

as they themselves are concerned, to subordinate the future to the passing time. Almost all the writing produced in our first-class newspapers, however distinguished for ability, or influential in directing opinion, passes away with the day, or at least with the week, in which it has been produced. Like those ephemeridæ which, born in the morning, deposit their eggs and die before night, it makes its nidus in the public mind, and then drops and disappears. Contributions, however, to the higher quarterlies and first-class magazines have a better chance of life ; and we have already a class of works drawn from these sources which bid as fair to live as almost any of the more elaborate authorship of the age. Such are the collected critiques of Jeffrey and Sidney Smith, the philosophic papers of Macintosh, the brilliant essays of Macaulay, and the soberer contributions of Henry Rogers. And to this class the Essays of Professor Masson belong ; nor are they unworthy of being ranked among the very foremost of their class. There are essays in this volume which, for the minute knowledge of English literature which they display, and their nice appreciation of the distinctive and characteristic in our higher writers, we would place side by side with the *chef d'œuvres* of Jeffrey. Though consisting chiefly of contributions to the quarterlies, written at various times, and published in different periodicals, the pieces which compose the work have been so arranged, that they form, with but few gaps,—which are more than compensated for by at least as many happy episodes,—a history of English literature, from the early days of Milton down to those of Wordsworth. Nor are there backward glances wanting, which bring before the reader the primæval English literature of the times of Chaucer and Spencer. There are just two blanks in the work, which we could wish to see filled in some future edition,—a blank representative of that period which intervened between the times of Swift and of Chatterton, during which old Samuel