

It now only remains to Crabbe, an author, who disdains the common-place characters, has shewn what powerful effects be produced by agents hitherto supposed too homely and vulgar for any of the loftier passions; who, has once read it, can forget the emotions aroused by this portrait of Peter Grimes? What is principally remarkable in Mr. Crabbe, is the great range of his power to describe guilt and suffering, and joy, the hardened ruffian, the gentle country maid, with a forcible pencil. There is a peculiarity in him. His diction is all thoroughly and fully English, so English, that I doubted if a foreigner could fully enter into their spirit. This is similar to that of Scott's novels, which secure the existence of Mr. Crabbe's poems, as long as the English language remains unchanged.

\* We say *Scott's* novels, for it is they that affect ignorance on the subject. No other person capable of writing the *Walter*, and they will be his sure passport to posterity.

The reason alledged by the ingenious critic for this victory of the moderns was, that there now existed a taste for stronger excitement and deeper emotion than such writers as Pope, Swift, and Addison could supply. Now, without stopping to inquire whether this 'taste' denotes a sound and healthy or a depraved and sickly appetite, and admitting the fact that Scott can boast of more readers than Pope, the real reason appears plainly this, that the reading public has increased at least a hundred fold since the last century, by a prodigious influx from the middle classes, whose taste, very naturally, leading them to

delight in novels, romances, and the 'hoc genus omne' of the circulating library, it as naturally leads them to delight in *Ladies of Lakes and Lords of Isles*;—for what are these meritorious productions for an *English* reader, but romances in rhyme?

There is, however, another and a numerous class of readers, principally consisting of young ladies in the higher circles, to whom grim barons and bald-headed monks are but tame and insipid personages. Their double distilled, highly rectified feelings cannot be satisfied but by the perpetual adhibition of that 'strong excitement' furnished by the stimulants of rage, lust, despair, madness, and murder: happy England, when such are the longings of thy daughters; and happier still, when a British Peer is raised up to gratify them!

In such a state of things, can any one be surprised that Wordsworth is not popular? i. e. popular in the Edinburgh 'sense, which estimates a man 'non pondere sed numero' of his admirers. In this sense he never can be popular; for to suppose him a universal favourite, would imply that every individual was gifted with the power of appreciating the highest excellencies of poetry,—an event very desirable, but not very probable. Mr. Wordsworth may, however, console himself under present neglect, by reflecting that such was the fate of his great model, to whom at last the centuries to come were yielded for renown. For, after all, good poetry is sure of obtaining, in the end, the applause it deserves. The public has often raised some authors to undue eminence, and depressed others who ought to have been exalted, but a succeeding age has seldom failed to rectify the error. Who was more popular in his day than Darwin, and yet who reads him now?

It is observable that Mr. Southey, in some of his earlier productions, was borne away by the stream of popular taste and wrote in compliance with it, as may be seen in his *Thalaba*, *Curse of Kehama*, &c. His *Roderic*, however, is more than an atonement for the temporary subjection of his genius to models which his better taste must have condemned.

From Mr. Southey the transition is natural to Mr. Coleridge, and in speaking of this gentleman must it not be deeply lamented, that one who can write so well, should write so little? that the author of the finest tragedy our stage has seen for a century, should

remain totally inactive, at a time too, when he might walk the course? Those who consider the influence (and it is by no means a small one) of the theatre over taste and morals, will not think the assertion extravagant, that he who, in the drama of *Remorse*, could display such powers of exerting and purifying the passions, is not morally justified in allowing this precious talent to rust unemployed, when so noble a field is open for its exertion, and in which he has absolutely no competitor.

Of Thomas Moore, who can deny that he possesses an unlimited empire over grace, elegance, and beauty; pathos might be added were it not too often deformed by a pining, whining, effeminacy, totally repugnant to the strong, but manly (and perhaps somewhat rugged) feelings of Englishmen, who, in general, look with very unequivocal contempt on the 'charming agonies of love.' And this will always be an insuperable bar to Mr. Moore's attaining the height of his fame; his muse is decidedly oriental. Had he been born in the flowery regions of the East he would have recited his lays to enraptured monarchs, contending who should bestow the highest honors on him,—a guerdon, we fear, he cannot look to receive from any European potentate.

It now only remains to speak of Crabbe, an author, who disdaining all the common-place characters of poetry, has shewn what powerful effects may be produced by agents hitherto supposed too homely and vulgar to excite any of the loftier passions; who, that has once read it, can forget the terrible emotions aroused by this poet in the fate of Peter Grimes? What is principally remarkable in Mr. Crabbe, is the great range of his powers; he can describe guilt and suffering, innocence and joy, the hardened ruffian and the gentle country maid, with the same forcible pencil. There is also another peculiarity in him. His dramatic personæ are all thoroughly and completely English, so English, that it may be doubted if a foreigner could ever enter fully into their spirit. This nationality (similar to that of Scott's novels\*), will secure the existence of Mr. Crabbe's poems, as long as the English character remains unchanged.

T. G.

\* We say Scott's novels, for it is absurd to affect ignorance on the subject. There is no other person capable of writing them but Sir Walter, and they will be his sure and certain passport to posterity.

## ESSAY ON METRICAL PROSE.

(Continued from p. 503.)

THE vocabulary of polite literature has but three names to designate all the various compositions which are included by that species of language, called poetry, viz. metrical prose, blank verse, and rhyme. The first is emphatically called metrical, though, in fact, metre or measure is common to all three, as they are all species of poetry, which, properly speaking, is measured prose.

Of these, rhyme is clearly distinguished from both the others, by the attribute of assonance in its final syllable, i. e. that if pronounced simultaneously, they would have the same sound. The distinction between metrical prose and blank verse is not quite so obvious, but a little consideration will shew us in what respect they differ, as though they are both metrical, yet it is easy to see that their metre is of a very different kind.

I do not know if any writer ever attempted to give a precise criterion, whereby we might distinguish these two poetical sisters; but to me it appears evident that it consists in this—that in blank verse the metre observes a given law; in the other it observes none. The regular return of the same metres, in the same order, and at stated periods, or after a certain number of intervening lines, I call the *law* of that metre. It is this regular return of the same metres, which constitutes blank verse, and by this it is always distinguishable from what is usually denominated metrical prose. Thus the law of the Miltonic metre, which is the simplest possible, is that in which the same metre returns every line. In the following lines:—

There was a little bird upon that pile,  
It perch'd upon a ruined pinnacle,  
And made sweet melody,  
The song was soft, yet cheerful and most clear,  
For other note none swell'd the air but his,—  
A lonely anchorite!

The law of this metre is, that the same metre shall return every third line; and, therefore, three lines are the *period* of this law.

Having thus settled this criticism, which, heretofore was, I confess, to me a *desideratum*, we may now proceed to compare these two species of language, with respect to the excellence possible to be attained in each, by beings of our finite abilities. I would here caution my reader against supposing that I mean to institute any comparison between blank verse and the metrical prose of the moderns. This latter is

only a species of metrical prose, and which being devoted exclusively to the expressing of passion or sentiment, I would best leave to call by the name—rhapsody, i. e. the irregular expression of passion. But it is no reason that because moderns have chosen to confine this species of language to the expression of passion alone, it should, therefore, be incapable of embracing much higher subjects than our passions, and engaging much higher faculties of the mind than our imagination. The Bible is a continued series of reasoning, in most eloquent metre.

But in return, the reader will do well to recollect the rule which I gave in my last paper for determining that species of language in which the greatest excellence is possible to be attained by finite beings such as we are. It was this, that in which the proportion of pleasurable qualities possible to be by us attained, to the difficulties necessarily incurred by attaining these qualities, is greatest; for it will be granted, I presume, that the language into which we may infuse most pleasurable quality, with the least difficulty, is that most likely to be brought to the highest perfection among us.

Now, in order to apply this rule to the subject under consideration, let us compare the pleasurable qualities possible to be by us infused into both metrical prose and blank verse, as also the difficulties in their composition; or in other words, since, as I have shewn, blank verse is only metrical prose under the restraint of a given law, let us inquire what the latter gains and what it loses, what new difficulties are created and what old ones avoided, by the introduction of that law?

The only qualities possible to be introduced by a regular return of the same metres, are two; uniformity of sound, which, to a certain degree is pleasing to the ear; and order or system, which is an intellectual gratification.

The qualities lost, are variety of sound, simplicity of structure, and freedom of expression. Of these, the two first are necessarily opposite to the above two qualities introduced by the law, and, moreover, are lost exactly in the proportion that these latter are gained. So that, so far, the introduction of the law cannot be considered either as an advantage or a disadvantage. But there remains still, on the side of the quality lost, freedom of expression, ease or natural grace; so that, on the whole, metrical prose is a loser

in pleasurable quality, by the introduction of a law or regularity in its metre.

Again; the difficulties of composition are wonderfully increased by this law, as is evident. The necessity of so disposing and choosing your words, as that they shall agree in their order to a given rule, introduces a difficulty not only in the selection of your words, but moreover in that of your ideas. You are compelled absolutely to reject beautiful ideas, on account of the impossibility of expressing them in words which will preserve the law of the metre.

There might be a good deal more said upon this subject, but I believe I have already fatigued the reader with this abstract speculation; and, therefore, I will conclude these essays by observing, that as it has appeared from investigation, that metrical prose, by subjecting itself to the law of blank verse, diminishes its pleasurable qualities, and increases the difficulties of its composition; it thereby renders less excellence attainable by us finite agents, than when in its primitive state.

I feel no hesitation, therefore, in saying, that it is yet in the power of man, to carry this species of language to an extent of perfection which no other yet invented could attain.

Sept. 5th, 1827.

REDLAY.

#### LIFE,

AS DISPLAYED IN THE SOJOURNINGS OF  
LOFTUS GREY.

Collected, Methodized, and Conglomerated,  
By W. B. L.

#### CHAP. II.

A touch at sublimity—infancy—its fooleries—  
internal commotion—its consequences—school  
—a frolic—punishment—the cobbler—retalia-  
tion.

How sweet, how doubly sweet are the days of childhood; how pleasant the scenes of those young years, when all is life and lightness, and joys come trooping on in all the richness of variety; what streams of laughing gladness flow into the remembrance, at the mention of that time,—that beloved time of buoyancy and brightness, which trips up our very sorrows with a smile, and sounds our pleasures on the ruins of a tear. Alas! how fleetly do they pass away; how evanescent their delights: springing into existence in all the glow, and splendour, and gay revelry of some soft fairy vision, so soon—too much in its similitude—to die away into the air. Oh! golden time; oh! happy days; why do you fly so quickly? why do you leave us for

dreary shadows and fearful sorrows, for cares, and troubles, and vexations of spirit? Earth! earth! thou art the same; thou art still as fresh, as blooming, and delightful; thy fields are as green; thy flowers do bloom as beautiful, the sun shines upon thee as brightly; and yet dost thou seem changed. Oh! man! here is thy wisdom! Oh! sin, here is thy curse!—

Oh! Pegasus! oh! most valorous Pegasus, whither, in the names of all that is wonderful, art thou wending; verily, thou hast been prosing, Pegasus; yea, and that wofully, and if we go on at this rate, heaven only knows where we shall be by-and-by! Let us descend into denser regions, my most sweet Peg, ere we dislocate our respective noses—try we a trot, just a dog-trot or so, and then shall we right-pleasantly proceed. Once more!—

As I progressed my way into days and months, I of course became the idol of every heart, the theme of every tongue; as usual, there never had been, was, nor would be, so sweet and beautiful a babe;—perfection I beat all to nothing; I was fed upon sugar and honey, and all that was sweet did they administer unto me; eager so to anticipate my infant whims before they could be expressed, so to stifle the wants which thickened with every growing moment, so to pamper my green appetite to utter loathing, they speedily exhausted all that could fascinate, and lost all power to please. Unluckily, the pith of things in the eye of childhood is variety, sweet variety; when, therefore, they could no longer satiate my unharnessed desires, and no more glut my passionate cravings, what could I do but roar! 'roar an it were any nightingale'; then was I hugged and comforted, then was I so kissed and be-prattled, that my young sense, loathing all human caresses, spurned at the very hand that fostered me. And yet my poor mother thought me an angel—and so indeed did other folks; the only difference was the kind.

To recount all the beautiful exploits of my veriest infancy, or to enumerate those delightful traits, which, whilst they picture me at home as but few removes from an actual cherubim, displayed me to all beside as a supreme pest—is, to say nothing of a somewhat treacherous memory with respect to such remote periods, not my intention; the pleasure might be nothing to speak of, and the profit, perhaps, questionable. My parents, however, loved me