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CRITICISM.

[This article is selected from a work published some years since—but that makes it none the less valuable, although we have, in modern days, Byron and other poets of great merit.]

There is no one of the fine arts more commonly esteemed, or that possesses a more general empire than poetry. In music and painting we willingly acknowledge our ignorance, where it exists, and deem it no disgrace to be born with an indifferent ear, or to be unable to point out the defects and excellencies of a picture. But of poetry every man presumes to judge and will give his opinion of an ode or tragedy, with as much confidence, as the first critic of the age.

But, notwithstanding the general presumption there are, in reality, but few, qualified to judge accurately of this charming art. To estimate justly the production of the Muse, requires not only a fine natural taste, but an extensive acquaintance with elegant literature, both ancient and modern. Without these indispensable qualifications, we can form no correct opinion and though we may cavil we cannot criticize.

From this general inability to judge accurately, arises the admiration, unjustly conferred on modern poetry, to the comparative neglect of those unrivalled masters, to whom our language is chiefly indebted for its harmony and grace. Novelty seems to compensate for excellence, and the short-lived poems of the day are perused with avidity, and praised with extravagance, while the standard bards are allowed to moulder on the shelf. It is my intention, therefore, in this paper, to restore the great poets to their proper rank, and assign to the rest, that station, to which their respective talents entitle them.

To Milton and Shakspeare, all I presume, are willing to yield the first seat in the temple of the Muses; the former distinguished by his sublimity and learning, the latter by his universality of genius.

The claims of Dryden and Pope to the second, will hardly be disputed, though it may not be so clear, to which of these great poets, the palm of superiority is due. Dryden may have more genius, but Pope has more art. The subjects, on which Dryden exercised his talents, were generally of a temporary nature, and consequently excite little interest in posterity. Pope wrote to the business and business of men, and will therefore be read with instruction and delight, while the English language lasts. Dryden is sinking into neglect, but Pope is rising still higher in the estimation of scholars, throughout the

whole civilized world. The works of Dryden have never, I believe, appeared, but in their native tongue; the productions of Pope have been translated into every polished language in Europe. We respect Dryden for what he could have written, we are grateful to Pope, for what he has actually performed.

It has been fashionable, of late years, to depreciate the genius of Pope, as deficient in originality. But no charge can be more unfounded. Long before he was of age, he wrote an epic poem, entirely the creature of his own imagination, and many other performances, which sufficiently prove that he was not wanting in fertility. These, his mature judgment committed to the flames, so that he is indebted, for this charge of deficiency in original genius, to his exquisite taste. What Pope loathed and rejected, would probably have been admired and extolled, by these sticklers for originality.

I have often thought, that if the great critics of antiquity, who were most distinguished by correct taste, could rise from their graves, and, by some miracle, be enabled to comprehend modern languages, they would give a decided preference to Pope, over all the authors of Europe. Though Milton, in some particulars, may excel all the ancients, yet, his quaintness and pedantry would exclude him from the first rank of critics, in the judgment of Horace and Quintilian.

Thomson, Armstrong, Somerville, Akenside, and Cowper, may be considered among the first poets in the second class. Of these, Thomson is the most pleasing, and Armstrong the most correct. Goldsmith, Mason, Gray, and Collins, may possess equal, though different excellence. Gray is thought, by some, to have refined too much, and Mason is universally acknowledged to yield to no writer, ancient or modern, in purity of language.

These are the authors, that ought to form and guide the public taste in poetry, and to whom our language is under the greatest obligations. Many modern versifiers may have merit, but it is of an inferior stamp, and entitled to little praise, beyond that of industry. Cowper is the last of the English poets, and since him, I know not an individual bard who will probably reach posterity. The public, in general, are fond of novelty, and incompetent to judge. Hence, every new poem is extolled, in terms of extravagant encomium, by the ignorance of its admirers, and by the partiality of the author's friends. We all remember the admiration, which Della Crossa and his followers excited, both in England and America; nor did the delusion cease, until the pen of Gifford, like the spear of Ithuriel, dissolved the charm, with its magic touch, and discovered the loathsome deformities, concealed under the dazzling covering of brilliant phraseology. An intimate acquaintance with the good poets will enable us to detect the faults of the bad, and let it be remembered, that this is no trifling accomplishment, if it be true, that a good taste in literature generally leads to a correct taste in politics, morals, and religion.

VALUE OF CONTENTMENT.

HASMOT was descended of parents neither proud, rich, nor avaricious. Contented with a sufficiency, they enjoyed a happiness which riches could bestow, & young Hasmot inherited a fortune, not acquired in pursuit of riches, but which insensible grew out of the moderate desire of not being poor. The lessons, practically taught within the roof of an humble but decent cabin,

made early impressions, and seemed happily established to the mind of Hasmot: the ardor of youth kindled not in his mind any immoderate wishes, except, perhaps, a too ardent desire to do good: the fruits of his revenue supplied his own wants, the balance was claimed by, and with much simplicity bestowed on, the necessitous neighbor: his favorite place was home; his favorite society, his poor acquaintances as dependants; the objects of his munificence were, those least likely to be ever able to prove their gratitude, and it was bestowed without ostentation or any appendage that could render it painful to the receiver. Happy would it have been for Hasmot had he remained in his paternal cot, and happy would the resolution have been for his happy tenants. The character of Hasmot would be despicably incomplete had he been entirely without ambition.—A circumstance, which has since led to the political convulsion of a large portion of the world, was affected or commenced during the minority of Hasmot. The people, exercising the sovereign power, expelled from the throne of France the representative of a long line of monarchs: their justification was drawn up in a masterly style, and published to all nations; the effect was momentous, and so general, as to threaten the dissolution of all hereditary monarchy, nor could there be found a more zealous prose

Hasmot. Already he fancied himself a slave, and could see, in the government of Holland, his native country, but an illigimate exercise of authority not derived from the people. He would be a revolutionist for the public good; but seeing no prospect of effecting what he conceived justifiable and obligatory, he determined to cease to be a slave. One road only was open: he set off for Paris, the sea of revolution and reform. He did indeed enjoy a degree of satisfaction, but he sighed for a return to the ways of his youth—while involved in unsatisfied meditation, he was invited to form one of a party then about travelling, for their amusement, into Switzerland. Our hero was already tired of Paris; some reasons had determined him not to return to Holland; a journey seemed necessary to relieve his drooping spirits: he eagerly embraced the invitation: he had no friends to part from, no long preparation to make; he was ready, and joined his party in a few hours. At once fascinated with the romantic heights and luxuriant vales of Switzerland, he sighed anew for his former happy home, and hesitated whether he would return to Holland against his former resolution. He loved his native country above all others, but liked the natural appearance of Switzerland more; he believed the laws were better, and he resolved, if otherwise, that he would be a slave any where rather than at home: he therefore fixed his residence in a rich valley, and already felt a happiness greater than if he were king of the canton. The democratic sentiments, which arose out of the ashes of the French monarchy, began to spread widely and the people of Holland were not free from their imposing effect. The stadtholder, fearing for the stability of his crown, enacted, by concurrence of the states general, several severe laws abrogating still more the rights of the people: many in consequence followed the example of Hasmot, and emigrated to France. Some of these, knowing the virtues, and swayed by the council of Hasmot, repaired to his place of residence, and bought farms contiguous to his. For years these settlers enjoyed happiness arising from content and their moderate views; but Hasmot was not as lasting as he merited; he be-

came for a time, a sufferer by his great anxiety to serve others.—The difficulty of procuring his property from Holland, and various other causes, produced embarrassment. He repaired to Paris, with a view to the settlement of his affairs in Switzerland and Holland; but, being sued for debts, his estates in both countries were sequestered, and he was, for some reasons to him unknown, although innocuous, of crime, arrested, by order of the executive government of France, and kept in solitary confinement for several years. During this time his resolution and virtue continued to him a comparative happiness: and when released, by whose order or interference he never learned, he was informed that his estates were irrecoverably lost, and that an amiable woman of his native country, whom he married on his first visit to Paris, lived in great indigence in the city, and, by her own industry, supported a family of children. He repaired to their wretched habitation, but the mightiest monarch who ever swayed a sceptre, might witness, with ease, the scene of love and harmony produced by their meeting. The difficulties which presented themselves to this amiable family were truly great, but they were resigned, and, in spite of poverty, happy. Economy and industry gradually lessened their wants, and they lived to be rich. Some of their debts remain-

not legally recoverable by a general law passed during the confinement of Hasmot; but Hasmot disdained to take advantage of a discharge which he called "merely legal."—He called his creditors, and, from his earnings, paid their demands in full; and, with the balance of his fortune, repurchased an estate in Switzerland, where he resides in the enjoyment of riches not to be purchased by gold, and in the possession of that happiness which never entirely forsook him, because, while in search of it, he always stopped at that point alone where it can be enjoyed.

Georgia and Alabama.—We learn of a gentleman direct from Georgia, that an accommodation of the contested question relative to the boundary line between these two States has been effected. As we stated in our last, the Georgia Commissioners commenced running the line according to their construction of the compact of 1802, when they were recalled by the Alabama Commissioners, and the difference which prevailed was settled by the latter party assenting to the proposition of the former. So that the line will now be run from Nica-jack on the Tennessee river, to the most western point of a great bend on the Chatahouchie, known as Miller's bend, about 37 miles above Fort Mitchell.

The National Gazette contains a translation of the Speech of M. Vidaurre, the Representative from Peru to the Panama Congress, at the opening of that body. We shall give some extracts from it hereafter as it is an exposition of the faculties, objects and duties of the Congress, as understood by himself, a lawyer of eminence.

Treaty with Mexico.—The New-York Times says—A friend has obligingly handed us an extract of a letter dated Mexico 11th of July, from our Minister Mr. Poinsett, in which he states that he "had just concluded and signed a treaty of a city and commerce with that country, and that he did not apprehend any difficulty in the Congress there, although the treaty must be approved by both houses."