

NOTES.

(1.) *Affairs of honour,*

So very fashionable, are, perhaps, the most ridiculous of all human absurdities. Much has been said of personal bravery, in what it consists, and how properly expressed. It seems somehow understood, in the teeth of all law and reason, that a man cannot shew the truth of his heart, or deserve the favour of good men, and good ladies, unless, in case of the smallest accidental difference with another, he will stand too, like a bull-dog, or a game cock, till he either mar his neighbour's visage, or get his own nose smashed flat on his face, or both; or (if a *gentleman*, as he may be pleased to think himself,) shot his neighbour like a snipe, and submitted, like any other *honourable* wild-goose, to be shot at himself. Now, not to speak of duty, with which such conduct is entirely incompatible, I conceive, that by flying from the present scene of passion into retired manly reflection, while it hurts not the legal cause of quarrel one whit, we retain all the consciousness that the true bravery, as well as the true wisdom, lies in the true courage of thus despising the world's brutal habits and opinions, and to which the less we are conformed the better. Such is the proper action of a proper man. Alas! the barbarous taste of retaliation—even revenge, still so very prevalent,—is too sure a mark of the absence of Christian principle operating with its truly regenerative influence on the hearts of many of its outward professors.

(2.) *But these were visions of the olden time, &c.*

All our bogle, witch, and fairy stories, bred in the heat of the Roman superstition, once prevalent in Scotland, has

now escaped through the holes of the ruined and windowless abbeys, and are entirely evaporated in the mists of that delusion in which they were originally fostered. No child is now *erie* to go by churchyard, dell, or hill, or lonely stream in darkest hour, as ghost, witch, kelpie, fairy, &c. are words now differently understood, and indeed nearly quite *obsolete*.

(3.) *And O, ye stars! that, clustering, glow around.*

To the eye of astronomy it is now plainly perceptible, that the stars are congregated in clusters, and that our solar system belongs to that immense cluster which, from its comparatively near vicinity to us, spreads such a stream of light along the heavens, as to have long ago received the name of "the milky-way."

(4.) *O may we entertain a hope of grace, &c.*

If, in that future state of existence with which the faithful in this state of probation are so comforted in Revelation, this be considered as conducive to the satisfaction of the redeemed soul, I have no doubt of its being found compatible with the divine grace to permit it, or a vision to the proper effect of full satisfaction will be conferred. We are at least assured, that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath laid up for those who love him."

(5.) *There's something in the redbreast's voice that moves
The feelings more than song of other birds.*

I have been much surprised to find individuals in life, over whose chimney-top the charming redbreast has carolled the sweetest sympathetic strains for fifty autumns, still so insensitive, as to be quite sceptical on the subject of that bird's ability to sing at all, although, with him they have, in other respects, been particularly familiar, from his winter visits to their kitchen hearths.

(6.) *Till autumn, in her sober bracing airs.*

A cool atmosphere operates as an astringent upon the bodily system, narrows the passages by which the motion

of the fluids is increased, giving force and energy to the functions of the brain.

(7.) *Compared even with Cambyses and his army.*

It is very distressing for the human mind to contemplate the dire movement of such congregated masses of flesh and blood, dragged out in the train of hellish ambition for the most horrible purposes! following individuals who shew themselves so utterly unworthy of even personal existence!—being, in a moral and proper point of view, an utter disgrace to humanity!—unworthy of the direction of the energies of a single canine animal. Single highway robberies, for which rogues are justly hanged, are nothing to their general assaults on human life—to the most terrible devastations. It may be urged, that wars are necessary as providential correctives of flooding iniquity, and that *such men* are instruments of Almighty chastisement. A pity such should be necessary, while we are assured, on the very best of all authority, that “wars and fightings amongst us, proceed from our lusts.”

(8.) *That base exclusive spirit has prevail'd
Its times, and seasons, all the world over.*

The great question which has in all ages more particularly agitated mankind, to the keeping up of a resemblance of hell upon earth, is the *tussle* about the art of social government, as most conducive to the public good. In this, (whatever the reigning powers of any given time may say to the contrary,) every man, from king to cobbler inclusive, finds himself particularly concerned, as it so materially affects his present nearest interests, and those of his posterity. A continual stirring, in what are called state contentions, is kept up by parties for public office, in idea of honour, or profit, or both; but these are comparatively like winds, and storms, to the balance of the general atmosphere, partial and trivial in their effects, compared with the spirit of the *exclusive* principle, ever generative of those heart-burnings which excite to political volcanoes, eruption, and earthquake. Despotic and audacious absurdity, on the one hand, and democratic frenzy, its antithesis on

the other, have shaken the nations of the earth since the hunting days of *Nimrod*, to the date of our British *Reform Bill*—that charter of political propriety. The essence of that old question, divested of its technicalities, seems to be this, whether the *few*, who happen for the time to be invested with “a little brief authority,” should, by the *many*, be allowed (as the *few* generally seem to incline,) to fix themselves in a hereditary right and title of usurped superiority over the lives and fortunes of the *many*, even over their minds and higher characteristics of rationality? or, whether there should be a wholesome influence asserted, and kept in constant exercise, over their anamolous tergiversations, and abuse of public trust? This last influence can now be kept up, by a watchful and constitutional use of the inestimable general privilege gained by the *Reform Bill*,—the only rational and safe *reform* of public abuse that has succeeded on the face of the earth for ages past, or perhaps hitherto. A blessing must follow what has been gained by the force of rational mind, firmly expressed, in preference to the brutal and brutalizing influence evinced by *their* former argument—the bayonet.

The man who will tell me, that, because I am a poor man, I have no business with the government of my country, I must despise as something worse than a simple idiot. My poverty, by which he would exclude me, likely arises from the prior effect of that principle, which it is every man's duty, as far as in him lies, to use all lawful endeavours to correct; and because, in the days of ancient *rieffraid* and spoliation, my honest forefathers (good and honourable in blood and brains, as the fathers of any aristocrate whatever,) might, from sympathy to better principles of life, or other circumstance, class amongst the *despoiled*, rather than the *despoilers*, should their offspring continue to stand on a despised and *excluded caste*, under designation of “*the rabble*,” from civil capacity, to all generations?

The votaries of the *Pit-system*, not content with their parchment rights to much of the soil, and its natural product, had entrenched themselves in a hostile position against all rational liberty; and by a *war* and *tax* system of government, for the best thirty or forty years of my

life-time, urged my passive obedience, wresting, to their own use and abuse, about half of the whole overstrained energies of my bodily existence. Our *Reform Bill* now speaks better things, (no wonder, then, *Conservators* of rotten things, which were, cry out against it,) and, by a steady exercise of the privileges thereby attained, as implied in the rational *principle* of that *Bill*, we shall, by and by, let the world see the infinite ascendancy of *mind* over *matter*—of *soul* over *sword*. One gets thirsty from the generous heat excited by the thoughts of this matter, and longs to drink the health of those *truly noble* spirits of the aristocracy, who could forego their extrinsic advantages of rank and fortune, and condescend on a liberal acknowledgment of general rights; and who will ultimately find, that, “doing as they would be done by,” in the emancipation of all our former foreign and domestic systems of abject slavery, will eventually prove to have been not only their very best policy, but the *true conservation* of their *own* highest stakes in the country, of whose salvation they have, under divine providence, been the faithful and honoured instruments.

(9.) *Which has made Britain what she is at best.*

It is true, that by the industrious application of scientific energies in aid of our manufacturing and mercantile speculations, we have been enabled to advance our unnatural and absurd *revenue*, over and above advancing the country in the scale of rationality hitherto unparalleled in the history of human energies.

(10.) *I never shall shed Alexander-tears.*

Alexander the Great wept for want of work, after he had brutally overrun the then world in the character of conqueror. A pity he had not been born a British manufacturer, under the *Pit-system*! he would have found employment for head and hands to support himself under *corn-bill* price of food, and paying taxes.

(11.) *Can wisdom of a British senate ever*

Degrade their souls by taking such a view?

The illiberal Opposition in Parliament were in debate on

the slave emancipation bill, to this purpose, at the time these verses were written.

And David Ross has told me, he had been, &c.

David Ross, a native of this village, a baker to business, an adventurous sort of a character, possessing all the characteristics of a British sailor, besides a pretty close observer of nature, who, after being first impressed to sea about the year 1804, while at London, had, by frequent desertions, and shiftings of situation, sometimes at Greenland, whale-fishing, and at Africa, slave-catching, in ships of war of various countries, and several sea actions—sometimes in American traders, and confined long in high roofless walls under the tropical sun, under suspicion of being a Frenchman, by Black Christophe, in St. Domingo;—in short, after running through a vast variety of adventure over about two-thirds of the known world, was at last brought home by his father, from an American vessel, then lying at Greenock, and who, while living here afterwards, gave me an account of all his recollections, and which I have often reflected I had not noted down in regular detail, being so particularly wild, graphic, and interesting. He told me, that at one time the natives were at peace, and their chiefs would not be persuaded by the slave-ship masters to go to war, and make prisoners, to sell them for slaves: therefore, their ship's boat-crew went in up the Gaboone River, and surprised the natives, till, by this means, they forced up a cargo; and his affray with the young chief was literally as I have related.

(13.) *They toast their freedom "o'er the lion's grave,"
Then advertise for sale, their brother slave.*

From an American States paper I copy the following:

"Freemen love the hickory tree,
Oft its boughs have sheltered thee;
O'er thee let its branches wave,
'Twas planted on the lion's grave."

Just under the flash of this motto, I read various advertisements of rewards offered for the capture and production

of run-away slaves, sales of slaves, &c. in the express terms of brute property,—and felt disgusted.

(14) *Our present state of life is such, as rather,
To mar, than further young love plans of marriage.*

I breakfasted with John Anderson, the school-fellow of my early youth, at *Hiltonhill*, his mother's fireside, on the 25th of February, 1805, the morning of his departure for the West Indies; ^{accompanied} ~~conveyed~~ him a mile on the way ere we parted, reluctantly, (as it has happened,) never to meet again. He left a sweetheart, a fine girl, who lived much in the circumstances described, surviving him but a short time. She had been brought up in rather more genteel circumstances than himself; and the unpromising appearance of things, as to how a decent footing might be effected in the world, prevented their desired union by marriage; when, in the fervour of his youthful mind, he resolved on making a dash of trial at the acquisition of some small fortune,—what he might suppose competent to keep her in a style somewhat equal to the merit she possessed in his imagination. The consequence was, that in Jamaica he struggled and fought on for several years, beat down like a slave by those a step in office above him, till, as I afterwards understood, having survived a first attack of yellow fever, he struggled a while, and then sunk to “where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.”

A passage in his letter of June 20th, 1807, runs thus: “Your last session of Parliament has played the devil here, by prohibiting the free importation of slaves in British vessels from Africa, so that a negro who would cost L.80 when I came to Jamaica, is now L.130 out of the ship. Nor are the reports true, which accuses the West Indian planter of cruelty to his slaves; no, they are in many respects better situated than many poor families in Britain: for one thing, they live much better; they have as much provision ground as they think proper to work; they have every *Sunday*, and one day every two weeks, to work their grounds; and can keep as many hogs and

fowls as they please. We only keep them ignorant, and punish them when they do wrong."

This last sentence, *particularly*, gave my young heart "a pang unfelt before." I thought if a two years' residence in the West Indies could so pervert the fine sensibilities of the generous heart of my youthful friend, as to speak with such levity of the *horrible thing*, what must the spirit of the thing itself be? How demoralizing, how demoniacal, and misery-making, in all its tendencies!

Thank God, for the spirit of that legislation which has freed the British dominions of those grappling chains of hell upon earth—the blasting bands of colonial slavery.

(15.) *But to compare,'s a second fall of man.*

Colonel Graham of Claverhouse, in hunting to the death the Covenanters, "frequently shot those who fell into his power, though they were unarmed, without any form of trial; and when his soldiers, shocked at the wantonness of his cruelty, hesitated at obeying his orders, he executed them himself. The case of John Brown, of Muirkirk, affords an example of this kind. He was a man of excellent character, and no way obnoxious to government, except for non-conformity. On the 1st of May, 1684, he was at work in the fields near to his own house, when Claverhouse passed on his road from Lessmahago, with three troops of dragoons. It is probable that information of his non-conformity had been given to the Colonel, who caused him to be brought from the fields to his own door, and, after some interrogatories, ordered him to be instantly shot. Brown being allowed a few minutes to prepare for death, prayed in such an affecting strain, that none of the soldiers, profane and hardened as they were, could be prevailed upon to fire, upon which Claverhouse, irritated at the delay, shot him dead with his own hand, regardless of the tears and entreaties of the poor man's wife, who, far gone in her pregnancy, and attended by a young child, stood by. The afflicted widow could not refrain from upbraiding the murderer, and telling him, that he must give an account to God for what he had done; to which the

hardened and remorseless villain proudly replied,—‘ To man I can be answerable, and as for God, I will take him into my own hand.’—M’CRIE.

John Brown might have saved his life by a word, signifying conformity with the principles they wished by force established in Scotland; but, under these most trying circumstances of violent instant death, and the consequent awful bereavement of his family, he would not even retain the life of the body on such soul-debasing terms. Can it possibly be supposed his vile ruffian murderer ever possessed a feeling of such true heroism?

(16.) *See Byron upon hands! &c.*

“ There is perhaps nothing more distinctive of birth than the *hand*: it is almost the only sign of blood which aristocracy can generate.”—BYRON.

(17.) *As Walter Scott on lever-powered watches.*

Sir Walter Scott, in speechifying at Jedburgh against the propriety of a Parliamentary Reform, drew, what a learned neighbour of mine called, the most astonishing fine simile ever used on earth, of a lever-powered watch, to which he compared the state, and which (according to the substance of his words,) he conceived nobody could wound up, and keep in movement, but those of *Tory* principle; and therefore concluded, that no *Whig* should attempt to possess a share in one, though he should have purchased it with his own money. When hissed into silence, he first shewed angry, declaring that he cared no more for the hisses of the company, than for the hissings of geese: this shewed where he stood in regard to the information and spirit of the age, and ideas of his own self-sufficiency; and then sat down as aristocratic, gruff, grey, and *gurr* as a muzzled mastiff; and then (as fame reporteth,) wept his way home, on reflection that the respectable Reform meeting there at Jedburgh, did not consider him the oracle he had probably supposed “ the whole world worshipped.” His old piper stories had there failed to amuse. “ *The rabble*” were grown at last too serious for his novel *hum-dronery*. His dwarf and witch tales,

and what are sometimes miscalled "representations of Scottish manners," have failed to divert those classes who find their national tastes, feelings, sympathies, motives, and actions, monstrously caricatured; besides,

———"The mob
"At last fall sick of imitating Job."

(18.) *All stale conceits of blood, and state outvieing,
Is that which Johnnie Home so sagely teaches.*

John Home, in his tragedy of *Douglas*, shews aristocracy drunk, or stark mad, or both. Besides the lady's observations about

"The young eaglet of a valiant nest,
"How soon he gaz'd on bright and burning arms;
"Spurning the low dunghill where his fate had thrown him,
"And tower'd up to the regions of his sires,"

John then makes the young eaglet himself soliloquise thus:

"Once on the cold and winter shaded side
"Of a bleak hill, mischance had rooted me
"Never to thrive, child of another soil."

And into old Norval the foster-father's mouth, he puts these foolish words:

"Meanwhile the stripling grew in years and beauty,
"And oft, as we observed, he bore himself
"Not as the offspring of our cottage blood,
"For nature will break out."

It is likely she will by and by,—and I wish, Johnnie Home, she would, in the true sense of the words, and assert her own proper rights. What idiotical ideas! to be so often expressed, even by the ingenious, and acted upon by the governments of this world, as if human nature varied according to such contingencies as these, that the son of an individual, who had come by *money*, or *soil*, no matter *how*, should vary in even the innate principles of his mind, or affections, or being, from the offspring of his less fortuitous, though it may be even more virtuous neighbour; and that the effect of acting on this cheat or delusion, should be a blind concession by the sons of men, called

commoners, so far as to devote themselves to be awed or imposed upon, by the very insignificance of this imaginative superiority—as ridiculously stupid in principle, as the great wooden image at Jauggernaut, which bruises out the souls of devoted superstitious ignorance.

(19.) *The spirit never pour'd the lay sublime
To be the idle sport of passing years.*

Virgil, the Latin Poet, who lived in Mantua in the spiritual darkness of the heathen world, and it is supposed without any knowledge of the Christian scheme of Redemption to salvation—yet, seeing the disorder of the world, from the wickedness of men, he supposed some divine interposition necessary to its rectification—and under the influence of such impression, ideal of divine goodness, emitted verses of a prophetic cast,—which verses run in a wonderful analogy with the inspired song of Isaiah in Israel,—signifying the approach of a divine Redeemer, at whose presence the deserts of the earth should become fertile, rejoicing to blossom, and fruitage, and universal harmony be restored, &c.

The learned sceptic, under *revelation*, in this day of gospel light, bursting with pride, from his imagined depth in science, will strut forth amidst the confusion of his ideas—and denounce the divine revelation of the Almighty will and procedure towards the children of men, “an old wife’s fable”—as inconsistent with his yet half-formed notions of material-philosophy—while, like his far-famed prototype David Hume, he has never verily *read* the New Testament dispensation of God’s will, in relation to *grace*, *mercy*, and *life*, or experienced, to comprehension, the wisdom, knowledge, humility, and consolation of heart thereby imparted to the otherwise “poor creature o’ the earth.”

And still worse—and most strange it is! after all—that, an acute discernment of the wonderful operation of the means employed by creative power and wisdom, for the organisation of a man, a beast, or a world, should, to such minds, even imply a conception that such means, from the apparently fine simplicity of their texture, and ulti-

mate efficiency to their purposes, should supersede the necessity of, what they so clearly indicate, an *Almighty cause*.

Ignited oxygen is an astonishing phenomena, yet it is only "*ignited oxygen*,"—but let the *sceptical* philosopher prostrate his mind, while he tells us, who produced this oxygen, and the ignous quality. The work is very excellent, but who is the author? This question they ever evade, or mystify; while, like Virgil in his analogy with Isaiah the prophet, but with far other than Virgil's simplicity of feeling, they also at present prophecy some grand approaching change of the manners of the world, and the state of humanity, some millenium, from the very rational progress of general education, in an improved system of natural philosophy, and abstract moral science,—here again they take the *means* (or only a part of the *means*) for the *cause*, and are still in error,—ever at fault. Athiests and deists only differ in the degree; their allegations are the same in effect as regards our earth, and themselves, their life, mortal, spiritual, and eternal.

The one denies the God of *creation* and *providence*,—the other with equal folly his promulgated plan for the renovation of sin disordered-humanity, which bears the clearest evidence in itself, its applicability of being the only adaptable, proper, (or perhaps possible) means effective to the correction of the evils of life—which arise from the seen perversion of the human will, which they all must admit to be real, because such sensibly affect themselves; while, with their mere moral, and physical philosophy, they fail to discover any salutary antidote for their own share of the all-pestilent disorder.

Now, the New Testament, which shews at once the deadly sore, and the healing salve, tells us, in the most perfect beauty of language, that, when that species of knowledge, which alone is supremely calculated to produce the effect, the knowledge of Christ,—the *word*—the *truth*—and the *life*, taking the hearts of men in hand, leads them forth as a father would his little children, into all necessary knowledge, in the light of his divine *truth*, which *alone* is calculated to rectify the disorders of our in-

tellectual nature, to purge the world from the pollutions of sin, and consequent error, unbelief, and its tendencies. And when this knowledge of *God the Redeemer* becomes so extended, as to "cover the earth as the waters cover the channel of the sea," then shall *true science* flourish to yet unimagined sublimity, and the sons of men, rejoiced in heart and spirit, charm the ear of time with the general song of praise to the Redeemer, who will dwell spiritually in their hearts, attuning all to harmony, love, and praise.

(20.) *Heaven's light, now flashing forth o'er every clime,
Shews him who runs, to read, what plain appears.*

Though the extension of the gospel, with its concomitants, general education and science, have been much, or altogether, in a national point of view, hitherto neglected, yet the late success of private societies, in voluntary associations on a small scale, give clear indications of what is going forward in the course of providence, with hourly accelerated motion. Such societies seem crowding up into the spirit of a still higher vigour, giving hopes that the whole Christian universe will soon become associated for this special purpose. Such means are becoming more rapidly influential, in proportion as the obstructive tyrannies of the civil world give way before its humanizing influence. That they are losing their hold on the spirit of man, and tottering to break up, is a conceded point; while that satellite attendant on Christianity, liberality of sentiment, in the circle of its orbit, darts forward, to appearance, often as if precursing her, shedding the reflected lustre of her all-enlightening effulgence,

Which, through the darkness of the clouded mind,
Will shoot the radiance of the perfect day.

ERRATA.

P. 23, v. 62, l. 3, for tail, read *train*.

P. 29, v. 81, l. 3, for gulph, read *gulp*.

P. 36, v. 100, l. 1, for adore, read *adorn*.

END.