

NOTES FROM THE JOURNAL OF A SCHOLAR.

NO II.

WRITING OF JOURNALS.

I CANNOT pinch the Genie, and shut him into a casket. The life that I live is a various, salient, wide-lying life. The spirit of the creature is not to be expressed in sentences of a journal, but lives and leaps along the uneven road of human affairs, — now wrangling with obstructions, now manfully overcoming, now sportful, now prayerful. It is not the pieces, it is the forming whole I study. If I chose to press flowers of conversation, like a *hortus siccus* in my book, and keep them to entertain me in a winter's day, when no such flowers bloom, — I might, — such flowers I find and pluck, — none fairer, sweeter; but I wear them in my heart. They go to perfume and enrich the imagination, a garden where they drop their seed, and spring again, after snows and dead leaves have covered and deformed the ground.

NATURE.

May.—I do not know but one of the ancient metamorphoses will some day overtake me, and I shall shoot into a tree, or flow in a stream, I do so lose my human nature, and join myself to that which is without. A few days ago I spent the afternoon in the warm hollows of Canterbury. The robin, the blue-bird, a moist frog with green uniform and gold enamelled eye, were my companions, rather than W. with whom I went, for we straggled wide apart. I found the saxifrage, just urging through moss and leaves its little ear of buds. And now a glass of water is on my shelf, wherein are met, drinking sociably together, anemones and hepaticas, the pearly fair arbutus and crimson columbine, with other green, white, and pink friends from the fields.

We are so near to nature, and yet so far! Glorious kind moon and stars that beam love; air that sweeps and sings through the chambers of heaven; flowers, beautiful and sweet; — you have your life, and I mine, and a different

one; I cannot wholly possess you. We draw near to each other, — perhaps a delicate and passionless kiss is breathed towards you, but you live on in vestal state, and I am everywhere repulsed from an embrace that shall mix our natures.

July 9.—Verily your seal and beaver and the submarines are your only comfortable livers, when the mercury stands at 98 in the shade. A little aspen has flourished two summers in the spout of a building on Cornhill; and nodded kindly to me each day, but I doubt the zeal of this sun will burn up its roots.

Aug. 2.—The fields grow yellow to the harvest; the autumn flowers are budding; the industrious globe hastens to finish its year. I like to tell at the top of my page what's o'clock. It is pleasant to be folded in the arms of a celestial order, and the course of seasons, days and years is like a rocking motion which tranquilizes our tumultuous thoughts.

Aug. 22.—Almost autumn, the sunsets say, and goldenly publish along half the horizon, — and I am glad. If oaks have spiritual creatures, whose being is linked with the life of the tree, I do not know but there is a like sympathy between my nature and the seasons. In spring, there leaps up a fount of love and hope, and animal exhilaration; in summer, I suffer a Hindoo repose; in autumn, a broad clear spirit is mine, which, if it partake of a stoical scorn, is perhaps the stronger armed to endure the labor and pain of living.

Sept. 21.—Autumn is the afternoon of the year; but there are those whom the afternoon pleases more than the fresh morn. Autumn is the Odyssey, wherein the genius of nature blazes less high than in her Iliad summer; yet the season, like the poem, hath those who set its beauty's praise above its brilliant sister. I feel so much stronger as the sun goes off the back side of the world, that o'er the ruins of the year I savage exult.

The days go, and come, and go. Here from my window towards the East, I shall presently peruse at length large-limbed Orion, my shining chronicler of many a winter. God be thanked who set the stars in the sky, planted their bright watch along the infinite deep, and ordained such fine intelligence betwixt us and them; yea, God

be thanked for all in nature that is the symbol of purity and peace.

Nov. 10.—I have spent my Sunday in God's first temples. The wind was choir and organ, now singing its anthems, now whispering its dirges. For Bible and psalmbook, I had the grand page of nature, and many a holy verse I read from off the brown sward and the trees. But my sermon came to me from the distant hills, and the blue heaven on which was traced their profile. They preached strength and a serene trust. I found me a sunny, sheltered chapel framed of the living rock, and there I prayed as I could. It was high holiday in the fields. Old Mother Earth said, she had ceased from her labors, and no more for one while was she to pour her life-giving juices to be sucked up through all the arteries of this lavish vegetation. The woods too said, —we have done; we will rest, we have fetched and carried up and down our old trunks the sap that fed these frivolous leaves, that now drop from us at the scent of a cold breeze. "Off, off you lendings!" We will battle it alone with winter. The leaning stalks of the aster and the golden-rod, and the red flaunting wax-work, that had climbed over the walls and the savin-trees to show its pomp of berries, — and the dead stems of hundreds of little flowerets, each holding up its ripened plume or pod of seed, — all said, — "We have done, we will rest, we have borne, each after his kind. Son of Man! who hast come hither to look at us, do thou too bear thy fruit, then too around thee shall it hang ornaments and trophies; thou too shalt rest, while over thee the sky shall be blue, the sun shall be bright."

TRUTH.

Let us not veil our bonnets to circumstance. If we act so, because we are so; if we sin from strong bias of temper and constitution, at least we have in ourselves the measure and the curb of our aberration. But if they, who are around us, sway us; if we think ourselves incapable of resisting the cords by which fathers and mothers, and a host of unsuitable expectations, and duties falsely so called, seek to bind us, — into what helpless discord shall we not fall! Do you remember in the Arabian Nights the princes who climbed the hill to bring away the singing-tree, — how

the black pebbles clamored, and the princes looked round, and became black pebbles themselves?

I hate whatever is imitative in states of mind as well as in action. The moment I say, to myself, "I ought to feel thus and so," life loses its sweetness, the soul her vigor and truth. I can only recover my genuine self, by stopping short, refraining from every effort to shape my thought after a form, and giving it boundless freedom and horizon. Then, after oscillation more or less protracted, as the mind has been more or less forcibly pushed from its place, I fall again into my orbit, and recognise myself, and find with gratitude that something there is in the spirit which changes not, neither is weary, but ever returns into itself, and partakes of the eternity of God.

Do not let persons and things come too near you. These should be phenomenal. The soul should sit island-like; a pure cool strait should keep the external world at its distance. Only in the character of messengers, charged with a mission unto us from the Everlasting and True, should we receive what befalls us or them who stand near us. This is the root of my dislike to laughter, and nervous hands, and discomposed manners; they imply too close a neighborhood of sensible objects. Even love is more exquisitely sweet when it marries, with the full consent of the will, souls not lightly moved, which do not take the print of common occurrences and excitements.

Life changes with us. We have perhaps no worse enemy to combat than a bad recantation of first love and first hope, a coxcomb-like wrapping of the cloak about us, as if we had a right to be hurt at the course which the world takes, and were on cool terms with God.

SELF AND SOCIETY.

It is a miserable smallness of nature to be shut up within the circle of a few personal relations, and to fret and fume whenever a claim is made on us from God's wide world without. If we are impatient of the dependence of man on man, and grudge to take hold of hands in the ring, the spirit in us is either evil or infirm. If to need least, is highest to God, so also is it to impart most. There is no soundness in any philosophy short of that of unlimited debt.

As no man but is wholly made up of the contributions of God and the creatures of God, so there is none who can reasonably deny himself to the calls which in the economy of the world he was provided with the means of satisfying. The true check of this principle is to be found in another general law, that each is to serve his fellow men in that way he can best. The olive is not bound to leave yielding its fruit and go reign over the trees; neither is the astronomer, the artist, or the the poet to quit his work, that he may do the errands of Howard, or second the efforts of Wilberforce.
