

many subjects has been run into; hence the differentials of new and old labours, and distinctions of partiality, that has taught many, like Goldsmith, to despise lyric poetry and blank verse, odes, sonnets, &c. and to relish nothing but rhyme, and the common verse of five feet, or ten syllables. There seems to be something inhuman nature that inclines to the formation of eminence, on either side, as we find ourselves passionately fed in the pursuit of literature, will as often occur, as they do in religion. Pope is too much of the

dramatic poet; he was not because he was not that he improved the English language, and had written excellent satire nor that he had translated the second poet of antiquity; nor that he had written of his time; nor that he had written Goëlines smooth and pathetic as the Deflected Village:—No! but because, collectively considered, he had done as much as any individual writer, since the invention of printing.

Byron's has been called by Shakespeare, in the dramatic sense, Milton, in his particular walk, in religion. Pope is too much of the dramatic poet; he was not because he was not that he improved the English language, and had written excellent satire nor that he had translated the second poet of antiquity; nor that he had written of his time; nor that he had written Goëlines smooth and pathetic as the Deflected Village:—No! but because, collectively considered, he had done as much as any individual writer, since the invention of printing.

great poet, or as a writer, or as a man, the poet of reason, to be looked upon as the standard of universal excellence; and it is beyond a doubt, that the case of comprehending him and his level powers, have increased the number of his admirers above any other qualification he was possessed of—and Goldsmith was certainly envious, or angry, when he wrote the preface to his *Deserted Village*. Indeed, with Pope, Johnson, &c. on this side of the question, the appearance, at a distance must be rather formidable; but it will appear a plain case to the more penetrating, that if either of these

such a one, or such a one is the greater, &c. is saying nothing to the purpose; for, though there are various gradations of merit, it is certain that a versatility of powers, that is, a capacity to exceed mediocrity in every department of poetry, the light and the grave, the sublime and the burlesque, in all their various modes and measures—I say, it is certain, that a capacity approaching the nearest to this, is the only unerring evidence of a superior genius.

It is some consolation, however, that, in some instances, as in the case of Pope, and a con-

has been a constant, or, perhaps, a blank verse, the lyric ode, sonnet, or the Spenserian stanza, some of the heroes of the Donchad had been spared, Goldsmith been silent, the life of Spenser have been given, with the lives of the poets, and the small fry that have lately raised an outcry against the fonnery of Mr. Smith, W. Hamilton Reid, &c. in some of the daily prints, might have lived their twelve hours without being heard of.— Let it remain as an infallible criterion of merit, that those who have excelled in the difficult, could have excelled in the easy; and if some of them have given

climate, not ability — To make a more
 immediate application, either Milton,
 Shakspeare, or Dryden, separately con-
 sidered, have infinitely more to recom-
 mend them as standards of universal ex-
 cellence, than Pope, Johnson, Goldsmith,
 and all their &c. &c. put together.

It was on account of variability of na-
 ture, that one of the best judges the world
 of letters ever produced. (Voltaire, *Œs-
 saies*) gave Dryden the lead of the Bri-

—and yet none of these, in their poetry,
 was distinguished in sublimity or pathos.
 And, finally, the inspired writings, from
 which their greatest authors derive a
 sanction, for, of the principles of every
 species of excellence, afford in a great
 number of almost every other kind of poe-
 try, but, one, exception. Considerations of
 this kind will tend to regulate and sta-
 bilize our estimation of this diverse and
 illustrious, its beauties and defects, and,

insensibly

p 11 (1790), 22-24

never may be encumbered.

This leads to a discussion of the mode of writing that has attracted the most of the public attention for some time past, that is, the sonnet. One thing proves to us, that, the more simple these are in their construction, the longer they will please. This is evident in the admission of Mr. Chatterton, Robert Burns, and those of Mr. Charlotte Smith have obtained, in preference to many others.

The author of the *Canons of Criticism* wrote several in imitation of the Italian, or Petrarchian mode, but they had few readers. "The frequent recurrence of the rhyme," has been noticed as a defect in an English ear, and is no merit in the Italian poets, as it arose from a want of variety in their terminations. An imitation of these, among us, undoubtedly requires the skill of a Sewall, in their execution; but it is still thrown away upon the many; for, as long as the multitude in another respect, will prefer an English or Scots tune to an Italian air or finale, so long will the common ear prefer the simple sonnet, viz. that composed of three stanzas of alternate rhymes and a couplet. No derogation, notwithstanding, is intended to either of these; genius is genius, whatever direction it may take. But genius independent of acquirements, or unlettered, has been much talked of these few years past; and, according to some critics, if they were not rhetorical, it is now frequent! Pictoufons to it may have become frequent. Chatterton, Robert Burns, Mrs. Yearley, and W. Hamilton Reid, in the poetical world, have set it on this foot; but it was the untimely death of the former, more than his merit, that made his advocates so warm in his favour; and, with Dr. Gregory, every susceptible mind is liable to be transported with pity and indignation. Burns's claim is admitted—Mrs. Yearley has many admirers—and the public have been long delighted with Reid's inspiration, in every channel he has appeared in; and in some of them, his abilities have been mentioned by some of the first characters in the literary or poetical world. But, chiefly viewed, unlettered genius is but the creature of the moment; the love of writing naturally begets a love of reading, even where it did not exist as a previous

habit. Few, as some able critics have observed of Chatterton, "write to be read without reading to write;" but the mischief is, that too many people content learning with knowledge, good sense, or discrimination. There is, as Mr. Pope says, a vast difference between learning, intelligence, or languages; and if a man has knowledge, it is not one great matter whether he has it from one language or another."

Upon the whole, the ardour of those who have been too warm in the cause of unlettered genius is to be excused, as it is evident that much of the sensibility of leaving or intelligence may be whipped into any dull subject, in the course of a number of years. Simple poetic genius is then a capacity for fine writing; and, properly, the best ground for letters, as far as they are concerned in composition; so that it is an unfounded notion, that a capacity for writing good prose is not congenial with a poetical genius. For who that had a genius for poetry but excelled in prose? Pope's was the most musical, Swift's the most correct, and Milton's eminently nervous; and without any idea of comparison, we could even point out some prose pieces of Mr. Hamilton Reid's, which, deriving their excellence from his reading, scientific taste, and powers peculiarly discriminative, would, like the *versatility* of his poetical talents as much excite astonishment at his obscure situation, as they would tend to gratify any other affection.

Description of the Mountain Hare, or Lepus Versicolor.

By Mr. Am-Sinn.

IN works of natural history we find accounts sufficiently accurate of the common hare, but no one has, as yet, spoken with any certainty respecting the *versicolor*, or hare that changes its colour. This animal, though called sometimes the mountain hare, is found in Russia, Siberia, and other countries where there are no mountains; and, according to Britton, Pennant, Forster, and Pallas, is a distinct species; for Mr. Berthout-Van-Berchem says, very properly, that it never mixes with others,

and that its mode of living is quite different from theirs.

This hare, which differs from the other species in its exterior configuration, and by its manner of living, has a head not quite so long, but somewhat rounder than that of the common hare; its cheeks are broader, and its nose and ears longer in proportion. By means of long, hooked, and very sharp claws, which it has the power of contracting and extending at pleasure, it can support itself, and run on the surface of the snow. On this account it may be distinguished from the common hare, by the traces of its feet. Its hind legs, which are as long again as those before, render it fitter for leaping over rocks, and traversing precipices. It is more lively, and less timid than the common hare. Its fur, which is softer, is whiter in winter, and becomes grey in summer on the head, neck and back. The long hairs are then of a blackish colour, in the greater part of their length from the root; they then grow yellow, afterwards pale, and at length black altogether at the points. The down is of a whitish grey colour; the belly remains white, as well as a part of the ears, the tips of which are black. The tail also remains white, with a little black at the point.

Being perfectly white in winter, its colour begins to change gradually, in the months of April and May, and in autumn it again resumes its robe of white. The mountaineers, therefore, establish on this subject very just calculations respecting the course of the seasons. If any snow happens to fall in summer, it conceals itself under it; for its colour, which is then grey, a little inclining to brown, would betray it. In fine weather, as its colour approaches near to that of the rocks, it is on this account sheltered from its enemies.

The *Lepus Versicolor* inhabits desert and mountainous countries, where there are neither trees nor shrubs. When pressed by hunger, it contents itself with dry or green herbs, which it tears for, by removing and digging up the snow with its claws. If not disturbed, it feeds in the night-time, and sleeps during the day; the greater part of the time with its eyes open; but when it has been disturbed, it hides itself for some

days under stones, and the hollow recesses of rocks. In winter, it often descends to the neighbourhood of haystacks and barns. If there are two, as often happens, one places itself before the barn, and another behind it; and, what is very astonishing, if one of them be surprised, it goes round to awaken the other, and they both betake themselves to flight together. In summer, they feed in the mountains, which may be considered as their real place of abode, which they find on the Alps, and of which they gnaw the leaves, till the commencement of winter, then the *mutetina*, the *acellia mychata*, &c. &c. the bark of the Alpine willow, and the shrub *daphnis*. In winter, all sorts of coarse herbs, except a few, such as the white bellflower. It is not ascertained whether they drink water, as they feed in the night-time, the dew seems to be sufficient for them in summer, and in winter the snow, with which the herbs are then covered. When this animal is bred in houses, it may gradually be accustomed to milk, but with difficulty to water, which it can do without, when it gets any thing green, such as cabbages and fruit. However well it may be treated it always licks after liberty, and if it can escape it betakes itself to the summits of the highest mountains.

Hunters have no other means of distinguishing the sex of these animals, but by the manner in which they sleep. The male sleeps with his head raised up, and supported on his ears; but the female places her head on her legs, and bends back her ears on her neck. They copulate for the first time in the month of February, and the females bring forth their young in April and May; they nourish them only for three weeks, at the end of which they leave them to themselves, and soon after forget them altogether. They copulate, they again, and the young are brought forth in July and August, the number produced each time is from two to six. A male and a female reared together in a house, and engaged. When the young are brought forth, they are no longer in the same place; in a few days, however, they are in a condition to keep themselves