

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

AUTUMN.

"Autumn! soul-soothing season, thou who spreadest
Thy lavish feast for every living thing,
Around whose leaf-strew'd path, as on thou treadest,
The year its dying odours loves to fling,
Their last faint fragrance sweetly scattering;—
O! let thy influence, meek, majestic, holy,
So consciously around my spirit cling,
That its fix'd frame may be remote from folly,
Of sober thought combined with gentle melancholy.

"If, in the morning of my life, to Spring
I paid my homage with a heart elate;
And with each fluttering insect on the wing,
Or small bird singing to his happy mate,
And Flora's festival, then held in state;—
If joyous sympathy with these was mine,
O! still allow me now to dedicate
To thee a loftier song:—that tone
Assign unto my murmuring lyre, which Nature gives to thine.

"A tone of thrilling softness, now, as caught
From light winds sweeping o'er a late-reap'd field;
And, now and then, be with these breezes brought
A murmur musical, of winds conceal'd
In coy recesses, by escape reveal'd:
And, ever and anon, still deeper tone
Of winter's gathering dirge, at distance peal'd,
By harps and hands unseen; and only known
To some enthusiast's ear when worshipping alone."

BERNARD BARTON.

THE opening autumn continues the summer's glory, gradually becoming more and more sobered and subdued, and is the interval in which the ingathering is completed of those fruits of the earth which are capable of being stored for use. With us, the last loads of cereal and leguminous produce leave the fields; and those who have contributed to the safe garnering of the crops,

"Crowned with ears of corn now come,
And to the pipe sing harvest-home,"

sharing the hospitality of the master. In more southern lands, "Lo! the vintage now is done," and the fruitage of the olive-yard and orangery is collected. It is a very wholesome usage for employers and employed to meet for the time on terms of equality, to celebrate the blessing of a finished harvest at the festive board, when, as is now generally the case, decorum is observed, while the occasion is often seized to recognise the fact of their common dependence upon the bounty of Providence. Such festivals are in harmony with the spirit of religion, and with enlightened views of social science. They tend to smooth the asperities of life to the hard-toiling classes, while proprietors have their reward, enlisting in their service the sympathies of dependents, as well as their manual labour, which always has the effect of increasing its value. Few features of a despotism are more revolting than its interference with joy in harvest, as was the case in ancient Egypt, and still is in that country at the present day. Royal officers being at hand to receive the stipulated portion of the produce, which was doubtless the lion's share, rendered the gathering of the crops anything but a joyous season to the agriculturist. It has been observed that there is great similarity

between the joyless looks of the husbandmen depicted on the old monuments, and the sombre countenances of the modern peasantry, who are so wretchedly remunerated for their toil, and brutally treated while bearing the burden and heat of the day. If our industrial orders had any experience of an oriental despotism, then would the every-day occurrence of freely enjoying the full fruit of their labour be prized as a special blessing.

By degrees, yet surely, autumn loses the summer's splendour, and nature is invested with sober and even solemn beauty. The foliage of the woods and hedgerows changes its hue, becoming "hectic, and grey, and fever-red," symptomatic of the decay of vegetable life in the leafy structure, and the approach of its final separation from the parent stem. The particular colouring of the fading leaf varies with the species, and is maintained from age to age with unflinching precision. The leaves of the plane-tree become tawny; those of the hazel, yellow; of the oak, yellowish green; of the sycamore, obscure brown; of the maple, pale yellow; of the ash, fine lemon yellow; of the elm, orange; of the hawthorn, tawny yellow; of the cherry, red; of the hornbeam, bright yellow; of the willow, hoary; and most glorious is the appearance of the woodlands, owing to the variegated tints, when the component trees are of several species. But soon with every breeze that blows,

"— the leaves, thin dancers upon air,
Go eddying round,"

till the forest is completely stripped of its former pride, and the soil beneath is covered with the withered, dead, and decomposing vegetation. The change is monitory to us—an emblem of our own mutability. If life has its youth and manhood, its spring and summer, so, as surely as autumn comes in the cycle of the year, old age arrives, the harbinger of dissolution. Men pass into the "sere and yellow leaf," and fall away. Yet calm, gradual, even lovely, is the change in nature; and we are pleased with the last signs of foliage lingering on the branches.

"The beauty of decay
Charms the slow-fading year,
And sweetly fall away
The flowers and foliage sere;
And lingering summer still we see,
In every half-dismantled tree."

So, if opportunities in the prime of life have been faithfully improved, the decline is peaceful, and lacks no cheer. "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness," antedating by but a brief space the crown of heavenly life, which shall never fade away.

WILKIE AND HIS PICTURES.

DAVID WILKIE, the first artist that Scotland has produced, and who has never been surpassed in that department of art denominated by the French *genre* painting, was born in the parish of Culter, in Fifeshire, in the year 1785. His history affords an admirable example of most of those unobtrusive yet manly virtues which moralists and public preceptors would have us admire and practise. As a

student of nature he was modest, diffident, persevering and pains-taking, and silently reliant on his inward resources. Profoundly conscious of all the difficulties of his profession, he set himself to overcome them with a dogged, untiring resolution, working incessantly to improve himself, not merely in the outset of his career, when he had everything to learn, but also, and if possible with greater industry, when he had gained reputation and competence, and when all Europe had concurred in acknowledging his genius.

As a boy, young Wilkie earned at school almost the reputation of a dunce. The schoolmaster reported that, with all his pains, he could not teach him to spell, and that the expectation of making a scholar of him must be abandoned. This was a severe disappointment to his father, who was the minister of the parish, and who was looking forward to see David following the same sacred profession. When the school days were over, with no very scholarly results, young Wilkie declared himself resolved to be a painter—a profession of all others which his father the least relished, as he considered pictures but as idle frivolities, and picture-making a useless calling. The lad's mother, however, possessed the rather rare endowment of good common sense, and knowing thoroughly the earnestness and force of will which were the basis of her son's character, notwithstanding its connection with a compliant and gentle disposition, she saw that he must be a painter, or he would be miserable. She therefore pleaded David's part against both father and grandfather, and finally, by her influence, all opposition was withdrawn, and he was allowed to follow his inclinations in the choice of a profession.

Application was made to the Earl of Leven for a letter of introduction to the Edinburgh Academy for the Encouragement of Manufactures—not the very best school for developing the genius of a born artist, but the only one at that time which was at all available to the Wilkie family. In order to be received here, it was necessary that the applicant should send specimens of his work to be submitted to examination. Young Wilkie did so; but the specimens he sent in were not approved of: indeed, it is very likely that they gave but small promise of excellence in the department of designing for manufactures—and the result was that his application was at first rejected. Finally, however, at the repeated instances of his patron, the lad was admitted, and took his place among the students. Once in the ranks, his characteristic perseverance told, and he soon began to distinguish himself. With industry not to be surpassed, he worked sedulously at the geometrical designs peculiar to the academy, during academy hours, and at all other hours snatched from recreation and repose, he wrought as pertinaciously at his favourite studies of the human face and figure.

Wilkie remained in the Edinburgh Academy five years, every one of which was signalized by substantial additions to his knowledge and skill. In 1803, while yet but seventeen, he attempted great things, and among other essays painted a classical subject which gained a prize. It is singular that he always had a hankering for grand historical

pictures, and never relinquished the desire during his whole life—nor for long together the attempt—to produce them. In this same year he made many rough sketches of several great works, which in after life he made it his business to complete. When, in his nineteenth year, he left the academy and returned home, he painted numerous portraits, and found the practice good in a double sense, as it gave him a ready dexterity of hand and replenished his purse. It was at his paternal home that he executed his first picture of any note, the "Pitlessie Fair," in which he delineated a hundred and fifty portraits of the people of his immediate neighbourhood, and which was visited by crowds, and talked about far and wide.

Young Wilkie was now feeling his power, and panting to exercise it. Before he was twenty, he had painted his "Village Politicians," the first sketch of which he had made before leaving the academy. This picture he offered to the Earl of Mansfield for fifteen guineas. Instead of buying it at the price named, the earl counselled him to advise with his friends—perhaps he might find the picture more valuable than he thought. In consequence of this suggestion, the picture was sent to London, and exhibited in the Royal Academy, where it was speedily purchased at the price of a hundred pounds.

From this moment the reputation of the young Scotch artist was established, and commissions for pictures, more than he was in a condition to undertake, poured in upon him. He came to London, where he was received with the respect due to his genius, and won the good-will of the English artists by his modesty and kindness of heart. In London, during the first years of this century, he painted many of those exquisite works which, more than any others, have become household words and household ornaments in ten thousand British homes. We need not enumerate them, as every reader is familiar with them as reproduced by the engraver, and most of us, from time to time, turn to greet them as old friends, in our portfolios or on our chamber-walls. We learn from the "Memoirs of Haydon" that it was Wilkie's habit, when he had received a good sum for a picture, immediately to disburse a round portion of it in presents for his mother and sister at home; and sometimes he would be found surrounded with silk dresses and bonnets which he had been out to purchase, and was basily packing for transport to the loved Scottish fire-side. We ask no other trait than this in proof of his genuine kindness of heart and filial love—and yet there is a better one behind; for when, in 1812, his old father died, he sent for his mother and sister to come and make their home with him in his house at Kensington.

So much for the unrivalled domestic painter. Let us look now for one moment at his paintings. Like most other works of creative genius, they stand at the head of a school of followers, to which they have given birth. Before Wilkie's time, the English painters of domestic pictures (leaving Hogarth out of the question, as not fairly coming within the category), of whom there were few of any note, left half, or more than half, their work unper-

formed. Under the false idea that generalization was preferable to detail—an idea encouraged by the practice of portrait and historical painters, as well as by the oracles of the lecture-room—they concentrated their labours on the faces of their figures, and dealt with the remaining portions and with the back-grounds as summarily as possible, often extemporizing the drapery and accessories either from imagination or from memory. This custom certainly had the merit of being in opposition to the Dutch and Flemish schools, which it was the fashion of the period to decry, as though the finest masterpieces of Teniers and Ostade were worthy only of reprehension and avoidance; but it had the effect at the same time of rendering the productions of the English school tame and unreal, and therefore comparatively worthless. The fine instincts of Wilkie revolted against this erroneous idea. He saw from the first that the grand element, the vital principle of all art, is truth—truth in everything, small things as well as great; and therefore, though he painted human character as few men have done before or since, he did not think it beneath him to give character also to inanimate things—to the asthmatic bellows, to the rickety table, the old cracked fiddle, the worn-out besom-stump, the bruised and bulging quart pot. Here it was that his modesty and diffidence brought him such a large return: he did not believe it possible that he, David Wilkie, was able to paint a mug, a spoon, an inkstand, a joint-stool, etc., from imagination merely, and therefore he never attempted it without having the objects before him. His practice was, whatever he painted, invariably to paint it from the model; and on this subject there is a curious anecdote told concerning him, which, as it is in all probability true, we shall set down.

One morning a nobleman, who had already paid him some large sums, called on him to commission a new picture. While both were seated, talking over the subject to be painted, his lordship, observing a biscuit lying on the table, broke it with his knuckles, and put a fragment in his mouth. Wilkie leaped from his seat with an exclamation intended to stay the blow, and when too late for that, turned away with an ejaculation of chagrin. "Why, what is the matter?" asked his patron. "O, my lord," said Wilkie, "you have destroyed my model biscuit: I have walked half London to get it, and now it is gone. You see, my lord, it was a crumpled biscuit, and they are extremely rare to meet with."

The effect of the fidelity in detail above mentioned is familiar to us all in the pictures of Wilkie. We feel that the result of every touch of truth in the picture tells not merely in its own place, but throughout the whole of the canvas; there is not a spot on the entire surface that shows either falsehood or failing, nor any the minutest portion that is wrapped in conventional because convenient obscurity. The consequence is, that we identify the scene with ourselves, and, so to speak, step on to the stage and play our part in the drama.

We are not claiming the merit of originating this pervading fidelity to fact in delineation for Wilkie—indeed it was old among the Dutch and

Flemings before it was practised in our island: there is this grand difference, however, namely, that, with the majority of the Dutch and Flemings, their scrupulous fidelity in detail was the sole merit in their pictures, while in the works of Wilkie, wonderful as is his dexterity in the same way, it is always subordinate to the living idea of his work, and is the last thing, and not the first, which claims the admiration of the spectator.

To form a just idea of Wilkie's versatile dexterity of hand, one should have the opportunity of comparing his pictures with one another. Such an opportunity was afforded soon after his death, by the exhibition of the major part of his greatest works in the gallery of the British Institution. It was then seen that the great Scotch painter had been as various in his manner and methods of work as he was in fancy and imagination. While some of the canvasses and panels were barely covered with thin films of colour, others were painted in thick impasts, the pigments standing out almost in relief. The pictures painted during the last few years of his life were nearly all on stout wooden panels, which his watchful experience had shown him were best adapted for works of elaborate execution.

We have said above, that Wilkie stands at the head of a school of followers. We may say more. Though he was the last man who would have presumed to take the lead, it is the fact that there is not a fine *piece de genre* in the Royal Academy this present year, nor has there been one for these twenty years past, the painter of which was not indebted to Wilkie's example, more or less remotely, for the elements of his success. All our good artists in this department have accepted and practised the lesson he so modestly taught; and English art at the present day, in this peculiar direction, owes to him what landscape art owes to Turner.

Wilkie travelled in search of improvement, both in France and Italy, and in search of *subjects* for his pencil, in Spain and the East. It was on his return from the East, in 1841, that he died, after a brief illness, on shipboard. Some of our readers may remember a mysterious picture by Turner, (now in the Turner Gallery at South Kensington), illustrative of the burial at sea of David Wilkie.

TWO FISCAL EPOCHS.

THE following statement of the chief mercantile productions of every state in Europe (France excepted), in the fifteenth century, affords a singular and interesting exposition of the *resources of those* countries and our own, with the state of commerce and its chief channels at that period, compared with their aspect in the days we live in. It appears in an old pamphlet, entitled, "Processe of English Policie, advocating the necessitie of England keeping possession of the sea."

"At that period," says the writer, "France was in a deplorable condition from her continued warfare and English conquests; its land lying uncultivated and overgrown with briars and thorns, like