

POETRY.

AUTUMN.

BY WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

The melancholy days are come, the saddest of the year, Of walking winds, and naked woods, and meadows brown and grey...

Where are the flowers, the fair young flowers, That lately sprung and stood, In brighter light and softer airs, a beauteous satchel...

The wind-flower and the violet they perished long ago, And the brier-rose and the orchid died amid the summer's glow...

And now, when comes a calm mild day, as still such days will come, To call the squirrel and the bee, from out their winter home...

And then I think of one who in her youthful days was so beloved, Whose fair, sweet blossom, that grew up and faded by my side...

VALLOMBROSA.

Which e'er with her enclosure green, As with a rural mound, the champagne heap, Or a steep wilderness, Mitros.

The power of the poet is shown in few things more remarkably than in that of his giving a perpetuity of remembrance to the places he may chance to mention in his song.

What would the general English reader have known of Vallobrosa, had not Milton named it? And who, since he spoke of it, has not dreamt of its tangled wilds, and dim religious bowers...

And who, since he spoke of it, has not dreamt of its tangled wilds, and dim religious bowers, of its awful groves, strewn the brooks "with their autumnal leaves," and all the other sad or solemn images of "Elysian shades"?

But never did poet fix upon a richer scene than which to draw the forms that people his world, than Vallobrosa. The perfect solitude of its thickets, preserved from intrusion by the height and almost impassable crags of the mountains, fits it for the constant residence of meditation, and of winds that have hidden adieu for ever to the world and its concerns.

It has been elegantly observed, by the author of the "Philosophy of Nature," that the founders of abbeys and other religious houses, have evinced a remarkable taste in selecting the most delightful situations for their monastic retreats.

The woods and rocks, however, which give beauty or sublimity to the scene, create, in fact, the solitude; and the latter, in such a country as Italy, could rarely be found without the former.

It is not, therefore, in all instances that we can attribute the beautiful situation of a monastery to the taste of its founders for the charms of nature.

But Vallobrosa owed its selection to individual enthusiasm, and whatever strongly affects the mind and heart in conjunction, disposes to the love of scenery.

The founder of this far famed Abbey was John Gualbertus, a Florentine noble family, who lived in the early part of the Eleventh century. He was led to think more seriously of religion than he had hitherto done by a singular circumstance.

he retired from the monastery, and entered that of Camaldoli, situated but a few miles distant from Vallobrosa.

This institution, which almost equals in reputation, that which we are about to describe, had been but lately established by St. Romauld, one of the most distinguished men of the age.

Like Gualbertus, he was descended from a family of rank, and like him, owed his conversion to a strong conviction of the wretched state of morals which prevailed in his time.

He had often, it is said, when pursuing the pleasures common to his age and rank, felt disgusted with his folly; and often, when he happened in hunting, to find himself alone in some retired spot of the forest, he would exclaim, "How much better would it be to spend one's life amid these tranquil shades, than to pass it in the midst of the world!"

These feelings received a considerable accession of strength, when his father, who is described as a man of most violent passions, obliged him to be present at a duel, which he fought with some one who had offended him.

From that moment Romauld determined to pass his life in religious solitude, and to promote, by every means in his power, the same disposition in others.

His efforts, in respect both to himself and to those whom he addressed, proved eminently successful. The growth of his piety was accompanied by a corresponding increase of reputation and influence.

He was thus soon enabled to form a little community of persons devoted to the same principles as himself; but even while still a young man, and under the tutelage of a hermit, to which he had joined himself, he had an important share in persuading Peter Urselle, the Duke of Venice, to resign his ill-acquired dignity.

After a long life, of varied labor, and some peril, he founded the monastery of Camaldoli, and soon after died.

The discipline of that establishment was of the strictest kind, and Gualbertus remained there a considerable time. But at length the superior expressed his desire that John should be chosen his successor, which induced him to retire from that monastery, as he had before done from St. Minias.

On his way from Camaldoli, he passed through the wild, untraced district of Vallobrosa. The united hearts and solitude of the place arrested his steps, and he resolved upon passing the remainder of his days among its shades.

There was a small spot of ground, in the heart of the rugged precipice, which seemed formed expressly for the abode of a little brotherhood, intent only on the worship of God, and the exercise of personal austerities.

The stern Appennines hemmed it in with their rocks and woods. Not an echo could be heard that bore any murmur of the peopled valleys. Here and there a stream, gushing through the interposing crags, broke the silence but not the solitude of the scene; and the birds that sung, hidden in the impenetrable foliage of the forests, were, by the very nature of their race, afraid, like the holy hermit himself, of being subject to man, or his customs.

In this lonely spot, therefore, Gualbertus took up his residence. There were already, it is said by some writers, two hermits in the neighborhood; and having united himself to them, he obtained a grant of the superior of an Abbey to which the district pertained.

He was soon joined by several persons, who venerated him for his signal piety; and, a humble building having been erected, a brotherhood was formed, of which he remained the venerated head to the end of his days.

The rule which he followed in the government of the society, was that of St. Benedict, in the strictest form; and there is sufficient evidence to prove that he felt the necessity of adhering to it, as the only safeguard against the corruptions which, even in solitude, lead men to imitate the world.

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