly recalled to the style, by this very neglect; and no other excellencies can atone for the want of that dignity and elegance, without which there can be no poetry. The poet is therefore restrained from indulging in that familiarity of phrase or allusion, by which the novel-writer is often enabled to give his portraits a greater air of life and reality. He may approximate very nearly to the language and feelings of actual life, but he cannot transcribe them, as the novelist often does, without alteration or embellishment. There is a limit, not very easily defined, though sufficiently clear in practice, beyond which he cannot pass, consistently with poetical effect. But the novelist is liable to no restraint, excepting this,—that the characters and scenes which he describes shall be fitted to excite human sympathy; and therefore he is quite at liberty to be dignified or familiar, to captivate his reader by splendour of fancy and eloquence, or touch him by pathetic simplicity; to choose his characters from the humblest station, and clothe them in all their natural loveliness, provided they are better fitted, by that means, to touch the feelings. What, accordingly, can be more affecting, than those scenes in which the Great Novelist throws aside all the disguise of adventitious rank and splendour, that he may expose to our view the unrestrained workings of nature,—the ungovernable passion of grief, for instance, as displayed in the fisherman's cottage, (in the *Antiquary*;) upon the death of his son,—the pure sisterly affection and unconscious heroism of Jeanie Deans,—or the fearful pathos with which Meg Merrilies denounces the fate of El-

langowan? In these, and a thousand other instances, the pathos is rendered more intense, by the plainness of language, and familiarity of allusion, which place the character or scene before our eyes, and give it at once a local habitation in our bosoms. It may, perhaps, be thought national to remark, that the Scottish peasantry are peculiarly adapted to awaken this kind of interest, by the circumstance of being better educated, and consequently not so mechanical in their habits, but, on the contrary, more reflective and imaginative than the peasantry of most other nations; a disposition of mind that is not a little heightened by the deep and enduring influence of a pure and simple religion, which has long given dignity to their character, and purity, as well as strength, to their affections. But however this may be, there can be no doubt that novel-writing is susceptible of much greater pathos, from the facility and freedom with which it can delineate this kind of characters; and that poetry, also, has greatly augmented both the extent and the efficacy of its resources, in proportion as it has been able to approximate to the same style of delineation.

We have hitherto considered chiefly, that species of the pathetic which adheres pretty closely to the standard of nature, and presents its scenes and characters as nearly as possible, with the same accompaniments that they might be supposed to exhibit in actual life. This is certainly the most efficacious means of touching the heart. But very different modes of producing this effect (and some of them displaying great genius) have been adopted. In the first place, we may notice what may perhaps be called the *Sentimental style* of writings. The professed object of this species of writing, is to touch the softer feelings, and, with this view, it indulges chiefly in tender scenes and melting descriptions. The author does not profess to exclude misery from his descriptions, for without that there could be no pathos; but he carefully avoids all those details which might render it disgusting, and introduces only so much of it as is necessary to complete an affecting picture of elegant distress.

But the woes on which he loves most to expatiate, are those of the heart; for it is in sympathizing with these that we may indulge the luxury of grief, in its unalloyed purity. His heroes are, therefore, often "cras'd with care, or cross'd in hopeless love," and his heroines beautiful angelic creatures, with no other fault than excess of feeling, which is apt to overflow in favour of some male creature equally delightful, of whom an old uncle or sober husband is unreasonably jealous. *Hinc illa lacrima*. The feelings of the unfortunate pair, who, of course, are nearly enamoured of virtue, in the persons of each other, ("for even their feelings lean to virtue's side,") shall get the better of their reason and remorse; discovery, poisoning, &c. shall soon close the scene; while the young lovers breathe out to the winds their former tenderness, and pour out their whole regret and admiration. It is almost needless to say, that many works of this class differ essentially from the sketch now given, in their leading features, and in their details, although all of them coincide with it in this respect, that they delight to keep the sluices of the heart constantly open, and rather to luxuriate amidst perpetual sorrow, than to represent the actual state really is, with its capricious alternations of grief and joy, and that truly dramatic mixture of good and evil, which forms the ground-work of most of its actions and characters. No one who has seen the admirable works of this kind, which have been written both in French, and more especially in English, can doubt that it is a style of writing susceptible of great pathos and eloquence. But, as the luxuries are apt to pall soon on the taste, so perpetual appeals to the softer feelings become tedious, monotonous and tiresome. It is the existence of a smaller and less national taste, that this style of writing appears to have fallen lately into disrepute, and that men prefer the beauty and variety derived from a more strict imitation of nature. This sentimental style of writing may probably have a pernicious effect, sometimes upon very young people, by furnishing arms to the imagination and

the passions, when they are almost ready of themselves to overpower reason; and the tendency of such writings, even to nourish benevolence, is rather doubtful, since the habit of sympathy with the scenes of elegant distress described in them, serve rather to create a disgust for the coarse and vulgar appendages of real misery. But this tendency to pervert the imagination or the feelings is chargeable only against such works when taken by themselves: it is easily modified or corrected, by a rational and judicious education, and, under this correction, such works may be of eminent use in refining the taste and softening the heart.

There is another kind of the pathetic which has been attempted in some instances with considerable success, viz. that which, instead of presenting a full picture, gives only a few significant traits of character or feeling, leaving it to our imagination to fill up the rest. The *Man of Feeling*, *Sterne's Sentimental Journey*, and many passages in *Sterne's* other works, must at once occur to every one as examples of this species of writing. It cannot fail to be occasionally successful, as it often happens that a single circumstance, stated by itself, awakens a more numerous train of kindred associations and feelings, than if it had been encumbered with an elaborate description. But it is impossible that it should be successful as an habitual style of writing. The ordinary course of events and characters is made up of many details, and the author who wishes to draw a picture agreeable to nature, must embody a number of these details, although not to such an extent as may distract or weary the reader. Neither human events, nor human feelings, are often wound up to such a pitch, as that they can be hit off by one stroke of the pencil, or summed up in a single word; and, therefore, if an author indulges habitually in this style of delineation, he goes out of nature, and forces his style into an artificial emphasis; contrives unnatural situations, with the view of creating an opportunity for his favourite art of delineating objects by a single trait; and at last, wearies and disgusts the reader, by a succession of laboured attempts at this

kind of energy, which, as they are inapplicable to the ordinary course of events or characters, must be frequently abortive.

But there is a school of pathos and energy, which has been lately much more celebrated than any of these, from the splendid genius with which it is adorned, viz. that which professes to represent ungovernable passion, revelling amidst the pleasures of life, without restraint from prudence or principle, and adopting at last, from satiety and disappointment, the maxim that "all is vanity;" satirizing alternately with the bitterness of a cynic, and the levity of a libertine, those habits of social and domestic life, which cannot be enjoyed without the cultivation of serene and contented feelings, with which such violent passion is inconsistent; and expressing an unconquerable aversion for the world, and for all human pursuits, founded on a brief and superficial experience, which, being spent in the hasty pursuits of passion, without any serious attempt to cultivate friendship or sympathy, has necessarily ended in spleen and mortification. Such a character forms an admirable vehicle for giving a rapid sketch of all the leading pleasures and pursuits of human life, with that spirit of satire which lends point and energy to description. There is a boundless field for pathos and talent of every kind, in describing, with all the force of moral painting, those objects in which man most strongly sympathizes, and the passions which they excite; and the author, after he has wound up our feelings to the highest pitch, by his eloquence, exalts the mystical grandeur of his assumed character, by pouring contempt on the emotions he has raised, and declaring, that whatever rouses the strongest sympathy of others, has no longer any power over him. If any stories are written in this poetical vein, they will relate, of course, to beings whose strong passions have hurried them into crimes that arm society against them, and who, being still sufficiently under the impulse of passion to justify their conduct to themselves, consider themselves as the injured parties, and resolve to avenge the wrongs they have done to society, as if these were wrongs which

they had suffered. Linked with the fortunes of such a misanthropic hero, the object, and generally the victim of his passion, is some form of more than human beauty, and more than feminine tenderness; whose mild and unresisting submission to suffering forms a strong relief to his dark ferocity, and who yet sheds a ray of human feeling over the gloom of his character, by showing, that he who had lost all sympathy for others, had concentrated all his affections in her. The prototypes of such characters, and the occasions for displaying them, are happily not to be found in British society; they must be sought for in those half-barbarous countries, where mankind are divided into tyrants and slaves, tormentors and victims,—where one class of society makes another the unresisting sufferers of their passion and cruelty. These subjects afford scope for some striking delineations, and abound in tragical results; but they want variety. The violent passions do not admit of variety, because they are of rare occurrence, and lead only to great catastrophes, but do not connect themselves in the least with that train of ordinary incidents which form the chief source of variety in the drama of human life. Nothing could have given to the characters now alluded to the interest they have excited, but the powerful genius that ushered them into notice, who has entered into the very life and spirit of the gloomy characters which he delights to paint,—infused into them a fine vein of enthusiasm and feeling, which, assuredly, never were consistent with the actions that he imputes to them,—and has thus turned the arms of society against itself, by describing that morbid refinement of feeling which is peculiar to civilized life, as the prevailing disposition, and the implied apology of characters, whose habits are at war with all social existence. The general idea of his performances is not new, although it never before met with so admirable an exposition. Rousseau has expended the happiest efforts of his genius and eloquence, in attacking the established forms of society, and in endeavouring, by show,—so as to fill the imagination at least, if not to satisfy the reason,—how

actions, which are commonly esteemed vicious, may be consistent with the loftiest feelings, and the purest notions of virtue. Many writers of the German school have carried the same system to its utmost height, and seem, one would think, to have tried the experiment how far it was possible to connect virtuous motives with bad actions. The extravagancies into which this system has often hurried them, bears the same relation to real genius and feeling than fanaticism bears to true piety. It is the English poet, however, who has given this system more than its true value, by the adventitious ornaments with which he has invested it. The splendid and often just moral sentiments which he utters, as to the nothingness of human pursuits—the unrivalled beauty and life of his descriptions—his singular skill in analysing the feelings of dark bosoms, and placing human passion before us, in its fervent ecstasy or ungovernable fury—these, with his many other great qualities, give a sacredness to every subject which he touches, and invest his characters with an appearance of inspiration, which they owe solely to his genius.

But such characters, however powerfully delineated, cannot excite a deep or permanent sympathy, since they take possession chiefly of the fancy, and scarcely ever reach the heart. It requires a violent effort of the imagination to throw ourselves out of our habitual sympathies and associations, and to derange our minds so far as to place them in accordance with the feelings of those extraordinary beings whom the poet represents to us. His genius may produce a momentary belief, that the illusions which he places before us are realities; that the headstrong passions and perverted principles which he adorns with all the blandishments of poetry, are the only lights of human nature; and that the principles and feelings of those whom we have hitherto considered as wise and good, are full of error and deception. It would be too much to say, that we do not sometimes even feel pleasure in this temporary delusion; for true genius can give a magical charm to the most unnatural emotions. But, while we

remain subject to this influence, we are spell-bound, as under the wand of an enchanter:—the train of feeling which the poet makes us follow may be coherent, as the thoughts of lunatics often are; but it is not less unfit than they are, to stand the test of reality; and we gladly escape, at last, from the state of unnatural ecstasy, or self-created sorrow, to which he has condemned us, into the cheerful day-light of actual life and nature. His genius, however, would probably not have been so distinguished in any other course as it has been in this; for genius, more than any other mental gift, receives an impulse from early habits and associations, which marks out the precise path in which it is destined to excel. It is in vain to argue that more excellence would have been attained in another course; every effort made by the author, in another department, would have probably been laboured and lifeless; it is only in that path to which his own propensities have guided him, that his genius feels all the vigour of a spontaneous existence. The advice, therefore, of critics, as to the works which a poet should undertake, are often useless, since they direct him to objects from which his inclination, the indispensable guide of his genius, feels totally averse. We ought thankfully to receive the exertions of genius, even in the species of writing now alluded to, (when they are not pernicious to morality), as affording us a new store of enjoyment, and as adding a new region to the wide dominions of intellect. But it is impossible for any strength of genius to conceal that such subjects afford much more scanty materials for poetry, and produce much less heartfelt enjoyment than others which are more agreeable to nature. Even in the works of the poet so often alluded to, amidst their numberless excellencies, there is a frequent monotony; the same character is reproduced, in successive poems, under different forms; the same train of sentiment is repeated, with new illustrations; the same headstrong passions rage again before us with results similar in kind, though different in their details; in short, all the rich ornaments of genius and poetry are lavished, in vain, to dis-

guise from us the lurking features of that fearful spirit, which has possessed our thoughts, under all its various incarnations, and arrested our attention to the war which it appears to wage, incessantly, with society and nature. The poet himself appears, indeed, to have been at last tired of the perpetual gloominess of his muse, and has, on several occasions, exchanged it for a vein of levity not less portentous, in which he treats, with bitter ridicule and scorn, those habits and feelings which were formerly the subjects of his invective and indignation. He sometimes even places the riddle and its solution in still closer contact, when he raises our feelings, in one verse, to the highest pitch, by the most daring efforts of poetry, and derides, in the next, the enthusiasm which he had kindled. The strong emotions excited by his serious poetry, which leaves on our minds the disheartening impression, that the manners and institutions of society are at war with human happiness, cannot be more effectually removed than by his lighter poems, in which he laughs at all serious emotion whatever. The latter afford a tolerable parody on the former, and illustrate what is at any rate tolerably clear, that his serious misanthropy must be merely a passing mood of the fancy, since his genius which created, can, almost at pleasure, dispel the illusion. It may, perhaps, be thought that the fierce invective which he directs against society, and the levity with which he would persuade us to despise it, both arise from the same distorted views of human nature; and that such views are too alien from ordinary feelings and experience, to excite any enduring interest, or afford sufficient materials for poetry. The poet who opens his fancy and his heart with least reserve to the impressions arising from nature and society, will rather be led to regard human life with an agreeable feeling of curiosity and sympathy, tending occasionally to pity for the faults and

errors of humanity, but seldom sharpened into hatred, and always mixed with delight and wonder at the phenomena of intellect and passion, exemplified under a thousand forms, in the eager contentions and keen enjoyments of the great drama that is constantly passing and changing before him. The feeling naturally produced by such a scene may be often grave and contemplative, but scarcely ever misanthropic; and it is frequently cheerful and joyous. This, accordingly, has been the temper of those great poets whose minds have been most extensively imbued with a knowledge of human life, and whose works are treasures of information regarding human nature, as well as imperishable monuments of genius. The works of Shakespeare, and all the other great English dramatists, of Milton, Goldsmith, Campbell, Scott, and of the Great Novelist, abound in those cheering and indulgent views of human nature, which appear generally to increase as our experience enlarges, and as we acquire a deeper insight into the human character. It was not by a repulsive contempt for human feelings and pursuits, but by entering into them with the keenest sympathy—in short, by living in imagination the characters which they portrayed—that many of these great men have been able to give us pictures of human character, which are only surpassed in vigour and variety by Nature herself. In this way alone can a poet expect to excite permanent interest, or to obtain enduring fame. On the whole, it is not unpleasing to reflect, that those views of mankind which are derived from the widest observation, are generally the most favourable; and that a love of virtue, accompanied with an indulgent sympathy for human failings, and a warm interest in human happiness, is not merely founded on true philosophy, but is the only feeling sufficiently congenial with human nature, to form a permanent source even of poetical interest.

SWITZERLAND; OR A JOURNAL OF A TOUR AND RESIDENCE IN THAT COUNTRY, IN THE YEARS 1817, 1818, AND 1819: FOLLOWED BY AN HISTORICAL SKETCH ON THE MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF ANCIENT AND MODERN HELVETIA. BY LOUIS SIMOND, AUTHOR OF A JOURNAL OF A TOUR AND RESIDENCE IN GREAT BRITAIN, DURING THE YEARS 1810 AND 1811. TWO VOLS. OCTAVO. LONDON: 1822.

We have transcribed the title of this book in English, although it was in French that we first met with it—and we begin with advising such of our readers, as are at home in the latter language, to study the work in its original form. We believe, indeed, that M. Simond is author of the translation, no less than of the French original; but we do not think that in English he has given a very fair view of his own book. It is not exactly a translation; it is rather another original. The alterations do not seem improvements, and there is not that flow and colouring of language which render the French work a composition of great beauty and eloquence. M. Simond once wrote better English than he does now. This is not at all surprising, since he has of late resided so much on the Continent; the wonder was, that he at any time wrote our language better, we believe, than had ever been done by a foreigner. It is scarcely possible, too, to give to a work the same interest or beauty, when it is new-modelled, as it possessed in its first form, at least, if it was originally a work of excellence. Several great poets have attempted to make translations of their most perfect performances, but seldom with success. Tasso and Akenside have failed remarkably. Had M. Simond written first in English, however imperfect the composition might have been, yet we question if he could have conveyed into another form of the same work, although in the French language, the original animation and vivacity. How then must he have failed when this process was reversed—when he employed himself, not in translating, but in giving a lifeless likeness—getting up a

wan fraternal shade," in a language with which he was but imperfectly conversant, of the glowing and brilliant picture which he had already executed in the fresh colours of his native tongue\*! We think it right to mention this, because, as the English work will naturally come into the hands of most readers in this country, they will by no means be aware of its great merit as a work of eloquent description. For our own parts, we are glad that we first perused it in French, as we are sure our imaginations could not otherwise have been so warmed with the pictures which this admirable tourist has drawn. A writer of feeling and judgment can make almost any description of nature or of man strike upon some chords that carry it to the heart. The author of the *Pirate* has given to the barren and naked landscape, even of Ultima Thule, an interest which the scenes of Greece or of Italy could not inspire, if described by a tame or indiscriminating observer. But M. Simond has here found a field fully equal to his powers, and such as to awaken all his research and inquiry. He has, in truth, beat it in all its bearings, with infinite activity and sagacity—he has tried, alike, "what the open, what the covered yield;" and much as it has formerly been explored, we doubt much whether Switzerland has, till now, found an observer who was so well qualified either to appreciate its beauties, to give a candid and correct view of its inhabitants and their institutions, to open so many pleasing and novel aspects of their history, or to present the whole varied sketch to his readers, in words and thoughts so well adapted to rouse a multitude of reflections, and to find a thousand avenues into the secret soul. It is this character of mind, indeed, which is worth every thing else in a

\* What if all this fine speculation turns on an error, and if the English was the original work? Should this supposition prove to be correct, the observations above made will still, in a measure, apply. The French, in that case, is an improved picture taken from a rude, unsketched sketch. But why has M. Simond published the unsketched work, to the prejudice of the other, and of his own?