

“ hideous winter” of death, draw near, when beauty “ shall be o’ersnowed,” and “ bareness left everywhere ;” and that unless the odours of the summer flowers continue to survive, distilled by the art of the chemist, they shall be as if they had never been,—things without mark or memorial.

“ Then, were not summer’s distillation left  
 A liquid prisoner, pent in walls of glass,  
 Beauty’s effect with beauty were bereft,  
 Nor it, nor no remembrance what it was :  
 But flowers distilled, though they the winter meet,  
 Leese but their show ; their substance still lives sweet.”

And then the poet, with the happy art in which he excelled all men, applies the figure by urging his young and handsome friend to live in his posterity, as the vanished flowers live in their distilled odours ; and expatiates on the solace of enduring throughout the future in one’s offspring :—

“ Be it ten for one,  
 Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,  
 If ten of thine ten times re-figured thee ;  
 Then, what could Death do, if thou shouldst depart,  
 Leaving thee living in posterity ?  
 Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair  
 To be death’s conquest, and make worms thine heir.”

What strange vagaries human nature does play in even the greatest minds ! Shakspeare was thoroughly aware that his verse was destined to immortality. We have his own testimony on the point, to nullify the idle conjectures of writers who have set themselves to criticise his works, without having first taken, as would seem, the necessary precaution of reading them. He tells us in his sonnets, that “ not marble, nor the gilded monuments of princes,” would outlive “ his powerful rhyme.” And again, addressing his friend, he says,—

“ I’ll live in this poor rhyme  
 While Death insults o’er dull and speechless tribes ;  
 And thou in this shalt find thy monument,  
 When tyrants’ crests and tombs of brass are spent.”