

Literary Extracts, &c.

Variety's the very spice of life,
That gives it all its flavor.

BRACEBRIDGE HALL.

The following notice of this late work of Mr. Irving, is taken from the last number of the *Literary and Scientific Repository*, an ably conducted work published in New-York.

We commenced the perusal of this work with no ordinary anticipations. We recollected that the author was not only an American, but a citizen of our own state. Our national pride, therefore, and our local partialities, were alike enlisted in his favour. We recollected too, that he had already been admired for the beauty and grace of his compositions, his humorous delineations of character, and the general simplicity of his style—and what was still more, that he had found favour in the eyes of the English literati, and had been tolerated, if not praised, by the Scotch Reviewers.

We confess, also, that the appearance of the volumes, (two handsomely printed octavos,) and the price the author is said to have received for the manuscript, (to say nothing of the price of the volumes themselves,) had no little agency in exciting our imagination as to the merits of the work.—We took up the book, therefore, predisposed to admire, and almost predetermined to applaud. But a perusal, we are compelled to say, has in some measure shaken our faith, and abated the ardour of our feelings. But, let us not be misunderstood. The book has, indeed, fallen short of our expectations, but is nevertheless a very considerable book; and we doubt not, will be read by many with eagerness, if not with delight: For fashion is as arbitrary and as capricious in the library, as she is at the toilet, and often influences the mind, while she disfigures the body. If, however, we did not consider the work before us, as possessing a merit independent of fashion; as containing something to admire as well as to censure, we should suffer it to pass without the labor of a comment.

There was an error, we think, in not giving to it the name of its predecessor; for it is formed of the same sort of materials, and is in shape and character and substance the same.—Bracebridge Hall is, indeed, nothing more or less than a continuation of the Sketch Book. Its title, therefore, is injudicious. It leads the reader to anticipate something new; and, to the votaries of fashion at least, a disappointment, in that particular, is apt to be fatal.

It seems to be a conceded point, that the reputation of a living author cannot be stationary. He must advance in merit, or he will be supposed to decline. In other words, he cannot sustain his reputation, by barely equalling, in the same line of composition, that which he has already produced. He must either cultivate a new field, or produce a richer harvest from the old. Our author has done neither. And of this fact he appears to have been sensible. For in his introductory chapter, he anticipates no praise on the score of novelty; and endeavours to apologize for his travelling over beaten ground, and dwelling upon topics that are trite and common place, by urging his peculiar fondness for things "which he had read so much about in the earliest books, that had been put into his infant hands," and the overflowing delight, with which he contemplates every object of the old world, whether it be Ferners Abbey, Conway Castle, or Mr. Newberry's print shop! This introductory chapter, by the bye, is the worst in the whole book. It has too much of the nursery in it, too much of artificial feeling and laboured simplicity.

It was our intention to have said something in relation to the language and style of the work before us, and with this view, we had noted many exceptionable passages: we shall, however, content ourselves by simply remarking, that the merit of the composition, consists in its *grace* rather than in its *power*. Such words as *rejuvenate*, and such phrases as "perilous to discussion," "champion his country," "champion he fights of the people," "to qualify the damp of the night air," "implicit confiding," &c. &c. are certainly as remote from purity, as they are from good taste. Upon the whole we are apprehensive, that these volumes will add but little to the reputation of the author. They embrace, indeed, a variety of subjects, and contain many sensible observations and

just reflections: but the subjects want importance, the observations novelty, and the reflections force. The stories that are introduced, are composed of the ordinary romance materials, and not very skilfully combined. They excite but little interest, and make but a faint impression. The work, however, contains much genuine humour;—many picturesque descriptions, and is recommended by a style, remarkable for its simplicity and graceful ease.

EXTRACT

From Miss Wright's View of Society and Manners in America, &c.

The enemy soon advanced up the shores of the lake to the river Saranac, at the mouth of which stands the village of Plattsburg, backed and flanked by the forest, whose dark interminable line it sweetly breaks with its neat and cheerful dwellings, overlooking the silver bosom of a circular bay which receives the waters of the river. Continual skirmishes now took place between the enemy and flying parties of militia, 700 of which soon collected from the surrounding forests. The State of Vermont, which lies the opposite shores of the lake, then poured forth her mountaineers. Scattered through a mountainous country, it might have been thought difficult to collect the scanty population; but the cry of invasion echoed from hill to hill, from village to village—some caught their horses from the plough, others ran off on foot, leaving their herds in the pastures, and scarce exchanging a parting blessing with their wives and mothers, as they handed them their muskets.

"From the grey sire, whose trembling hand
Could hardly buckle on his brand,
To the raw boy, whose shaft and bow
Were yet scarce terror to the crow,
Each valley, each sequestered glen,
Mustered his little band of men,
That met, as torrents from the height
In highland dale their streams unite;
Still gathering as they pour along,
A voice more loud, a tide more strong."

Their guns on their shoulders, a powder-flask at their side, sometimes a ration in their pockets, crowd poured into Burlington, and all, as a friend who had witnessed the scene, described it to me, "came at a run, whether on their own legs, or of their horses."

The beautiful little town of Burlington covers the breast of a hill on the opposite shore, and somewhat higher up the lake than Plattsburg. Here every boat and canoe was in requisition; troop after troop hurried to the shore, and as the scattered crowds poured into Plattsburg, they collected in lines on the Saranac to resist the passage of the enemy, or struck into the woods, with orders to harass their rear.

The fleet was now equipped; and, when that of the enemy appeared in sight, moored in a line across the entrance of the bay; with such breathless alacrity had the Americans prepared to meet this encounter, that one of the vessels which then entered into action, had been built and equipped in the space of a fortnight—eighteen days previous to the engagement, the timber of which it was constructed had been actually growing in the forest upon the shores of the lake.

The British flotilla, under the command of Captain Downie, mounted 95 guns, and upwards of a thousand men; the American, under Com. Macdonough, 86 guns, and nearly eight hundred men. The first exchange for cannon between the fleets was the signal of the armies on land. A desperate conflict ensued. The British twice attempted to force the bridges, and twice were driven back; then, filing up the river, a detachment attempted to ford; but here a volley of musketry suddenly assailed them from the woods, and forced them to retreat, with loss.

The issue of the day was felt by both parties to depend upon the naval engagement, then raging in the sight of both armies. Many an anxious glance was cast upon the waters by those stationed near the shore. For two hours the conflict remained doubtful; the vessels on either side were stripped of their sails and rigging; staggering and reeling hulks, they still gave and received the shocks that threatened to submerge them. The vessel of the commodore was twice on fire, her cannon dismounted, and her sides leaking; the enemy was in the same condition. The battle for a moment seemed a drawn one, when both attempted a manoeuvre which was to decide the day. With infinite difficulty the American ship veered about; the enemy attempted the same in vain; a fresh fire

poured upon her, and she struck. A shout then awoke upon the shore, and, ringing along the American lines, swelled for a moment above the roar of battle. For a short space the British efforts relaxed; but then, as if nerved rather than dismayed by misfortune, the experienced veterans stood their ground, and continued the fight till darkness constrained its suspension.

The little town of Burlington, during those busy hours, displayed a far different, but not less interesting scene; all occupation was interrupted; the anxious inhabitants, lining the heights, and straining their eyes and ears to catch some signal that might speak the fate of a combat upon which so much depended. The distant fire and smoke told when the fleets were engaged. The minutes and the hours dragged on heavily; hopes and fears alternately prevailing; when, at length, the cannonading suddenly ceased; but still, with the help of the telescope, nothing could be distinguished across the vast waters, save that the last wreath of smoke had died away, and that life, honor, and property, were lost or saved.

Not a sound was heard. The citizens looked at each other without speaking; women and children wandered along the beach, with many of the men of Vermont, who had continued to drop in during the day, but found no means of crossing the lake. Every boat was on the other shore, and all were still too busy there to ferry over tidings of the naval combat. The evening fell, and still no moving specks appeared upon the waters. A dark night, heavy with fogs, closed in, and some with saddened hearts slowly sought their homes; while others still lingered, hearkening to every breath, pacing to and fro distractedly, and wildly imagining all the probable and possible causes which might occasion this suspense. Were they defeated—some would have taken to the boats; were they successful, some would have burned to bring the tidings. At eleven at night, a shout broke in the darkness from the waters. It was one of triumph. Was it from friends or enemies? Again it broke louder; it was recognized and re-echoed by the listeners on the beach, swelled up the hill, and "Victory, victory!" rang through the village. I could not describe the scene as it was described to me; but you will suppose how the blood eddied from the heart; how young and old ran about frantic; how they laughed, wept, sang, and wept again. In half an hour, the little town was in a blaze of light.

The brunt of the battle was now over; but it still remained doubtful, whether the invaders would attempt to push forward, in despite of the loss of their fleet, and of the opposing ranks of militia, now doubly inspired by patriotism and good fortune. At day-break, the next morning, were found only the sick, the wounded, and the dead, with the military stores and munitions of war. The siege had been raised during the night; and the baggage and artillery having been sent back, the army were already some miles on their way towards the frontier. The skirmishing that harassed their retreat, thinned their numbers less than the sudden desertion of 500 men, who threw down their muskets, and sprang into the woods. A few of these sons of Mars are now thriving farmers in the state of Vermont; others fared with more or less success, according to their industry and their morals.

FROM A LONDON PEEPER.

JOHN WOLCOTT alias PETER PINDAR.

Wolcott was a man of vigorous constitution, and tasked that blessing to the utmost in the gratification of sensual appetites. His convivial talent was great, but not suited to the most virtuous sex, nor even to the moral or refined of our rougher kind. At the festive board he was a gourmand, and how long his propensities for promiscuous gallantry (alas! the word) were indulged or stimulated beyond the period for better things, may be gathered from the circumstance of his having been prosecuted, when above seventy years of age, for criminal conversation, or, we believe, for attempted criminal conversation, with the young wife of a friend, a tailor, to whom he obtained familiar access under pretence of preparing her for the stage, with a mania for which she was struck. Damages were given in the King's Bench Court, but never paid; and we know not whether the lady was exactly fitted for public life or not by her venerable tutor.—

She was rather a fine woman, and as the husband was concealed somewhere while Pindar fell into the snare, it was generally thought that the matter was planned to entrap him. He was sadly annoyed by the denouement.

This was among the last acts of Wolcott's career which furnished conversation for the town. He lived for some years in Gooch-street, where he once narrowly escaped being burnt to death, together with the old woman who attended him in his blindness: the bed-curtains of this domestic having caught fire, the blaze was luckily seen by a hackney-coachman on the stand opposite the house, who rushed in, in time to save Pindar and his house-keeper, and found the former amid all his infirmity endeavoring in vain to subdue the flames with a hearth-rug. From Gooch-street he removed for country air to Somers' town, where his salubrious retreat was most noisily situated near a stagnant and offensive pool. Here he died on the 13th of January, after a lingering, but not painful illness, in his 81st year. It is said that he dictated verses within a few days of his death: he had contributed slight productions to the periodical press within a year or two preceding. Report also states that many of his earlier and unpublished jeux d'esprit are preserved in Cornwall by his ancient acquaintances or their descendants.

What rank may be assigned to him as a Poet, it is not our province to determine. When the pure shall be separated from the impure in his works; the soundly critical, the easy lyrical, the humorous, the doggerel, the vulgar, and the profane, there will remain, in our opinion, a residuum which will long maintain powerful claims upon the applause of mankind.

COURTESHIP FROM THE PSALMS.

A young lady in the west of England, named Miss Grace Lord, by her uncommon beauty and accomplishments, had become the object of attention to numerous suitors. The young lady constantly referred them to her father, who, being of a whimsical temper, as well as much attached to the society of his daughter, for a long time gave no one a favorable reception. At length a young man, who had remarked that the father was a great humorist, after experiencing a refusal, addressed him in writing, in the following words, from the version of the 67th Psalm:

Have mercy on me, Lord,
And grant to me thy Grace.

The expedient succeeded, and he obtained the young lady with the paternal consent.

Religious.

The folly of men measuring themselves by themselves.

Extract from a sermon by the Rev. Dr. CHAMBERS, on the folly of men measuring themselves by themselves—from 2 Corinthians, x. 12.

It may be remarked, by way of illustration, that the habit condemned in the text is an abundant cause of that vanity which is founded on a sense of our importance. If, instead of measuring ourselves by our companions and equals in society, we brought ourselves into measurement with our superiors, it might go far to humble and chastise our vanity. The rustic conqueror on some arena of strength or of dexterity, stands proudly elevated among his fellow-rustics who are around him. Place him beside the returned warrior, who can tell of the hazards, and the achievements, and the desperations of the great battle in which he had shared the renown and the danger; and he will stand convicted of the humility of his own performances. The man who is most keen, and, at the same time, most skilful in the busy politics of his corporation, triumphs in the consciousness of that sagacity by which he has baffled and overpowered the devices of his many antagonists. But take him to the high theatre of Parliament, and bring him into fellowship with the man who has there won the mighty game of superiority, and he will feel abashed at the insignificance of his own tamer and homelier pretensions. The richest individual of the district struts throughout his neighborhood in all the glories of a provincial eminence. Carry him to the metropolis of the empire, and he hides his diminished head under the brilliancy of rank far loftier than his own, and equipage more splendid than that by which he gathers from his surrounding tributaries, the homage of a respectful admiration. The

principle of all this vanity was seen by the discerning eye of the Apostle. It is put down for our instruction in the text before us. And if we, instead of looking to our superiority above the level of our immediate acquaintance-ship, pointed an eye of habitual observation to our inferiority beneath the level of those in society who were more dignified and more accomplished than ourselves,—such a habit as this might shed a graceful humility over our characters, and save us from the pangs and the delusions of a vanity which was not made for man.

And let it not be said of those, who, in the more exalted walks of life, can look to few or to none above them, that they can derive no benefit from the principle of my text, because they are placed beyond the reach of its application. It is true of him who is on the very pinnacle of human society, that standing sublimely there, he can cast a downward eye on all the ranks and varieties of the world. But, though in the act of looking beneath him to men, he may gather no salutary lesson of humility—the lesson should come as forcibly upon him as upon any of his fellow mortals, in the act of looking above him to God. Instead of comparing himself with the men of this world, let him leave the world and expatiate in thought over the space of immensity,—let him survey the mighty apparatus of worlds scattered in such profusion over its distant regions; let him bring the whole field of the triumphs of his ambition into measurement with the magnificence that is above him, and around him,—above all, let him rise through the ascending series of angels, and principalities, and powers, to the throne of the august Monarch on whom all is suspended,—and then will the lofty imagination of his heart be cast down, and all vanity die within him.

Now, if all this be obviously true of that vanity which is founded on a sense of our importance, might it not be as true of that complacency which is founded on a sense of our worth?—Should it not lead us to suspect the ground of this complacency, and to fear lest a similar delusion be misleading us into a false estimate of our own righteousness? When we feel a sufficiency in the act of measuring ourselves by ourselves, and comparing ourselves among ourselves, is it not the average virtue of those around us that is the standard of measurement? Do we not, at the time, form our estimate of human worth upon the character of a man as it actually is, instead of forming it upon the high standard of that pure and exalted law which tells us what the character ought to be? Is it not thus that many are lulled into security, because they are as good or better than their neighbors? This may do for earth, but the question we want to press is, will it do for Heaven? It may carry us through life with a fair and equal character in society, and even when we come to die, it may gain us an epitaph upon our tombstones.—But after death, cometh the judgment; and in that awful day when judgment is laid to the line and righteousness to the plummet, every refuge of lies will be swept away, and every hiding-place of security be laid open.

Under the influence of this delusion, thousands and tens of thousands are posting their infatuated way to a ruined and undone eternity. The good man of society lives on the applause and cordiality of his neighbours. He compares himself with his fellow-men; and their testimony to the graces of his amiable, and upright, and honorable character, falls like the music of paradise on his ears. And it were also the earnest of paradise, if these his flatterers and admirers in time were to be his judges in the day of reckoning. But, alas! they will only be his fellow-prisoners at the bar. The eternal Son of God will preside over the solemnities of that day. He will take the judgment upon himself, and he will conduct it on his own lofty standard of examination, and not on the maxims or the habits of a world lying in wickedness. O ye deluded men! who carry your heads so high, and look so safe and satisfied amid the smooth and equal measurements of society,—do you ever think how you are to stand the admeasurement of Christ and of his angels? and think you that the fleeting applause of mortals, sinful as yourselves, will carry an authority over the mind of your judge, or prescribe to him that solemn award which is to fix you for eternity?

Proverb.—A wise man changes his mind, but a fool never will.