

REVIEW.

FROM THE ATHENEUM.

LETTERS ON DEMONOLOGY AND WITCHCRAFT, addressed to J. G. Lockhart, Esq. By Sir Walter Scott-Bart, London, 1830. Murray.

these which are continually seeking and obtaining parochial relief now; and if the increased burden thereby imposed upon the land, be taken into account, it will probably, be found that agriculturists are not such decided gainers by the change as most of them imagine. Besides all which, it must be manifest to all those who have eyes to look around them, and minds to comprehend what they see, that with the race of petty farmers has expired one of the finest and most virtuous classes of society. Their houses were the nurseries of good and faithful servants; they were themselves hospitable to the utmost extent of their means, and almost always honest. They were really, I say not upon principle, but certainly upon honourable prejudice, attached to the constitution in church and state. If then, the country have suffered in its moral character by their annihilation, he must be a very short sighted politician indeed who imagines that the injury thereby inflicted upon society can be at all compensated by any improvements in the art of agriculture, or increase of the amount of produce raised from the soil.

FROM THE GENIUS OF UNIVERSAL EMANCIPATION.

THE DEVOTED.

"It was a beautiful turn given by a great lady, who being asked where her husband was, when he lay concealed for having been deeply concerned in a conspiracy, resolutely answered she had hidden him. This confession caused her to be carried before the Governor, who told her that nothing but confession where she had hidden him could save her from the torture. 'And will that do?' said she. 'Yes replied the Governor. —Then, replied she, 'I have hidden him in my heart.'"

Stern faces were around her bent,
And eyes of vengeful ire,
And fearful were the words they spake,
Of torture, stake, and fire:
Yet calmly in the midst she stood,
With eyes undim'd and clear,
And though her lip and cheek were white,
She wore no sign of fear.

"Where is thy traitor spouse?" they said—
A half form'd smile of scorn,
That curled upon her haughty lip,
Was back for answer borne:
"Where is thy traitor spouse? again
In fiercer tones they said,
And sternly pointed to the rack,
All rusted o'er with red.

Her heart and pulse beat firm and free—
But in a crimson flood,
O'er pallid lip, and cheek and brow,
Rushed upon the burning blood!
She spake—but proudly rose her tones,
As when in hall and bower,
The haughtiest chief that round her stood,
Had meekly owned her power.

"My noble lord is placed within
A safe and sure retreat,"
"Now tell us where, thou lady fair,
As thou wouldst mercy meet:
Nor deem thy life can purchase his—
He cannot 'scape our wrath,
For many a warrior's watchful eye
Is placed o'er every path.

"But thou may'st win his broad estates,
To grace thy infant heir,
And life and honour for thyself—
So thou his haunts declare,"
She laid her hand upon her heart,
Her eyes flash'd proud and clear,
And firmer grew her haughty tread—
"My lord is hidden HERE!"

"And if ye seek to view his form,
Ye first must tear away
From round his secret dwelling place,
These walls of living clay,"
They quailed beneath her lofty glance—
They silent turned aside,
And left her all unharmed amidst
Her loveliness and pride.

If you resist temptation, do not assume to yourself that you shall escape slander. The reputation which has been fifty years a building, may be thrown down by one blast of calumny.

A dark chapter in human nature!—a book on demonology and witchcraft, by Sir Walter Scott! We have neither ate, drank, slept, nor spoke since this book was put into our hands. The subject is most alluring, and the manner in which it is handled is magical: a spell is thrown upon the reader little less powerful than a page of the Book of Gramery, which was buried in the grave of Michael Scott, the wizard. The devil is in the book, we think, for we cannot get it out of our heads; it has possessed us we have tasted of the witches' broth—a soup which however delicious to swallow, has this effect—all that we see and hear is of it and through it. We see visions—shapes such as haunted the dying moments of old Barcane, angels, and all black—we behold the spirits from the vasty deep, who refused to come at Glendower's bidding—we have had a glimpse of the foul fiend who bit poor Edgar's back—we have eaten at an enchanted table, and tipped unblest drink with demons of earth, and air and sea; the maritime fiends had an indifferent savour—we have walked upon 'Changed with Major Weir's magic staff in our hand, and the funds sunk till they perplexed monarchs—we 'sett, and reeled, and crossed, and cleeked," on Magus Moor and Criffel-Fell, with 'the meikle deil and a' his witches' who danced jig and reel in the empty pockets of Burns;—we rode on a broomstick of the Witch of Endor's from Jericho to Lincoln, and made the Lawn-sleeves tremble for their pluralities; and, finally, we have kept watch by the sinner's side who had a skeleton for an attendant, with a sceptical physician who trembled if he did not believe. When we get rid of these graver and darker companions, we find friends even in the elves, and fairies, and witches; some of the latter appear not in the likeness of withered virgins, rigwoodie-beldames, —but come pleasantly in, ripe, rosy and bewitching like her of the cutty sark, and 'cast the glamour o'er us,' or throw their spells on field and flood, and let bonnie boats sink at sea; and matrons lament on shore that their fairest daughters have run off to Gretna Green, and their cows, that gave eighteen Scotch pints of milk, are grown, in one hour, as dry as a witch's pike staff.

Of the great flood of superstition which covered the earth, Sir Walter marked the flow and noted the decrease: the land is now nearly dry, and he has stepped forth to describe the ravages it has wrought, and the terrors it caused in man and beast. This is a pleasing task, and one for which he is best fitted of all the sons of literature. His works, early as well as late, abound with knowledge of a wild and superstitious nature: Queen Mab has been with him in his cradle; and his great precursor, Michael Scott, has shown him more than the glimpse of a hand and the waving of a gown among the Eildon Hills. He knows all the aspects which superstitious belief has assumed; he has amassed a stock of legendary lore, such as poet never before collected; he knows the shape of the slipper which became a coach or a pleasure boat at the will of the possessor—of what wood the sympathetic peg was, with which a certain witch in Gallo-way drained the cows dry for fifty miles around—of the ingredients which mingle in the draught that turns hatred into love, he has the receipt; he can repeat the words spoken by the witches of Scotland ere they mount at Hollow-eve on ragworts; and has now, or had lately, a bottle of imprisoned wind, sold by one of the hags of Lapland to a discreet skipper of the sea of Solway, of which Meston, the Jarobite poet has sung—

The Lapland witches who can muster
All sorts of winds which blow or bluster,
And then expose the same for sale
As we do bottled beer or ale;
Which, when uncorked, as sailors tell us,
Will puff and blow like a smith's bellows.

To trace the impressions which superstitious fears and beliefs have made on history, jurisprudence, poetry, language, manners, and customs; to exhibit the fears of the brave, the credulity of the wise, and the terrors of the ignorant; and give us a sketch of what our pastoral districts think on the subject of super-human visitations, charms, spells, corpse lights, elf-candles, water-spunkies, ill omen, and all the manifold miseries which afflicted our ancestors, has been the wish of the author; and well and graphically has he done his task.

He treats first of spectral illusions, and seeks to ac-

count for them philosophically, as learned and ingenious men have done before. The vulgar went a readier way to work—they believed those visitations to be real. Many considered revelations made at the dead of night by some shape half seen, half hid; or even dreams, which pointed out a safer course to that which the sleeper was in life steering, to be the work of spirits; in short, they treated with great respect the doctrine of angels good and evil. It is the fashion of the present age to doubt every thing, and believe nothing. That Sir Walter Scott is one of this latter generation, we have not the means of knowing; but certainly his mode of discussing this subject will carry alarm into the bosom of many a worthy family. Spectral illusion!—there is no illusion in it. There are indeed false spectres, as there were false enchantments in the days of Pharaoh; but then these are created to frighten fools, as a will-o'-th'-wisp was made to mislead drunken rustics. The spirit which stood before Brutus was no spectre of sticks and straw like the Hamlet's ghost of a strolling company of actors; nor was that dread figure which arose at the spells of her of Endor, and confronted Saul the king, a shape made out of empty air. No, no—they were of the other world, and came here to do their errands upon the sons of men, and they did them and departed. Because we meet no apparitions at Temple Bar—see no ghosts on 'Change—and, inasmuch as neither goblin nor wraith are clapped on the shoulder and bid move on by the police at the mirk hour of the night, men assume that no such things exist. Why, what would a spirit of good or evil do here? "Good angels," said a preacher lately in our hearing, "have given us up, and evil ones are sure of us." We say again what would they do here? No! a spirit, whether of evil or good, is a poetic being in all its tastes; it loves to stray, like the superior fiend of Burns, in lonely and deserted places—to haunt ruined castles gray—and to walk in the cooling dew by the side of some mighty river. When it appears to man, it comes not to him "in populous city pent," with his wine and his boon companions; but it finds him when it can alarm him fairly—when it can make each particular hair to stand on end, and so to work it goes with all its terrors on. Spirits have more discretion than to come to be questioned and dissected by philosophers and materialists; when these persons have made up their minds about the human soul, let them proceed with the spirits. For instance, any one can see with half an eye that the hag of the following passage, from this new book of Magic, was a deadly hoax practised upon the patient by some relative who was wearying for the reading of the wail. Apoplexy, Dr. Gregory! No, no! you knew what it was; you had talked with the heir; and by the ministration of this accursed old crone—

The lad for twa gude gimmer pets,
Was laird himself.

A patient of Dr. Gregory, a person, it is understood, of some rank, having requested the Doctor's advice, made the following extraordinary statement of his complaint. "I am in the habit," he said, "of dining at five, and exactly as the hour of six arrives, I am subjected to the following painful visitation. The door of the room, even when I have been weak enough to bolt it, which I have sometimes done, flies wide open; an old hag, like one of those who haunted the heath of Forres, enters with a frowning and incensed countenance, comes straight up to me with every demonstration of spite and indignation which could characterize her who haunted the merchant Abudah, in the oriental tale; she rushes upon me, says something, but so hastily, that I cannot discover the purport and then strikes me a severe blow with her staff I fall from my chair in a swoon, which is of longer or shorter endurance. To the recurrence of this apparition I am daily subjected. And such is my new and singular complaint." The Doctor immediately asked whether his patient had invited any one to sit with him when he expected such a visitation? He was answered in the negative. The nature of the complaint, he said, was so singular, it was so likely to be imputed to fancy, or even to mental derangement that he had shrunk from communicating the circumstance to any one. "Then," said the Doctor, "with your permission I will dine with you to-day, to-morrow, and we will see if your malignant old woman ventures to join our company." The patient accepted the proposal with hope and gratitude; for he had expected ridicule rather than sympathy. They dined, and Doctor Gregory, who suspected some nervous disorder, exerted his powers of conversation well known to be of the most varied and brilliant character, to keep the attention of his patient fixed, and prevent him from thinking on the apparition.