

## LITERATURE, &amp;c.

FROM THE COURT MAGAZINE AND BELLE ASSEMBLEE.

## THE COQUETTE.

BY THE HONORABLE MRS. NORTON.

The ball was truly splendid; so was the supper. Three new beauties 'came out' that night; fourteen gentlemen, distinguished in the fashionable world, for various causes, fell in love with these 'blossoms of the London spring,' as the news-papers call them; and Bessie Ashton's marriage with Lord Glenallan was formally declared by her aunt, Lady Ashton, as fixed for the ensuing evening. One by one the lingering guests departed; the chandeliers gave a fainter light as the gradual day-dawn overpowered them; and the tired servants seemed only waiting finally to extinguish the lamps, till the departure of two figures should leave the rooms silent and deserted. They waited however in vain. Mute and motionless as a statue, Bessie Ashton remained gazing, from the open window, on the empty park, and ever and anon the cool breeze of the morning lifted her glossy black hair from a cheek, whose haggard weariness and unsmiling expression, ill assorted with the situation of Glenallan's envied bride. Opposite, leaning against a marble table which supported one of the magnificent mirrors in the apartment, and gazing steadfastly on her averted figure, stood a young man of about six-and-twenty. His mouth was course—his eye harsh—yet his countenance was handsome. Miss Ashton turned from the window, with a slight shudder, as if the wind had chilled her; 'Well, George?' said she, listlessly. 'Well, Bessie. And so you have sold yourself for a coronet? Ah! George, do not begin in that harsh way; you know I cannot bear it.—It is so long since I spoke familiarly with any one, and I was so glad to see you back again.' As she spoke the last words she clasped his hand in one of hers and laying the other lightly and tremblingly on his shoulder, looked up in his face with a nervous and painful smile. Her companion did not shake her off, but he shrunk from that caressing hand, and ceased to lean against the marble slab. 'I do not wish to speak harshly to you, Bessie; on the contrary you will find me more kindly disposed to you, than many who are smoother spoken; but I cannot, and will not, conceal from you, that your conduct towards my friend Claude Forester, has for ever destroyed my esteem for your character. It is impossible I should not feel this—and particularly at a time when I know him to be ill and heart-broken.' 'I did not forsake him—he chose to distrust—to forget me,' said Bessie, while she struggled in vain to choke back the tears that rose to her eyes. 'And why? why did he distrust and forsake you? because that spirit of coquetry, which is the curse of your existence, prompted you to encourage every one round you—to traffic for compliments; to barter looks for words, and words for feelings—and to make him miserable for the gratification of your vanity. Yet you might, if you had tried have won him back again; you might even now.' 'Win him back again!' exclaimed Miss Ashton passionately, 'I have no need to make so vast a struggle to be loved; there are many who are thought Claude Forester's superiors, who like me in spite of those faults you and your friends are so quick in observing; and pray on what occasions have I played the coquette, my wise cousin?' 'Bessie, Bessie, you need not be bitter with me; for the time is gone by when you could provoke or sadden me. Have you forgotten young Mildmay, to whom you were forced to apologize for having led him to believe you would accept him? Have you forgotten Lawrence Gordon and his labored gifts, which you returned when weary of the giver? Have you forgotten Lord Courtown and his flowers? Mr Montague and his blood-hound, which you caressed for the sake of making a *tableau*? Have you forgotten that at one time you even thought it worth you while——' a peculiar and confused expression passed over his countenance; he stammered and parsed. Miss Ashton raised her eyes, and a short quick smile of triumph lit every feature of her expressive face, as she gazed on his. 'I do believe you are jealous,' exclaimed she, 'it is ill receiving advice from a lover, Mr Ashton.' 'I am not your lover, Bessie, God forbid that my happiness should depend on you—and if I were your admirer, is the admiration which results solely from the power of personal attraction—without esteem, without respect—is it indeed worth that smile? Your beauty no one can be insensible to; but your heart! oh, very cold and selfish must that heart be, which could prize any triumph at a moment like this, when you have made the misery of one man, and are about, in all human probability, to destroy the happiness of another. Beware, Bessie, beware! the day shall come when the triumph of coquetry shall have no power to comfort your agony. Good night.' He turned and left the room. Mechanically Miss Ashton followed; and mechanically she sought her own room and flung herself into a chair. George Ashton's words

rang in her ear; her heart beat violently; the choking which precedes weeping rose in her throat. Grief, pride, resentment, and mortification, strove for mastery in her mind, and the triumphant beauty gave way to an hysterical burst of tears. Her passionate sobbing awoke the weary attendant, who had been sitting up for her. 'Dear Miss,' said she, 'don't fret so; we must all leave our homes some time or another, and I am sure Lord Glenallan—' 'Don't talk to me, Benson—I have no home—I have no one to grieve for. Home! is it like home-friends to give a ball on my departure, as if it were a thing to rejoice at? Where is the quiet evening my mother used to describe long ago, which was to precede my wedding day—where the sweet counsel from her lips which was to make the memory of that evening holy forevermore—where the quiet and the peace which should bless my heart? They have made me what I am—they have made me what I am.' 'La, Miss,' said the astonished maid, 'I am sure you ought to be happy; and as to your poor mamma, it is in nature that parents should die before their children, and she was a very delicate lady always. So do, Miss,' continued she, 'dry your beautiful eyes, or they'll be as red as ferrets, and your voice is quite hoarse with crying; you will not be fit to be seen to-morrow.' Nothing calms one like the consciousness of not being sympathized with: Bessie Ashton she ceased to weep, and began to address, after which she dismissed her maid, and burying her head in her hands, forgot all but the irrevocable past.

'Past four! a fine morning.' Bessie started, and raised her heavy eyes to the window—the monotonous words were repeated. She looked wistfully at the bed; but no—she felt she could not sleep. Her head sank again on her hand; vague feelings of wretchedness and self-reproach, weighed on her soul, and too weary even to weep, she remained listlessly dreaming, until a sudden beam of the morning sunshine lit on the ornaments she had worn the night before, and startled her into consciousness. Her clasped hand dropped on her knee as she gazed on the sweet sky which heralded in her wedding-day. The sun rose higher and brighter—the heavens grew bluer—the indistinct and rarely heard chirping of the earlier birds changed to a confused twittering, varied by loud cheerful notes, and the clear carol of the blackbird and thrush; the fresh wind blew on her weary aching brow, as if seeking to soothe her misery; and Bessie Ashton sank on her knees and stretching out her arms to heaven, murmured some passionate invocation, of which the only audible words were 'Claude, dear Claude!—Oh! God forgive me and help me! that love is sinful now.' Few would have recognised the pale and weeping form which knelt in earnest agony then, in the bride of the evening. Wedded by special license to an Earl: covered with pearls and blonde: flushed with triumph and excitement: the Countess of Glenallan bent, and imprinted a light cool kiss on the forehead of each of her beautiful bridesmaids; bowed and smiled to the congratulating beings who pressed round her; received the stiff and self-complaisant parting speech of her aunt, Lady Ashton; and descended the magnificent staircase with her happy bridegroom. One adieu alone disturbed her. George Ashton stood at the hall door, and, as she passed, he took her hand and murmured 'God bless you Bessie!' Involuntarily she returned the blessing; old memories crowded to her heart:—tears gathered in her eyes:—with a burst of weeping she sank back in the carriage, and when Lord Glenallan whispered caressingly 'Surely, my own, you have left nothing there, for which my love cannot repay you,'—she drew her hand from his with a cold shudder; and a confused wish that she had never been born, or never lived to be married, (especially to the man to whom she had just sworn love and duty,) was the uppermost feeling in Bessie's heart, as the horses whirled her away to her new home.

Time past: Bessie Ashton again appeared on the theatre of the gay world, as an admired bride. The restless love of conquest which embittered her girlhood, still remained—or rather (inasmuch as our feelings do not become more simple as we mix with society) increased and grew upon her day by day. The positive necessity of sometimes concealing what we do feel; the policy of affecting what we do not; the defiance produced by the consciousness of being disliked without a cause, and abused as a topic for conversation; the contempt excited by the cringing civility of those who flatter for services to be performed, and follow for notice to be obtained; the repeated wreck of hopes that seemed reasonable; the betrayal of confidence which appeared natural; the rivalry, disappointment, mortification, and feverish struggling, which beset us in the whirlpool of life, and carry us round whether we will or not,—these are causes which the noblest and the purest natures have difficulty in resisting, and which had their full effect on a mind like Bessie's, naturally vain and eager, and warped by circumstances to something worse. From her mother's home, where poverty and a broken heart had followed and imprudent marriage,

Miss Ashton had been transported to add, by her transcendent beauty, one other feature of attraction to the gayest house in London.

'Not quite a woman, yet but half a child,' she was at that age when impressions are easiest made—and, when made, most durable. Among her rich relations the lessons taught by the pale lips of her departed parent were forgotten: the weeds which that parent would have rooted from her mind, grew up and choked her better feelings; and Bessie, the once simple and contented Bessie, who had been taught to thank God for the blessings of a humble home, and the common comforts of life, struggled for wealth and rank that should place her on a par with her new associates, and shrank from the idea of bestowing her hand on any man who could not give her in return—diamonds and an opera box.

During the seclusion of an English honey-moon, Bessie had believed that (Claude Forester apart) she could love Glenallan better than any one. He was intelligent, kind, graceful, and noble. He was an Earl, he was popular with women, and respected by men. He had made two very creditable speeches in the House, and might make more. He rode inimitably well. He had shown more taste in laying out the grounds about Glenallan, than Nash did in Regent's Park. In short, there was no reason she should not love Glenallan;—except that it would be so exceedingly ridiculous to fall in love with one's husband; it would look as if nobody else thought it worth his while to pay her any attention; Glenallan himself would think it so ridiculous, for Glenallan had none of Claude Forester's romance, and was quite accustomed to the ways of fashionable couples, and contented to pursue the same path. Then Lady Ashton—how Lady Ashton would laugh! and it really would be laughable, after all. So Lady Glenallan's first *coup d'essai*, after her marriage, was to encourage the violent admiration evinced for her by her Lord's cousin, Fitzroy Glenallan, who was twice as intelligent, twenty times as graceful, won all the plates at Ascot, Epsom, and Doncaster; was the idol of the women—and as to the men—pshaw! the men were jealous of him. [To be concluded in our next.]

RELIGIOUS LIBERALITY.—A Church is building at Freiburg, in Brisgau, under circumstances that deserve honourable mention. The late Grand Duke Lewis of Baden, a Protestant, having obtained from the Pope, the creation of the above city and its environs into a bishopric, the magistracy and common council of the place, all Roman Catholics, voted the sum of 15,000 florins, towards the erection of a monument, as a mark of gratitude to their prince. But, it being subsequently found, that the Protestants in the town, who had lately much increased in number, were anxious to have a place of worship for themselves, the Catholics, thinking that no mark of gratitude would be more welcome to their Protestant ruler, than the building of a church for those of his own faith, resolved to appropriate the money to this purpose, and the building was actually commenced on the 25th of August, 1829, when the first stone was laid by the Catholic Archbishop, attended by his Chapter! The church is named after the Prince in whose honor it was founded, and is a glorious monument of a spirit of liberality, which is making rapid strides in Germany.

MODERN WONDERS.—Were the wise man who said there is nothing new under the sun, living in these days, he would, we think, change his opinion. All is new, or, at least, little is old. We would ask him, did he ever ascend the third heaven in a balloon? Did he ever sail against a stiff breeze and a strong current, in one of those maritime chimeras called steam-boats? and, above all, did he ever move over the vales of Judah or on the plains of Assyria, in one of the royal chariots with the rapidity of a London bagman on the Liverpool railway? We answer for him, 'Never.' And yet these miraculous matters to which we allude, seem but in their infancy. Gordon, an ingenious engineer, revealed to us lately, in his little clever book, some of the chief mysteries of motion. This put us on considering and enquiring: we set about comparing the past with the present, and the result was, that we held up our hands in wonder at the marvels which, even in our brief space of existence, have been wrought. Motion with us has been gradually increasing in velocity from the crawl of the snail to the flight of the hawk. Time was, when our most expeditions public travelling-carriage was the stage-waggon; the same in which Randon had the adventure with Captain Weasel—lumbering along with twelve horses, at the rate of three miles an hour; wearying of that, we tried our own proper feet, which, with some exertion, carried us over sixty measured miles in a summer's day; tiring—as who would not?—of such an uneasy mode of migration, we tried what water and wind could do for us, and, though once borne from London to Edinburgh, when the skies smiled, in forty-eight hours, we were twice detained smothered or eleven days in the performance of the same