

## LITERATURE.

## LOVE.

BY S. T. COLERIDGE.

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,  
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,  
Are all but ministers of love,  
And feed his sacred flame.

Oft in my waking dreams do I  
Live o'er again that happy hour,  
When midway on the mount I lay,  
Beside the ruined tower.

The moonshine, stealing o'er the scene,  
Had blended with the lights of eve;  
And she was there, my hope, my joy,  
My own dear Genevieve!

She leaned against the armed man,  
The statue of the armed night;  
She stood and listened to my lay,  
Amid the lingering light.

Few sorrows hath she of her own,  
My hope, my joy, my Genevieve!  
She loves me best when'er I sing  
The songs that make her grieve.

I played a soft and doleful air,  
I sang an old and moving story—  
An old rude song that suited well  
That ruin wild and hoary.

She listened with a flitting blush,  
With downcast eyes and modest grace;  
For well she knew I could not choose  
But gaze upon her face.

I told her of the knight that wore  
Upon his shield a burning brand;  
And that for ten long years he wooed  
The lady of the land.

I told her how he pined; and ah!  
The deep, the low, the pleading tone  
With which I sang another's love,  
Interpreted my own.

She listened with a flitting blush,  
With downcast eyes and modest grace;  
And she forgave me that I gazed  
Too fondly on her face.

But when I told the cruel scorn  
Which crazed this bold and lovely knight,  
And that he crossed the mountain-woods,  
Nor rested day nor night;

But sometimes from the savage den,  
And sometimes from the darksome shade  
And sometimes starting up at once,  
In green and sunny glade,

There came and looked him in the face  
An angel beautiful and bright;  
And that he knew it was a fiend,  
This miserable knight!

And that, unknowing what he did,  
He leaped amid a murderous band,  
And saved from outrage worse than death  
The lady of the land;

And how she wept and clasped his knees,  
And how she tended him in vain—  
And ever strove to expiate  
The scorn that crazed his brain.

And that she nursed him in a cave;  
And how his madness went away  
When on the yellow forest leaves  
A dying man he lay;

His dying words—but when I reached  
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,  
My faltering voice and pausing harp  
Disturbed her soul with pity;

All impulses of soul and sense  
Had thrilled my guileless Genevieve—  
The music and the doleful tale,  
The rich and balmy eve;

And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,  
An undistinguishable throng;  
And gentle wishes long subdued,  
Subdued and cherished long!

She wept with pity and delight,  
She blushed with love and virgin shame;  
And like the murmur of a dream  
I heard her breathe my name.

Her bosom heaved, she stept aside;  
As conscious of my look she stept—  
Then suddenly, with timorous eye,  
She fled to me and wept.

She half enclosed me with her arms,  
She pressed me with a meek embrace,  
And bending back her head, looked up  
And gazed upon my face.

'Twas partly love, and partly fear,  
And partly 'twas a bashful art,  
That I might rather feel than see  
The swelling of her heart.

I calmed her fears; and she was calm,  
And told her love with virgin pride;  
And so I won my Genevieve,  
My bright and beauteous bride!

## THOMAS HOOD.

BY GEORGE GILFILLAN, AUTHOR OF A "GALLERY OF LITERARY PORTRAITS."

It is the lot of some men of genius to be born as if in the blank space, between Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Penseroso*—their proximity to both originally equal, and their adhesion to the one or the other depending upon casual circumstances. While some pendulate perpetually between the grave and the gay, others are carried off bodily as it happens, by the comic or tragic muse. A few there are, who seem to say, of their own deliberate option, "Mirth, with thee we mean to live;" deeming it better to go to the house of feasting than to that of mourning,—while the storm of adversity drives others to pursue sad and dreary paths, not at first congenial to their natures. Such men as Shakspeare, Burns, and Byron, continue, all their lives long, to pass, in rapid and perpetual change, from the one province to the other; and this, indeed, is the main source of their boundless ascendancy over the general mind. In Young, of the "Night thoughts," the laughter, never very joyous, is converted, through the effect of gloomy casualties, into the ghastly grin of the skeleton Death—the pointed satire is exchanged for the solemn sermon. In Cowper, the fine schoolboy glee which inspirits his humour goes down at last, and is quenched like a spark in the wild abyss of his madness—"John Gilpin" merges in the "Castaway." Hood, on the other hand, with his strongest tendencies originally to the pathetic and the fantastic-serious, shrinks in timidity from the face of the inner sun of nature—shies the stoop of the descending Pythonic power—and, feeling that if he wept at all, it were floods of burning and terrible tears, laughs, and does little else but laugh, instead.

We look upon this writer as a quaint masquer—as wearing above a manly and profound nature, a fantastic and deliberate disguise of folly. He reminds us of Brutus, cloaking under pretended idiocy, a stern and serious design, which burns his breast, but which he chooses in this way only to disclose. Or, he is like Hamlet—able to form a magnificent purpose, but from constitutional weakness, not able to incarnate it in effective action. A deep message has come to him from the heights of his nature, but, like the ancient prophet, he is forced to cry out, "I cannot speak—I am a child!"

Certainly there was, at the foundation of Hood's soul, a seriousness, which all his puns and mummeries could but indifferently conceal. Jacques, in the forest of Arden, mused not with a profounder pathos, or in quainter language, upon the sad pageant of humanity, than does he; and yet, like him, his "lungs" are ever ready to "crow like chanticleer" at the sight of its grotesquer absurdities. Verily the goddess of melancholy owes a deep grudge to the mirthful magician, who carried off such a promising votary. It is not every day that one who might have been a great serious poet, will condescend to sink into a punster and editor of comic annuals. And, were it not that his original tendencies continued to be manifested to the last, and that he turned his drolery to important account, we would be tempted to be angry, as well as to regret, that he chose to play the Fool rather than King Lear in the play.

As a poet, Hood belongs to the school of John Keats and Leigh Hunt, with qualities of his own, and all but entire freedom from their peculiarities of manner and style. What strikes us, in the first place, about him, is his great variety of subject and mode of treatment. His works are in two small duodecimo volumes; and yet we find in them five or six distinct styles attempted—and attempted with success. There is the classical—there is the fanciful, or, as we might almost call it, the "Midsummer Night"—there is the homely tragic narrative—there is the wildly grotesque—there is the light—and there is the grave and pathetic—lyric. And, besides, there is a style, which we despair of describing by any one single or compound epithet, of which his "Elm Tree" and "Haunted House" are specimens—resembling Tennyson's "Talking Oak,"—and the secret and power of which, perhaps, lie in the feeling of mystic correspondence between man and inanimate nature—in the start of momentary consciousness, with which we sometimes feel that in nature's company we are not alone, that nature's silence is not that of death; and are aware, in the highest and grandest sense, that we are "made of dust," and that the dust from which we were once taken is still divine. We know few volumes of poetry where we find, in the same compass, so little mannerism, so little self-repetition, such a varied concert, along with such unique harmony of sound.

Through these varied numerous styles, we find two or three main elements distinctly traceable in all Hood's

poems. One is a singular subtlety in the perception of minute analogies. The weakness as well as the strength of his poetry, is derived from this source. His serious verse, as well as his witty prose, is laden and encumbered with thick coming fancies. Hence some of his finest pieces are tedious, without being long. Little more than ballads in size, they are books in the reader's feeling. Every one knows how resistance adds to the idea of extension, and how roughness impedes progress. Some of Hood's poems, such as "Lycus," are rough as the Centaur's hide; and having difficulty in passing along, you are tempted to pass them by altogether. And though a few, feeling that there is around them the power and spell of genius, generously cry, there's true metal here, when we have leisure, we must return to this—yet they never do. In fact, Hood has not been able to infuse human interest into his fairy or mythological creations. He has conceived them in a happy hour; surely on one of those days when the soul and nature are one—when one calm bond of peace seems to unite all things—when the "very cattle in the fields appear to have great and tranquil thoughts"—when the sun seems to slumber, and the sky to smile—when the air becomes a wide balm, and the low wind, as it wanders over flowers, seems telling some happy tidings in each gorgeous ear, till the rose blushes a deep crimson, and the tulip lifts up a more towering head, and the violet shrinks more modestly away, as at lovers' whispers—in such a favoured hour—on which the first strain of music might have arisen, or the first stroke of painting been drawn, or the chisel of the first sculptor been heard, or the first verse of poetry been chanted, or man himself, a nobler harmony than lute ever sounded, a finer line than painter ever drew, a statelier structure and a diviner song, arisen from the dust—did the beautiful *idea* of the "Plea of the Midsummer Fairies" dawn upon this poet's mind—he has conceived them in a happy hour, he has framed them with exquisite skill and a fine eye to poetic proportion, but he has not made them alive, he has not made them objects of love; and you care less for his Centaurs and his Fairies than you do for the moonbeams or the shed leaves of the forest. How different with the Oberon and the Titania of Shakspeare! They are true to the fairy ideal, and yet they are human—their hearts warm with human passions, as fond of gossip, flattery, intrigue, and quarrel, as men or women can be—and you sigh with or smile at them, precisely as you do at Theseus and Hippolyta. Indeed, we cannot but admire how Shakspeare, like the arc of humanity, always bends in all his characters, into the one centre of man—how his villains, ghosts, demons, witches, fairies, fools, harlots, heroes, clowns, saints, sensualists, women, and even his kings, are all human disguises, or half-lengths, or miniatures, never caricatures, nor apologies for mankind. How full the cup of manhood out of which he could baptise!—now an Iago, and now an Ague-cheek—now a Bottom, and now a Macbeth—now a Dogberry, and now a Caliban—now an Ariel, and now a Timon—into the one communion of the one family—nay, have a drop or two to spare for Messrs. Cobweb and Mustardseed, who are allowed in too among the number, and who attract a share of the tenderness of their benign father. As in Swift, his misanthropy sees the hated object in every thing, blown out in the Brobdnagian, shrunk up in the Lilliputian, flapping in the Laputan, and yelling with the Yahoo—nay, throws it out into those loathsome reflections, that he may intensify and multiply his hatred; so in the same way operates the opposite feeling in Shakspeare. His love to the race is so great, that he would colonise with man, all space, fairyland, the grave, hell, and heaven. And not only does he give to superhuman beings a human interest and nature, but he accomplishes what Hood has not attempted, and what few else have attempted with success; he adjusts the human to the superhuman actors—they never jostle, you never wonder at finding them on the same stage, they meet without a start, they part without a shiver, they obey one magic; and you feel that not only does one touch of nature make the whole world kin, but that it can link the universe in one brotherhood, for the secret of this adjustment lies entirely in the humanity which is diffused through every part of the drama. In it, as in one soft ether, float, or swim, or play, or dive, or fly, all his characters.

In connexion with the foregoing defect, we find in Hood's more elaborate poetical pieces no effective story, none that can bear the weight of his subtle and beautiful imagery. The rich blossoms and pods of the peaflower tree are there, but the strong distinct stick of support is wanting. This defect is fatal, not only to long poems, but to all save the shortest: it reduces them instantly to the rank of rhymed essays; and a rhymed essay, with most people, is the same thing with a rhapsody. Even dreams require a nexus, a nusus, a nodus, a point, a purpose. Death is but a tame shadow without the scythe; and the want of a purpose in any clear, definite, impressive form has neutralized the effect of many poems besides Hood's—some of Tennyson's, and one entire class of Shelly's—whose "Triumph of Life" and "Witch of Atlas" rank with "Lycus" and the "Midnight Fairies"—being, like them, beautiful, diffuse, vague; and, like them, perpetually promising to bring forth solid fruit, but yielding at length leaves and blossoms only.

Subtle fancy, lively wit, copious language, and mel- low versification, are the undoubted qualities of Hood as a poet. But, besides, there are two or three moral peculiarities about him as delightful as his intellectual;