

give back a response. But when stormy passion, or reckless irreligion, sweeps over those chords, they return only discordant sounds, that grate harshly upon the ear of virtue and piety. But when they are touched by the delicate and skilful hands of true benevolence, the tones which they return resemble the music of heaven, and they excite the spirit of heaven all around. To promote that spirit is doubtless the grand object to which the Creator intended the flowers of rhetoric and the strains of eloquence should be devoted. How immensely important, then, that Christian scholars should rescue these branches from the hands of the unprincipled and the wicked, and convert them to their legitimate use, as auxiliaries of virtue and religion!

Some worthy men, I know, look with a jealous eye upon the use of rhetorical and oratorical skill in aid of religion. They feel as if no attempt should be made to set off and recommend the naked truth. But, as remarked by Dr. Campbell, how much better for the minister of the gospel to write so as to make the critic turn Christian, than to write so as to make the Christian turn critic!

It is not in human nature to avoid receiving a powerful impression from a skilful choice and collocation of words; and why should not religion avail itself of this means of giving truth a keener edge? It may, indeed, be carried to excess, as Dante seems to have done in his descriptions of the physical torments of perdition. But Milton, while he has given an awful distinctness and force to those same torments, has not exaggerated them; and why may not religion use this power, as any other proper means, to impress divine truth? In this respect, thus far, the children of this world have been wiser than the children of light.

In passing from literature to science, on the great circle of