

Literature, &c.

REVIEW.

FROM THE SCOTTISH LITERARY GAZETTE.

ODD SKETCHES.

Odd Sketches. By the Author of "Poetical Aspirations." Edinburgh. Joseph Skeaf. 1830.

Mr. Anderson's present volume consists of a variety of prose sketches of a light and amusing character—tales, descriptive pieces, *joux d'esprit*, and whimsical adventures. The versatility of the author appears to great advantage, and his unflagging flow of animal spirits is calculated to lead the reader from the beginning to the end of the volume; without the slightest feeling of ennui. Praise, like this, is due to modern works which aspire to amuse. The style is pleasing, and, in every variety of writing, well adapted to the subject. But the great merit of the Book is its spirit, its jokery, its whimsicality, its point.

We shall now dwell upon the contents. We perceive two pieces which have already appeared in our columns, to which Mr. Anderson has been a frequent contributor; and to such of our readers as have perused them, we need not recommend the rest of the volume—they will read it. We have been highly amused by "The Man of Honour," a kind of gentleman of the press—an adventurer who is drawn with much life. A ghost story, too, has a very interesting turn. "Mr. Taylor is a very humorous description. "The Broken Heart," shows that Mr. Anderson is equally alive to the pathetic; and the "Fragments of a Sketch," though wild and mysterious, are written with vigour. There are not a few pieces which we should have been happy to extract, but we must content ourselves with one whole tale, which is entitled "The Smuggler's Isle."

Whoever has seen Loch Arklet in Perthshire, with the rude yet romantic scenery around it, can never efface its remembrance from his memory. It is a grand, a sublime, and in many parts even a terrible spot. Surrounded by hills, whose bold yet picturesque peaks shoot upward to the sky, and whose sides here sloping, there precipitous, and every where rugged and abrupt—are clothed with a brown mantle of heath, that spreads out far and wide, giving it an air of desolate grandeur, and affording but a scanty pasture to the few sheep that wander there to browse. The birch, the mountain ash, and the oak, cover Glen Arklet, especially towards the west, down even to the water's edge; and here and there, along the banks of the loch, or far up on the sides of the hills, may be seen, at distant intervals, a white cottage or two, with its small patch of cultivated land, which come upon the surprised traveller like oases in the desert.

And then the quiet and beautiful loch in the bosom of the glen, with the little island, floating like a cloud on the face of heaven, almost in its centre! It is a sweet and Sabbath-breathing spot; calm even in its majesty, and beautiful in its very wildness, it stands alone amid that Highland wilderness, like the meek and lowly of this world, while the high and haughty frown upon them from afar, as the rude and towering hills, within whose breast they find shelter, and security, seem to do upon these peaceful waters and that lovely isle.

But those beautiful waters do not always slumber in quietness around the shores of that lovely isle! The spirit of the storm, who holds his revels on these soaring summits, at certain times comes howling down the glen, when the loch pants and foams beneath him, as if a nightmare rode its dreams. Then does that little island roll and rock like a vessel in a hurricane; for the angry waters lash it on every side, as if they would sweep it away from the face of creation for ever.

About forty years ago, when every Highland hill and glen was the haunt of the smuggler, and a thousand secret stills were at work in silent and secluded spots, in defiance of the law and its executor, the exciseman, one of those desperate and fearless men, who carry on the illicit trade, selected the remote island for his retreat, and long did Mhasal Chreim's haunt, and his illegal occupation remain undiscovered and unsuspected. Secluded however as it is, you cannot enter the glen on either side, but you see the waters, with that isle upon its bosom, stretching away calmly and broadly beneath you. But no one thought that such a sweet and quiet spot was chosen as the refuge of the smuggler and the outlaw.

Yet such it was, and a more secure one could not have been contrived. Cut off from communication on every side, "this lone island of the west" could only be reached by means of a boat, which was always in the possession of the smuggler, and even if he had been discovered, it would have been a difficult if not an impracticable matter to catch him, sole master as he was of the boat and of the island, and armed with the weapons, as he was with the energy and fearlessness of heart, of a reckless and desperate man.

His wife, old and weather-beaten like himself, dwelt on the island with Mhasal Chreim and with her assistance, he carried on with success his business of an illicit distiller. He had two or three children—short and mis-shapen imps, "unlocked cubs," rude and uncultivated dwarfs—who ran about the island in a wild state, and were never on any account permitted to leave it. It was their birth-place, and perhaps might be their grave.

Mhasal Chreim was, as his name implies, a little, swarthy, beetle-browed shaggy old man, whose form and features had been too much exposed to the wild and stormy scenes and weather of his native hills, not to have caught something from their character and spirit. He was in short, as wild and rude, both in look and nature, as the romantic scenery around him, or as the wind that blew in tempests over Glen Arklet. His wife, as much exposed as he had been, partook also of his wildness, and with her tartan gown and red jacket, and long yellow hair streaming in the breeze, might have been taken, when seen from the opposite shore, sitting on the rock, waiting the return of his excursions, or walking impatiently along the beach of the little isle, for a witch-wife uttering her spells, or one of the furies conjuring up a storm.

For a long time, as has been said, Mhasal Chreim pursued his illicit occupation undetected. He was careful and cautious, and never fired his still but at night, that the smoke might not be discovered in the darkness. At night, too, he transacted his busi-

ness with the few persons with whom he dealt, and on whom he could depend; bringing over from the island barrels of whisky in his boat, and sending them away across the country in secrecy and silence.

But the attention of the excise was at last directed towards that district, and excisemen began to swarm thick and active around him. Every hill, valley and pass, every rock and ravine, every cave and corner, every lone and quiet spot, for miles and miles around him, were searched for smugglers, and many a secret distillery was discovered and destroyed. But the little island of that lonely loch, and its wild inhabitants, still remained unmolested. At length, however, suspicion began to point its finger to the spot. A solitary exciseman, passing early through the glen when the grey twilight of morning was merging fast into the slowly coming light of day-dawn, and the mountain eagle, rising from her eyrie in the yet cloudless peaks that look down Loch Arklet, soared away to the east to welcome in the sun; perceived a continual stream of blue smoke ascending like a cork-screw from the little isle, which, with the eye and the perception of one who, from long experience, could distinguish the smoke of a still from that of a cottage, he knew at once could only emanate from a still at work. Rejoicing in his discovery, he retired for assistance to enable to seize and destroy it, and to capture those to whom it might belong.

Meantime, Mhasal Chreim, totally unconscious that his proceedings have been observed, extinguished his fires, his constant custom at the approach of day, and lay down on his bed to sleep. Shortly afterwards, his wife was awoken by a shrill whistle, well known to her as the signal of the baker's boy, who came there every morning to supply them with bread and barm. She therefore rose, and paddled across the loch for the boy who had long been in their secret, and was, therefore, the only person permitted to come to the island, where it was usual for him to breakfast, and afterwards to return home.

To be Concluded in our next.

THE TEAR.

I was led in a dream to the gate of the Upper Heaven, and I saw many sights on which I must be silent; and I heard many sweet sounds, like the voices of angels, hymning to their lyres. And the seraph Uriel was with me, for he is the regent of the sun, and the conductor of errant sojourners through the paths of Infinity. And the light of Heaven dazzled mine eyes long before I reached its glorious portal; and I must have sunk beneath its insufferable splendor, had not the angel shaded me with his ambrosial wings, and touched mine eyes with balm of amaranth, which grows only in Heaven. And when he touched them with this balm, I felt them strengthened, and I could gaze, undazzled on any part of the bright Kingdom save one; and I asked Uriel the cause of this surpassing light, and he said it was the light of the Sanctuary. And, lo! at the gate of Heaven stood a pedestal of jasper, and on this pedestal a vessel of pure sapphire, encircled with gold,—and within this vessel lay a tear, which evaporated not in the light of Heaven, but remained the same forever. And I said unto the angel, "Whence cometh this tear?" And he answered, "From the eye of an earth-born maiden, named Leila, if thou wouldst know more of this tear, speak to it—it will answer thee." Then I marvelled, saying, "Can a tear answer?"—"Yea," responded Uriel, "this tear is not as other tears,—it hath a spirit within it, and a voice, for the sake of the maiden Leila by whom it was shed." Then, methinks, I spoke to the tear; and a voice arose from its bed of sapphire in reply.

BARD.

Crystal gem of mortal birth,
Fairer than the gems of earth,
Was it Grief that bade thee mount
Upwards from thy coral fount?
Moulded thee on Leila's eye?

TEAR.

Minstrel, nay, it was not Care
With his breath that framed me there;
Neither did I quit my fount,
From its crystal floor to mount,
(Like the dew on autumn's leaf.)
By the sceptered spell of grief.

BARD.

Jewel of a maiden fair,
Was it mirth that brought thee there?
Was it touch of Laughter's spell
That o'erflow'd thine azure well?

TEAR.

Neither Mirth invoked me here,
(Yet thou seest I am a tear,)
Nor Despair's terrific dart
Bade me from my fountain start,
Tear like me had never birth
Or by Sorrow, or by Mirth.
Whilome was my fountain dry,
Laughter beam'd in Leila's eye;
Round her bosom Joy was flung,
Mirth was floating on her tongue;
And her step was gay and light,
And her eye was pure and bright;
And her soul with Rapture fraught,
Harb'd no desponding thought
But a vision of Distress
Came athwart her loveliness,
Like a thunder-cloud in June,
Or a mist before the moon:
Straight the voice of Pity fell

O'er her spirit, as a spell,
And her eye distill'd a tear,
Lovelier than a Grief may rear.
Unto me the power was given
Leila's cause to plead in Heaven,
For I have been shed upon
Others' sorrows—not her own.

And I inclined my head while the voice was yet speaking; and it seemed to come from the drop within the vessel of sapphire—and I knew the tear to be a spirit. And I said to Uriel, "Do all tears find their way to Heaven?" But he answered, "Nay—none but those of compassion. All other tears perish, as a drop of water, when they are shed; but those of pity come hither, and, after sojourning for a season at the gate of Heaven, lo! some of them are changed into jewels, and hang upon the crowns of the archangels; otherwise are mingled with the fountain of benevolence, and they all plead with seraphic tongues for those that shed them." And I knew from this response of the angel that there were no tears like those of compassion.

FROM A LONDON MAGAZINE.

THE HISTORY OF A FRENCH ARTIZAN DURING THE LATE REVOLUTION.

Concluded.

The next morning every thing seemed to have passed by which had disturbed the tranquillity of the town on the previous evening—the streets were quiet, and the people engaged in their usual occupations. Mariette's mind appeared somewhat calmed; but still she looked at me anxiously, as she saw me about to depart, and made me promise more than once, that I would go straight to my work, without mingling with any mob I might see. I kept my word; and, though I saw several groups of people gathered round the corners of the streets, where the obnoxious ordinances were posted up, I did not even stop to read, but hurried on to the printing-house with all speed. The scenes in the work-rooms were different from any I had ever beheld. All the presses were standing still; and the workmen, gathered into knots, were each declaiming more violently than the other on the infamy and folly of the government; and, with furious gestures, vowing vengeance. The overseer came in soon after, and with some difficulty got us to our work; but, about twelve o'clock, the proprietor of the establishment himself appeared, and told us to leave off our labours. "My good friends," said he, "the government has annihilated the liberty of the press. The type of several of the journals has been seized this morning. Our liberties are at an end without we secure them by our own force. Far be it from me to counsel tumult or bloodshed—the law is quite sufficient to do us justice." However, I have determined, as well as Monsieur Didot and all the other printers, to cease business, and discharge my workmen." We were then paid the small sum owing to each, and dismissed, with a caution to be quiet and orderly, and to trust to the law; though the very fact of turning out a number of unemployed and discontented men, upon such a city as Paris, seemed to me the very best possible way of producing that tumult which we were warned to avoid.

I soon after found, that it was not alone the printers who had been discharged, but that almost all the workmen in the city had been suddenly thrown out of employment. As I returned home, there was a sort of ominous silence about the town that had something fearful in it. Not ten persons were to be seen upon the Quais, which are usually so crowded; and it seemed as if the whole population had been concentrated on particular points. To my great surprise, on entering my lodging, I found my brother sitting with Mariette, and holding our infant on his knee, while the child looked up in his face and smiled, as if it knew that those were kindred eyes which gazed upon it. My brother soon told me the occasion of his coming to Paris, which was to buy seeds and plants for the hot-house at the Chateau; and about three o'clock, as everything was quiet, I went out with him. As we passed onward, we soon saw that all was not right. The shops were closed—the gates of the Palais Royal were shut—groups of gloomy faces were gathered at every corner—and the whole town wore the dull, heavy aspect of a thunder-cloud, before the storm bursts forth in all its fury. A few gens-d'armes were to be seen, but no extraordinary military force appeared; and gradually the same sort of yelling shouts came upon our ear, that I had heard the night before.