

HAYDN AND OTHER POEMS

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Haydn and Other Poems by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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OTHER POEMS**

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AND
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BY
THE AUTHOR OF "LIFE BELOW."



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A
DEDICATION TO A FRIEND,
AND AN
INTRODUCTION TO THE PUBLIC.

WHILE writing "Life Below," I was accustomed to place in your hands copies of the several books after their completion, in part for safe keeping, in part for the purpose of soliciting your friendly criticism. When I took them from you, in order to have them published, nothing could have been more appropriate for me than to return them to you in a public dedication. But older and weightier obligations claimed my first regard.

Now that the time has come when I can acknowledge the firm and disinterested friendship which encouraged me through struggles of apprenticeship, in connection with the acknowledgment I desire to express, in public, those conceptions of poetic thought and form upon which I have often dwelt in private. Not that I esteem them needed in order to interpret,

to appreciative minds, my poetry. I feel indebted much — and doubly so, because all happen to be strangers to myself — to writers who have ventured to express, in public periodicals, opinions of my works, as favorable, certainly, as could be reasonably expected. It is true that much injustice, also, has been done me, as I think, in many cases. What, for instance, is more aggravating and absurd than that a man, simply because he has exhibited the fidelity of the artist while delineating an experience imagined, should be taken to task not only for commending, but even for possessing, characteristics of which he fancies that he has expressed disapprobation rather, inasmuch as he has represented them in a fictitious character not only, but even thus under a process of chastisement and correction? However, if I be inclined to find fault with the critics, on the score of superficiality, I am deterred by the consideration that my own examination of each latest publication of a similar character is equally defective. If poetry be never fitly finished, as is true, until the author have submitted it to microscopic tests in order to detect and to obliterate the least suggestion of a flaw, it is not fitly criticized before the reader have applied his mind to it with tests of equal thoroughness. But such tests will not be applied to any book until, in some way, it can indicate that it is worthy of them. Such an indication, as it seems to me, is

best presented in the fact, that those who chance to read it once, re-read it. Wherefore is a book re-read? I think, since it expresses truth.¹ In popular phrase, men term the truth eternal. In it they find the sources of perennial freshness. And the degree in which a work of art embodies it, appears to me to measure the degree in which it can awaken a perennial interest.

And in the sphere of language, poetry, much more than prose, seems fitted to awaken such an interest; a fact which furnishes the key to all my theories presented at this time. The one who spake the truth in forms which have been held most sacred, and received most universally, spake never, we are told, without a parable. But parables are in poetic form. They illustrate a principle of real life through picturing how it operates in fancied circumstances. They indicate the workings of a law in one department or development of nature, through instancing its operations in analogous departments or developments. And parables are not exceptional examples confirming the esteem to which the truth, presented after such a method, is entitled. While new discoveries of successive epochs render obsolete the theories of

¹ Poetry, the flowering of literature, has a form, and, so to speak, an aroma peculiar to itself which cause it to appeal especially to the aesthetic faculty. Nevertheless truth will be found to constitute the root even of these qualities. See pages 6, 7.

philosophers, they have, if any influence, an opposite effect upon the entire range of fables, myths, and legends which furnish subjects to the poets. Analogies implied in such, with morals pointed out for men who lived two thousand years ago, may be applied with equal truth to men and manners of to-day.

And if we turn from whole productions to short statements, we discover here, too, that the world remembers best those in the forms of poetry, — the proverbs, precepts, and quotations indicating illustrations from analogy. In these sometimes both objects, in which there are similar operations, are expressed; as, for example, "Anger, like rain, breaks itself on what it falls upon." Sometimes one object only is expressed with clearness, "Gratitude is the memory of the heart." And sometimes neither is expressed; a law alone is stated, which suggests, at once, a vast variety of objects to which it may be applied, and in which operations are analogous, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Such facts as these suggest the question whether analogy and truth are necessarily connected. He who thinks upon the subject will discover that they are. The truth which is the object of investigation in philosophy and science is the truth of analogy. The philosopher desires to know no isolated facts as ends, but that he may determine through their agency the laws and methods operating underneath them;