

nious, on literature and the belles lettres. Leaders and articles on the state of the army and the prospect of the campaign, or the narratives and descriptions of "correspondents" in the Crimea, formed the staple reading of the time; and some of our most respectable booksellers could tell very feelingly, on data furnished by their balance-sheets, how little, in comparison, was the interest that attended reading of any other kind. The roar of war drowned the voice of the muses. Now, however, the country has got a breathing time; its period of all-engrossing occupation is over for the present; and works of general literature will once more form the staple reading of its more cultivated intellects. Good books will begin to sell better, when at least the publishing season commences, than they have done for the last two years; and by their measure of success they will certify respecting the tastes and leisure-hour occupations of that great and influential portion of the people which constitutes the reading public. And we recognise in a work now before us,—“Essays, Biographical and Critical, chiefly on English Poets,” by Professor David Masson,\* which has just issued from the Cambridge press,—one of the class of books which, in the circumstances of the time, this portion of the public will delight to read, and be the better and happier for reading.

Professor Masson is a high representative of a class of literary men peculiar to the age,—men who a century ago would have stood prominently forward in the ranks of authorship as the writers of elaborate volumes, but who, in the altered circumstances of a more hurried age than any of those which preceded it, are engaged mainly in providing the reading public with its daily bread, and, for the sake of present influence and usefulness, are content in some degree, so far

\* *Essays, Biographical and Critical, chiefly on English Poets.* By David Masson, A.M., Professor of English Literature in University College, London.