

THE

214

PRINCETON MAGAZINE.

EDITED BY

WILLIAM C. ALEXANDER.

VOL. I.

PRINTED BY JOHN T. ROBINSON.

1850.

THE
PRINCETON MAGAZINE.

WORDSWORTH.

The recent death of Wordsworth affords an irresistible invitation to say something about his poetry. So long has he been before the public, that for some years past men have sat in judgment on him with almost the coolness which we ascribe to posterity. It is hard to say whether he has suffered most from his enemies or his friends. His excesses, simplicities, and almost hoaxes, such as Peter Bell, the Idiot Boy, and those Lyrical Ballads in which he did a violence to nature, and brought the Muse not only into the highway but into the very mire, together with his drowsy, dreamy, long-winded homilies in measured prose, have been embalmed and worshipped by a certain class of his admirers. This has done him more harm than Jeffrey's insulting sneers and unrighteous garbling, or than all the laughter exploded against the Lake School.

That Wordsworth will assume his place among the classic poets of England cannot be doubted for a moment. That he will occupy the same level with Shakspeare and Milton, it would be ridiculous to predict. Great contemporaries and rivals, not excepting his bitter lordly satirist, have recorded later judgments, which ought to hush the petty snarlings of

genuine enjoyment in the decline of life there must be provision laid in during many years. There must be health, ensured by regularity and temperance; knowledge, accumulated by reading and discourse; wisdom, the fruit of self-scrutiny and meditation; friends, secured and maintained by candour, beneficence and sacrifice; respect, always yielded to solid worth; a good conscience, habits of religious thought and will; and a hope that looks serenely towards the world beyond the grave.

ECONOMY OF THOUGHT.

Next to Freedom of Speech, the most essential requisite to universal authorship is a wise economy of thought. No wonder men do not write much, when they waste all their ideas on a single composition. Boys should be taught at school to husband their resources. They should even be flogged for using more than one thought to a sheet of foolscap. This would accustom them to spin or hammer out their few ideas in a serviceable manner, and instead of throwing them out at once in a crude and shapeless lump, to twist and turn and mould them into infinite variety of forms, without the slightest change of substance or increase of bulk. Without weighing a grain more, they would fill many inches more of space. The saving will of course be greater still when the elementary idea is itself begged or borrowed, not to say stolen.

Let me illustrate this by taking a proverbial theme; familiar to all readers, and endeavoring to show how far a judicious economy of thought will make it go in the instruction of mankind, especially if aided by an imposing show of logical arrangement and precise distinctions.

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY.

It seems to be commonly admitted, as a dictate both of

reason and experience, that a straight-forward course of conduct really promotes the interests of those by whom it is pursued, and as a necessary corollary from this indisputable proposition, that a disingenuous and tortuous procedure is injurious, not only to those whom it is immediately intended to deceive, but also to the self-deluded victim of his own devices, who, in seeking to impose upon his neighbours, very often succeeds only in imposing on himself.

It may not be so obvious, however, or so promptly admitted by the mass of those to whom the idea is suggested for the first time, that uprightness and sincerity, in character and life, besides their intrinsic rectitude and goodness *per se*, apart from all practical effect and bearing on the good or evil fortune of the person to whom these qualities belong, have in this respect also, no less than in abstract theoretical truth, a vast advantage over insincerity, duplicity and fraud, inasmuch as the first are necessarily promotive of the welfare of the agent.

To illustrate these important principles may be described as the design of the ensuing essay, in attempting to accomplish which it will be found conducive both to perspicuity and strength to lay down a few elementary principles, on which, as on a firm foundation, the whole theory or doctrine may be easily and safely built.

1. We may assume it as a kind of axiom or first principle, that freedom from duplicity and sinister design, or what is usually called an honest purpose, must, from its very nature, be a safer state, that is to say, less open and exposed to dangerous mishaps, than one of selfish and unworthy aims, requiring for its aid dissimulation and concealment, or in other words, that honesty is the best policy.

2. Another principle of great importance to the just appreciation, and indeed to the correct apprehension of this subject, is, that an upright and sincere intent may and in many cases does secure the very ends which a selfish indirection vainly seeks to compass, so that the arts of the inge-

nious schemer are in fact less effective than the artlessness of the ingenuous truth-teller, or as it may be more pithily expressed, honesty is the best policy.

If any one, by means of the most searching analysis, can find the slightest traces of progressive thought in this profound lucubration, it will only be one of the many cases in which he who reads a book knows better what is in it than the man who wrote it. By a faithful application of the same sublime and simple principle, whole folios might be written, without any limit but the one arising from the poverty of language, or its insufficiency to furnish more than a certain variety of terms in which to clothe the same idea. That this is not a new discovery, but only the revival, of a lost art, may be seen from the innumerable volumes thus produced in the first ages after the invention of printing. It may even be a question whether some works of the present day were not composed upon this very plan.

F. O. S.

NEW BOOKS.

THE ABORIGINES OF NEW JERSEY. By Archer Gifford, Esq. Newark. 1850.

This is one the publications of the New Jersey Historical Society, and was read before that body at its annual meeting, on the 18th of January, 1850. The author has explored a new and most interesting field, and has produced a work which will commend itself to the attention of every citizen of New Jersey. Mr. Gifford in this discourse, attempts to solve the questions as to who were the aborigines of New Jersey—from what race they sprang—and from whence they came to this continent? and in doing so he has been compelled to pursue the enquiry through many ages and over a very large extent of country. Although the result of the