

very self, I was led to a final conclusion regarding them. Their grand distinguishing characteristic is their unswerving and perfect truth. The poetry of Shakspeare is the mirror of life; that of Burns the expressive and richly-modulated voice of human nature.

CHAPTER VIII.

Burns was a poor man from his birth, and an exciseman from necessity; but—I *will say* it!—the sterling of his honest worth poverty could not debase; and his independent British spirit oppression might bend, but could not subdue. — LETTER TO MR. GRAHAM.

I HAVE been listening for the last half-hour to the wild music of an *Æolian* harp. How exquisitely the tones rise and fall! now sad, now solemn; now near, now distant. The nerves thrill, the heart softens, the imagination awakes as we listen. What if that delightful instrument be animated by a living soul, and these finely-modulated tones be but the expression of its feelings! What if these dying, melancholy cadences, which so melt and sink into the heart, be — what we may so naturally interpret them — the melodious sinkings of a deep-seated and hopeless unhappiness! Nay, the fancy is too wild for even a dream. But are there none of those fine analogies which run through the whole of nature and the whole of art to sublime it into truth? Yes, there have been such living harps among us, — beings the tones of whose sentiments, the melody of whose emotions, the cadences of whose sorrows, remain to thrill and delight and humanize our souls.