

Literature, &c.

A NIGHT IN A CHURCH.

Concluded.

"The title and estate went to a gentleman who was a second or third cousin, and he lived somewhere in foreign parts, as his wife was not in good health, and was not able to bear the changeable weather in England. The house was after a while let to a nobleman's family, but they only staid two days, and were off the third morning; some say, because my lady did not like the sight of the bleak mountains,—but others said, that the family had all been alarmed by noises at midnight, and nobody has ever since that staid long there. I myself put no faith in this sort of stories, but many of the neighbours will tell you, that long after Sir William's death horrid sounds were heard, at the hour of twelve at night, from the room in which he was laid before the funeral. The noises were said to resemble the howlings of a dog, mixed with the cries of a human being in the last extremity of agony. What they might have been I do not know, but the house is quiet enough now, yet I never go to that part of the mansion myself, and I do not much like to talk or think about it. None of the family have been here since, and the large tomb-stone that faces the great pew in the church was put up in memory of Sir William by his successor. This, madam, is the history, and this is the reason why the house was at first neglected, until now, as you see, it is only fit for a farm-house, and we have lived very comfortably in it, much more happily than ever Sir William did, I am sure."

"Now this account, at the time I heard it, had certainly shocked me as far as respected the awful death of Sir William; but the latter part of it I thought absurd in the extreme, for, my good friends, I was not then either nervous nor superstitious; but, at the moment I speak of, alone in a church, I felt that my mind was weakened, and I determined not to look at the tomb, or to think of the story. I composed myself as well as I could, and fell in a sort of doze, which I imagined lasted some time, for, when I awoke, the moon had risen, and was now high in the heavens, pouring a flood of softened radiance through the Gothic windows on a part of the church, while the other was left in a dark shadow. I rose from my reclining position, to make some change in the arrangement of my cushions, and perceived that the light was thrown most strongly on the tomb, on which I had previously resolved not to look; but, as I dare say you may some of you have experienced at times, we feel ourselves irresistibly impelled to look at, or think of, these things from which we would most wish to withdraw our attention, so I felt, I know not how, a strange impulse to fix my eyes upon this tomb, on which reclined the sculptured figure of Sir William, nearly as large as life."

"While my eyes remained, as it were, fastened on this object, could I be deceived by the shadows of the moonlight, or did I in reality perceive a moving form apparently rising from that tomb? Ah no! it was no vision of the imagination: I distinctly saw a long lean arm raised above the sepulchre, and, a moment afterwards, the ghastly apparition of a human face, pale, wild, and unearthly, glared on me with eyes expressive of misery and despair. I stood unable to move a limb; every faculty of body and mind seemed frozen up in horror. The spectre advanced a step from the monument, and in that moment my senses were almost paralysed by the most heart-rending sound that ever appalled a mortal ear. It was the yell of despair—it was the cry of human suffering, with a strange and horrible mixture of the agony of a dying animal. I sank down totally overpowered: all that I had heard recurred to my mind, which became a chaos of terror and superstitious alarms, and I lost all consciousness of the horrors that surrounded me in a temporary insensibility."

"I know not how long I remained in this state almost approaching death, but, when I in some degree recovered myself, I found that I had fallen on the floor of the pew, and, as my mind was gradually restored to recollection, I endeavored to persuade myself that I had been deluded by a phantom of the imagination: I thought how often we are victims to our over-excited fancies. My senses might have been bewil-

ered; I might only have dreamed. In this idea, I slowly rose from my recumbent posture, determined to examine the tomb myself, and to be convinced that my mind had been under a temporary derangement. I stood up; I looked to the door of the pew, when, oh dreadful sight! the same ghastly and horrid face met my view, as the spectre leaned over it, with its glaring eyes fixed on mine. My sensations I have hardly words to describe: by no power could I withdraw my eyes from this object: for hours did I remain thus spell-bound; I felt as if my blood had congealed in my veins; my temples ached with intense agony, and every hair on my head felt as if it was endued with a living power, and was moved by some invisible mechanism. I felt that my senses were deserting me, but I was not mad; for through that long and dreadful night did I distinctly hear the hours told by the church clock, which returned in dismal echoes to my ear. Horror at last became despair; I rose in frantic wildness to rush from my prison, when again did the spectre utter that soul-appalling sound. Every object, the church, the monuments, seemed to rock and reel around me, my eyes emitted sparks of fire, and from that moment I lost all recollection of many weeks of my existence."

"My story appears terrific, and it was indeed truly so to me, and yet the events were in reality very common, and such as, had my mind instead of being in a state of excitement and terror, been capable of calm investigation, would not to me have been the cause of such protracted suffering. The next morning, the woman who had the care of sweeping the church came to it early to prepare it for the approaching service, and she found me raving in a paroxysm of delirium, and the poor innocent cause of my fear himself terrified and alarmed. He was a pauper belonging to a village some miles distant; he was born deaf and dumb, and had, as he grew up, been found to be also an idiot. His parents had supported him decently while they lived; but, on their death, the care of him had devolved on the parish. He had grown old in poverty, sickness, and dependence: but he was perfectly harmless, and the neighboring farmers never refused him a meal. Frequently in the summer season he wandered around for days together, taking his scanty food from the hand of charity, and his nightly rest in barns or outhouses. It was supposed that he had wandered into the church, where he had fallen asleep; and when he awoke, he was the unconscious cause to me of terror never to be forgotten, by his meagre and ghastly appearance, and his horrid and uncouth attempts at articulation."

"I remained long on a bed of suffering. A frenzy fever left me reduced to almost infantine weakness. Of its effects on me corporeally and mentally you may judge, when I tell you, that when I entered that church my hair was brown and glossy as the chesnut, and that when I arose from my bed it was grey as you now see it. My limbs, which were strong and agile, have ever since trembled with paralysis; and my mind, which was once cheerful, energetic, and courageous, is now, as you observe, subdued to such weakness, as to have been overpowered at the idea of passing the night in a church, though surrounded by friends and protectors."

FROM THE HALIFAX MAGAZINE FOR FEBRUARY.

NEPTUNE VERSUS BLACKWOOD.

"THE SEA.—'Tis not easy even to look at him without falling asleep. Live for a month on the sea shore and you will be stupid for life."

We met these lines a few months ago, in Blackwood's Magazine, and they have occasionally since haunted our imagination, like the remembrance of insult given to ourselves, or the recollection of wrong done to a friend. Did we extend our ramble to Fort Mercy, and glance out on the glorious deep like a seamen from mid-air—all buoyant and exulting as though we could fly away and rest mid the distant glittering waters—the recollection of the libel which heads this chapter damned our emotion, we wondered at the impudence which penned and published it—and felt a desire to wipe away the stain, which—like the breath of an old debauchee—seemed to soil the path of the ocean sirens. Did we visit the delightful beach of Point Pleasant, and see the wood nymph hand in hand with the mermaid, the light chrysalis of ocean waving and murmuring about the deep shades of the grove: the sporting breakers now slowly and grandly rising into a long living ridge, and tumbling headmost, and as if laughing in ecstasy, running in among the weeds and shells at our feet—the arms of the sea spreading sublimely at either side, while beyond toying with its romantic islands, the smiling giant, reposed in its Atlantic bed; we could not—as we are wont, and as we delight to do—so luxuriate, without recollecting Kit North's "sleepy" "stupid" charge, and getting courage from our imaginations, longing for a wordy encounter with the Edinburgh veteran.

When we read the passage to which we allude, we said internally, this is a further addition to the many paragraphs, in which this peerless contributor, despising the truth of nature, and the general feeling of the human breast, for the sake of giving expression to the spleen of the moment. The ability of the leading papers in this noble periodical, generally carries the mind of the reader at their will, as an uncontrolled bark would be borne by a broad tide; but at times a rock peers above the surface, the roar of the rapid is heard—then the sails of the bark are hauled, her helm is put hard up, and she scores across the current, and seeks shelter from deception in one of the calm bays along the indented banks.

But we think a reader says "Break a lance with Blackwood!" the Halifax pigma enter the lists with the Edinburgh Mammoth! Preposterous!—unlike indeed—we answer—but nevertheless true. And never trust the little provincial periodical, but it would prefer being run down with all standing, then strike colours and canvas, and sneak into port while a friend outside, demanded a word or a blow. Also, be it recollected, that he who has his quarrel just, is doubly armed—away then with complacent, the terrorist can die nobly as the lion—and if a good will, and good cause can enoble small means, though defeated, we may not be disgraced. We are mighty in our theme—we back sublime old Neptune!—and his thunders shall raise our feeble voice above derision. Ungrateful indeed should we be if this duty were not delightful, we have been in some measure nursed by the ocean god; the pettishness of youth and the cares of manhood, have been alike sung to rest by his everlasting hymns.

Yes multitudinous sea, thine unruffled yet heaving bosom, thy sunrise glory, thy moonlight repose, and the rampant chidings of thy waves when they all lift up their heads together, have been among the first objects of nature, which created in a small degree a poetic soul under our ribs of earth. To be able to handle thy mane was one of our earliest aspirations—and the unearthly joy with which we were wont to cry ha! ha! to the tossing of thy billows shall resound to our latest sensitive feelings. Shall we be mute then, weak squire as we are—when a powerful knight, from his orgies in grottoes and taverns, comes forth all maddened, to attack thine eternal purity? Forbid it, all the principles, which by touching secret springs, controul the energies of the human soul.

Beautiful ocean—" 'tis not easy to look on thee without falling asleep"—says thy traducer—but the drowsiness which rises from thy translucent plain, and which gives delightful tranquility to the gazer—is as the feeling of the lover, who, gazing on his mistress' portrait from eve to moonlight noon, falls into a delightful slumber—and dreams of paradise and of immortal beauties: or it is as the drowsiness which a long continued but soothing and sweet strain of music, conveys—until the still delighted auditor hears in soul, the music of the spheres, and the echoes of heavenly harps. Constituted as we are, there is no pleasure piquant enough, to retard nature's sweet restorer, beyond given bounds—and perhaps there is no rest more delightful than that which he experiences, who, fanned all day by zephyrs, and delightedly satisfied with ocean scenery, rests in his cottage on the cliff, lulled to deep repose, by ocean murmurs. But to aver that the sea excites sleep as a dull book, or a talkative blockhead does, is not more reasonable than to traduce the sun, because the rush light sends forth murky effluvia,—and each occasions dimness of sight; or to turn from a bed of violets, because a mouldering weed heap was offensive—and exhalations from both entered the "palace of the soul" through the one organ of communication.

"Live for a month by the sea shore, and you will be stupid for life!" says the man, who gains inspiration amid the fumes of Auld Reekie.—He, that has known intimately what coast scenery is, feels a void amid the inland landscape, not to be satisfied by all the muddy streams and pigma banks of his neighbourhood: Tell him that the ever rolling and ever graceful swells, which burst on the sandied walks or marble floors of his former haunts, excites stupidity! he sets you down as one ignorant of the beauties which you slander, or unable to enjoy, and malignant enough to damp the delights of others. Is there any walk of earth more delightful than that along the grey sand? it is levelled with more than mathematical exactness by the retreating tide: at one side is the beach, the sand heaps, the sedgy meadows, the village, and the landscape in the distance,—at the other, is the snow wreaths of the breakers, the romantic cape, the majestic heaving of the swells, and the level glistening line of the horizon—while along your path shells beautiful enough for the Naturalist's Cabinet are strewn, and every rock which breaks the level of the strand, is surrounded by a little pond of water, pellucid as chrysalis, and ornamented with delicately tinted and exquisitely formed marine plants. Or, he who dwells for a month on the sea shore, may well avoid stupidity, on a very different and more retired route. Let him wander under the majestic cliffs which are the barriers of earth and ocean, and which have established along the disputed boundary a path, fitting indeed for the lover of nature: the awful precipices which close the path from all interruption on the one side, are noble as the battlements of earth should be, when so sublime an enemy as that outside is continually sapping the walls; each curve forms a little bay, and, according to position, almost each miniature strand is of a different material and appearance,—one is of impalpable sand, one is a collection of the small "cuckoo" shell, others is formed of pebbles which glister like so many topaz gems, and another exhibits the bare rock worn by the waves of ages until it now has the smooth appearance of molten lead. Here, the softer strata has yielded to ocean's eternal importunities, and has disappeared, leaving the superstructure which was formed of more stern materials, erect like a mighty arch, though which each high tide, flows rejoicing as a conqueror: look up as you pass beneath the grand portal, and ask yourself what perceptions, and the man have, who would call this the region of stupidity. There, an immense block has withstood ten thousand storms and floods, and rises abruptly, a romantic island amid the breakers: the swells course, each other around its base, or break into milk white spray and foam, on the sharp ledges which are the peaks of inferior islets: a thousand gulls settled on the brow of the island, and diversify the murmurs of ocean by their wild shrieking notes,—others float on their snowy wings, in graceful circles,—and some still sit the swells, seeming to be rocked by