

## Literature, &amp;c.

## REVIEW.

FROM THE SCOTTISH LITERARY GAZETTE.

## ODD SKETCHES.

*Odd Sketches.* By the Author of "Poetical Aspirations." Edinburgh: Joseph Skeaf. 1880.

## Concluded.

Breakfast had scarcely been finished, when Mhasal Chrein, who always rose when it was ready, chancing to look through the rude patched window of their hut saw three strangers and a few dragoons standing on the opposite shore, and pointing towards the island. His suspicions were instantly on the alert, and taking a better view of them, he was not slow in conjecturing their errand. They had come there doubtless to search the isle, and if possible to apprehend himself. Nevertheless, priding himself in his security, he laughed at their endeavours to reach him, for his boat was safely moored on his side of the island, and they would have to procure another at a distance of fourteen miles, before they could cross the loch. So he did not care though they stood there pointing to his cottage all day, and when night came, he could easily, if necessary, escape unperceived in an opposite direction to where they were. He, therefore, when the boy proposed to return across, absolutely refused to allow him to stir from the place, because that would be putting the boat completely into the power of the excisemen.

But the boy had no idea of remaining on the island any longer. In the first place, he had finished his errand and his breakfast, and was desirous of proceeding homewards. In the second place he liked neither Mhasal Chrein or his wife; and though obliged to come to them every morning, he could not conceal his fears that they would do him some mischief, perhaps kill him, if they once got angry or suspicious; and, in the third place, he knew that if the excisemen caught him there, he would be accounted equally guilty with them, and punished accordingly; for what was he doing on the island, if he did not know of and perhaps assist them in, their illegal proceedings? For these reasons, therefore, he was anxious to leave the island as soon as possible, and as the old man would not permit him, he was determined to carry off the boat and make his escape, if he could, without his knowledge or consent.

Mhasal Chrein, therefore, had no sooner left the cottage to reconnoitre, after enjoining his wife to keep a watchful eye on the callant, than he began to put his design into execution. Accordingly, finding that the old woman was determined to prevent his departure, without saying a word, he slyly came behind her, and tripped up her heels—he then sprang from the door, and ran with the rapidity of a greyhound down to the beach. But Mhasal Chrein observed him ere he was half way, and guessing his intention, immediately set off in pursuit. The boy, however, perceiving he was pursued, and finding that he could not reach the boat in time, turned, stooped, and lifting a large stone from the ground, he threw it with all his might at the smuggler's head. His aim was well taken, he hit him right on the forehead, and Mhasal Chrein fell stunned to the earth. He then leaped into the boat, and had already loosed the rope, when the old man, recovering from the blow, reached the shore, and running up to his waist in the water, caught hold first of the boat, and then of the boy's plaid, or rathman; but quick as lightning the adventurous boy unclasped the plaid with the one hand, while with the other he struck the smuggler with the oar, and the boat shot across the loch like an arrow from the bow, leaving Mhasal Chrein standing in the water, like Potiphar's wife, with the boy's plaid waving in the wind. The old woman now joined her husband with a gun, who immediately sent a bullet after the boat; but the boy cowered down at the bottom, and the balls sent after him by the enraged smuggler passed over his head without doing him the slightest injury.

The excisemen on the other side beheld the scene with much interest, and prepared to take advantage of it. Despairing at first of obtaining access to the island, they were about to retire to procure the means to transport themselves across, when, to their surprise and satisfaction they beheld the boy push off in the boat, which was now approaching them, the boy occasionally raising his head, and making use of the scullie, when the old smuggler was engaged loading the gun, and when he again presented, disappearing at the bottom of the boat. No sooner, however, had he reached the shore, than the boat was seized by the

excisemen, and he himself jumping from the bow, set off away among the heather, as if he had been a hare pursued by hounds, or a startled fox with the whole pack in full cry behind him.

The scene now assumed a romantic and extremely picturesque appearance. Half-way across was the boat, with the excisemen, and as many soldiers as it could hold; on the beach of the island might be observed the old smuggler and his wife, alternately loading and firing at them as they approached, while perched upon a rock, appeared two man-shapon-urchins each of them with a pistol, firing away as for life and death at the intruders. It was a scene worthy of the pencil of Salvator Rosa. The ban lit forms and occupation of the smugglers, the boat on the stream filled with excisemen, and soldiers; with the beautiful little island in the foreground, and the rude rock and brown and shaggy mountains, rising in a sort of rude amphitheatre to the clouds, gave the whole an air of terrible sublimity and grandeur, such as he would have loved to delineate.

In the meantime the smuggler—who was resolved not to be taken alive—and his wife, reserving their fire till the boat approached the landing-place, and taking a deliberate aim, fired. One of the excisemen and one of the dragoons were wounded. Indeed, Mhasal Chrein's shot could not have missed among such a crowded company. The soldiers fired in return, and now a regular but unequal skirmish took place. Every one of the smuggler's shot told, while the dragoons discharged their pieces for some time without effect. Mhasal Chrein at length received a wound in his arm, which levelled him with the earth, and the excisemen and the soldiers nearing the island instantly sprung ashore. But the foremost fell dead from the bullet of the smuggler's wife, who, throwing her wounded husband over her shoulder, hurried up to the hut, where, assisted by her urchins, she barricaded the door, and, as the enemy advanced, opened up an incessant fire from the window, as from the embrasure of a fortress. After a desperate struggle, the soldiers forced the door, and the smuggler and his wife were obliged to yield. The excisemen then destroyed the still and all the works, and carried off an extensive seizure of whisky which they discovered in the premises.

Mhasal Chrein and wife were afterwards imprisoned, and the beautiful life of Lovk Arlet was no longer the abode of the outlawed smuggler.

There are a number of rather smart epigrams scattered through this amusing little book, although we question very much the propriety of introducing them at all into a volume of "Odd Sketches." We have only room for the two following, which we give rather for their political point than for their literary merit.

Epigram *not* from *Marital*.

A certain MARTIAL Duke, who past  
The Papist Bill, did in his last—  
His very latest speech avow,  
He never would reform allow,  
He then resigned—no use to storm it—  
His Cabinet out, he'll ne'er REFORM it.

Suggested by reading that the Queen had chosen the Scots Greys to be her body-guard, when she visits Scotland.

The King has form'd a new Administration  
And chosen one GRAY to govern the nation;  
But our good Queen, distrustful of our ways,  
Selects for guard, a Regiment of GRAYS!

The volume is got up with much taste; and we would recommend our readers to obtain Mr. Anderson's little volume, which we consider as an admirable fillip in the present abundance of dullness and mediocrity.

## A NIGHT IN A CHURCH.

How wonderful is the effect of terror on our minds and bodies, and how much more open are we to the impression of fear, from the different circumstances in which we may be placed at the moment that such cause for fear assails us! I met with a remarkable instance of the effects produced by terror, in a history that was related to me at Harrogate, by a lady, who was herself a sufferer from it in no inconsiderable degree. I met with her in the general society of the hotel at which I had taken up my residence; she was pleasing and unaffected in her manners, but her nerves appeared to have been much shaken; she was subject to spasmodic and paralytic attacks, and appeared altogether an invalid. She, however, felt well enough one particularly

fine day to join a small party of us, who visited York, principally to view its beautiful Minster.

It was towards the evening that we visited this halloved pile, and the extreme beauty of its interior, greatly heightened by the almost magical effect of a brilliant setting sun, illuminating its numerous and splendid monuments, induced us to stay much longer than we had intended, and night was rapidly approaching. Our invalid friend had more than once reminded us of the hour, and pressed us to retire: the sun at length departed, and the shadows of twilight stole over the building. She again urged our return, and with increasing earnestness, when one of our company observed, in a sportive manner, that we need not make ourselves uneasy, for, should the sexton refuse to wait for us, and we be locked in, it was a warm night, and we could pass it well enough in the numerous, well-cushioned, and carpeted pews that surrounded us. I happened at that moment to cast my eyes on our invalid, and never was more struck than at the agitation, amounting almost to horror, which overspread her pale face at these words; she trembled and appeared ready to sink into the earth; her disorder was visible to us all, and had the immediate effect of stopping any further discussion. We instantly quitted the Minster, and we all saw that, from some cause or other, she was nervously anxious to go, and we would none of us have given her serious cause for uneasiness on any account.

When we had returned to the inn at which we were to pass the night, and were comfortably seated at our coffee, one of the younger part of the company rallied her a little on the fear she had exhibited. She replied with great gentleness to his observations, and, addressing herself to us all, said, "You must have thought me whimsical this evening, and I feel that I owe to you an explanation of the dread which, as you must have seen, had taken possession of my mind. It is a subject on which it is painful to me to speak, and for that reason I have never alluded to it; but I feel equal to it now, and shall like to relate it to you." We expressed the pleasure it would give us to listen to her, and she proceeded as follows.

"It is now nearly twenty years ago, that I was staying for some months in the village of——, in Cumberland: the place itself is small, but the church is a large Gothic structure, dimly lighted by colored glass windows, and enriched by splendid monuments of the former lords of the manor. I was sent for one evening to visit a sick friend, and left word with my family, that if I found her worse, I should probably pass the night with her. She was, however, much better than I had anticipated, and after remaining an hour with her I prepared to return home. I had to pass a meadow adjoining the church-yard, and, as a heavy shower of rain had fallen, the grass was wet; the church-doors were open for the purpose of cleaning it for the next day, which was Sunday, and, by walking through the church, I should avoid the inconvenience of the damp path. The pew-opener, who was coming out, let me in at the door, and shut it after her, telling me that I should find the door at the other end open, as some one was still employed there. As I passed through, I stopped for a moment to look at the effect of the colored shadows from the window on one of the monuments, and the appearance of it was so brilliant and so beautiful, that I remained several minutes before it, wrapt in admiration, and was only roused from my contemplation by the noise of the door violently closing and shutting out my retreat.

"I acknowledge to you, that at that moment I suffered extreme agitation, my heart beat audibly, and I felt as if the power of breathing had left me. I knew there was no possibility of making myself heard, and that I had no prospect but that of passing the night where I was. In a little time, however, reason came to my aid; I reflected that I was in no real danger; the weather was warm, and I had no reason to apprehend injury to my health from remaining one night in the church: no one would be made uneasy by my absence from home, for my family were prepared to expect it; and, in short, I argued with myself on the folly of my fear, and in some degree succeeded in removing it. The next consideration was, in what part of the church should I endeavour to rest, and I fixed on the large seat belonging to the lords of the manor. It was a