

which the satirist himself intended, that there is not much in even the highest flights of the poetry of Wordsworth to which prose might not attain. We know not, for instance, a single passage in his greatest poem, "The Excursion," that might not find adequate expression, not only in the magnificent prose of Milton, or Raleigh, or Jeremy Taylor, but, so far at least as the necessary expression is required, in even that of Dryden or of Cowley. The same may be said of the poetry of Scott. The flights in "Marmion" or the "Lady of the Lake" rise no higher than those in Waverley or Ivanhoe. And yet, as Professor Masson well shows, there certainly is verse under whose burden the highest prose would utterly sink. We have remarked, in travelling through the Highlands of Scotland, that almost all the first-class hills of the country take the character of hills of the average size, with other hills placed, as if by accident, on the top of them; and there is a very lofty poetry that attains to its greatest elevation on a similar principle. The imagination, in the plenitude of its power, is ever piling, like the giants of old, mountain on the top of mountain. Let us draw our illustration from Milton. After comparing the arch-fiend, as he "lay floating many a rood" on the burning lake, to the old Titanian monster that warred on Jupiter, the poet rushes into another and richer comparison: he compares him to

"That sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim the ocean stream."

And here, on the ground common to prose and verse, the comparison should stop. But the imagination of the great poet has been aroused; the glimpse of the huge sea-beast so fascinates him, that he must look again; and a picture is the consequence, invested with circumstances of poetic interest, and finished with a degree of elaboration, far beyond the necessities of the comparison:—