

and its dingles, its alcove and its wilderness, have been too minute. It has an interest as independent of any mere beauty or picturesqueness which it may possess, as the field of Bannockburn or the meadows of Runnimeade. It indicates the fulcrum, if I may so speak, on which the lever of a great original genius first rested, when it upturned from its foundations an effete school of English verse, and gave to the literature of the country a new face. Its scenery, idealized into poetry, wrought one of the greatest literary revolutions of which the history of letters preserves any record. The school of Pope, originally of but small compass, had sunk exceedingly low ere the times of Cowper: it had become, like Nebuchadnezzar's tree, a brass-bound stump, that sent forth no leafage of refreshing green, and no blossoms of pleasant smell; and yet, for considerably more than half a century, it had been the only existing English school. And when the first volume of "Poems by William Cowper, Esq., of the Inner Temple," issued from the press, there seemed to be no prospect whatever of any other school rising to supplant it. Several writers of genius had appeared in the period, and had achieved for themselves a standing in literature; nor were they devoid of the originality, in both their thinking and the form of it, without which no writer becomes permanently eminent. But their originality was specific and individual, and terminated with themselves; whereas the school of Pope, whatever its other defects, was of a generic character. A second Collins, a second Gray, a second Goldsmith, would have been mere timid imitators, — mere mock Paganinis, playing each on the one exquisite string of his master, and serving by his happiest efforts but to establish the fidelity of the imitation. But the poetry of Pope formed an instrument of larger compass and a more extensive gamut, and left the disciples room to achieve for themselves, in run-