

LITERATURE, &c.

REVIEW.

La Coquette, or Sketches of Society in France and Belgium, 3 vols. London: 1832.

In our first notice of this book, we expressed a hope that it might prove more original than its title (approximating so near to 'Flirtation') might lead us to believe. We are happy after reading the book, to make a most favourable report on this point. It is decidedly original and not in style only, but in plot, character, and incidents. It has been the author's object to portray two pictures—the one involving the domestic manners of the genteel, if not the highest, orders of people in our own country, and the other placing in different points of view, and under all the influence and contrast of strong light and shade, a sketch of Continental character, which it is almost as instructive as entertaining to survey. The cleverness with which these two pictures are painted is only exceeded by the grace, spirit, and elegance which is thrown into them. There is a lively and earnest tone pervading the book, and an interest thrown into the persons and actions of nearly all the dramatis personæ, that pleases us far more than most novels of the class. Moreover, as we before stated, there is an object in the work; it is not a book written for the sake of the story, but a story for the sake of the book. Perhaps its chief, and almost only fault, lies in the frequent use of foreign quotation, and the introduction of too much French into the dialogue. This we always conceive to be a mark of bad taste. In all other respects, we like and recommend the work, both for its purpose, its moral, and its characters, with some of whom we had well nigh fallen in love.

Little Rosa, the heroine, is especially our favourite—so amiable, so graceful, and so accomplished, and, we may add, in honour of our young countrywomen, so English. Contrasted to this natural creature, we have another woman, in the person of Madlle St. Quintin, who more often wakes our smiles than our sympathy; but who, nevertheless, has some manner about her, and passions withal, that make her witty and lively, and every thing else by impulse. Hugh de Clifford, too, is a glorious creature for a man; and Lady de Clifford, a worthy mother of the pretty Rosa.

So far then, we have given our readers as deep an insight as is permitted into the novel; and we advise them to refer to its own pages for whatever remains. In the meantime we turn to the same quarter for an extract; we give a specimen of the author's abilities in sketching scenery:—

On a delightful day, in the middle of July, the de Cliffords quitted the sultry town of Bruxelles and its environs, and soon entered the shady line of road that leads through the forest of Soignies to the plains of Waterloo.—There they devoted an hour to view the field of battle, where so many have to regret the loss of fathers, sons, and brothers. The country is so beautiful between Namur and Liege, and from thence to Spa, that I cannot help particularizing it. I trust my readers will allow me, in this instance, (and I promise it shall be a solitary one,) to deviate from the plan I originally laid down, and I feel assured that even those who are acquainted with the country, will not object to seeing it described. The de Cliffords slept at Namur; and on leaving the town early next morning, they found the road they were to travel ran by the side of the river the chief part of the way to Liege. Some author, I forget who, calls it the Sluggish Meuse, and so it certainly is during the summer months, when it diminishes to a small stream, which often allows carts, &c. to ford it. But at the other seasons of the year no one would recognize it under the above-mentioned name; and, with the high cliffs, that occasionally rise almost perpendicular over your head, and its turreted castles, and here and there a vineyard, where the vine already begins to put forth its delicious tendrils and fibres, you might at times almost believe it a minor Rhine. But how different its fate to that of its rival river, the Rhine. The Meuse, at times seemingly an unimportant stream, increasing as it flows towards its parent ocean, becomes the source of prosperity, riches, beauty, and health to the land it enriches and fertilizes,—to Holland. Rotterdam and its surrounding country owe every thing to this beautiful river. The magnificent Rhine, on the other hand, which is joined by a hundred streams, rushes with irresistible force over rocks and every thing that intercepts its passage, but as soon as it parts from its more steady rival, it imperceptibly declines in every way, and faintly attempting to defend the walls of Utrecht, it quietly divides itself into various small channels, and is lost and forgotten in the sands of Holland. In tracing the course and fate of these two rivers, I have often, in my mind's eye, compared them to the rise and fall of kingdoms,—the mighty Rhine to Rome in all its grandeur, and in its subsequent fall to rise no more;—the Meuse to the vanquished Gauls and Saxons, who have risen to wealth and dominion, while their rival neighbour has almost sunk into oblivion; the general fate of nations, and too often exemplified in families, as well as in kingdoms. On arriving at Liege, Lady de Clifford found it so early that she proposed proceeding to Chaud Fontaine, a small watering-place, famous for its hot baths, two miles from Liege. This was agreed to immediately by Hugh, to whom La Comtesse Corbinelli had strongly recommended their passing a day or two there. The situation is pretty, and the baths are delightful, but Lady de Clifford found the hotel so uncomfortable and wretched, and Hugh was so discontented with the indifferent fare, that they passed only one night there, and proceeded to Spa. Here again I must call my reader's attention to the beautiful scenery that presents itself to the eye of the traveller; which (and the new road lately made shows it to the greatest advantage) is most striking and romantic, from the height of the hills, which are in some places steep and rugged, with their sides clothed with copse-

wood and trees, and the most luxuriant herbage towards their bases, whilst now and then a clear rippling stream is seen to force its way from the side of the hill, and to fall into the river, that intersects the winds through the whole of the valley that leads to Spa. The river occasionally forms romantic cascades, which, seen at a distance, are most picturesque, as the imagination then decks them with beauties, which, if too nearly approached, you find they do not possess in reality. The river is extremely clear and rapid in its course, and like most of the mountain streams in that neighbourhood, has its progress constantly interrupted by large rocks and stones, which have fallen from the hills above, while on those hills are often seen huge pieces of rock, forcing themselves into notice, and peeping out from among the low copse-wood with which they are surrounded. This scenery was so new, and so much more romantic than any Rosa had yet seen, that she was delighted. The hill and dale, green meadows and hop-grounds, of her native Kent, which she used to think so beautiful, how much did they lose by the comparison. On passing Theux, a spot that must be well known to those who have visited the country I am describing, you come at once on the river which you have hitherto only partially seen, and occasionally passed, and which now winds by the side of the road the whole of the way, until you enter the town of Spa: this adds to the extreme beauty of the landscape, as you occasionally pass green fields sloping down to the river, or hills covered with thick wood, which overhang its banks. Few (if I am to judge of the feelings of others by my own) can pass this lovely scenery without being as enthusiastic as myself; and I am certain those who have seen it will acknowledge that I have but indifferently done justice to it. The high expectations which, from the beauty of the surrounding country, Rosa had formed of Spa, were cruelly disappointed on their first arrival. A collection of large red brick houses, intermingled with low, mean, ill-built ones of the same description, ill accorded with the fanciful ideas she had formed of the place previous to seeing it. Her mother and brother were equally disappointed. The town was empty, which it generally is in the early part of the season, and struck them as being most gloomy. But as health was the object, they determined to be satisfied, trusting it would become more cheerful as the place filled, and, after remaining two days at the hotel, Hugh succeeded in finding them comfortable apartments at the Hotel de Scissions, close to the Poulon.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

The following beautiful lines are from the pen of

L. E. L.

Our sky has lost another star,
The earth has claimed its own,
And into dread eternity
A glorious one is gone.
He who could give departing things
So much of light and breath,
He is himself o'er with the past—
Gone forth from life to death.

It is a most unblest grave
That has no mourner near;
The neatest turf the wild flowers hide
Has some familiar tear.
But kindred sorrow is forgot
Amid the general gloom;
Grief is religion felt for him
Whose temple is his tomb.

Thou of the future and the past,
How shall we honour thee?
Shall we build up a pyramid
Amid the pathless sea?
Shall we bring red gold from the east,
And marble from the west,
And carved prophesy, that the fane
Be worthy of its guest?

Or shall we seek thy native land,
And chose some ancient hill,
To be thy statue, finely wrought
With all the sculptor's skill?
Methinks, as there are common signs
To every common wo,
That we should do some mighty things
To mark who lies below.

But this is folly: thou need'st not
The sculpture of the shrine;
The heart is the sole monument
For memories like thine.
The pyramids in Egypt rose
To mark some monarch's fame;
Imperishable in the tomb,
But what's the founder's name?

Small need for tribute unto thee,
To let the fancy roam—
To thee, who has in many a heart
An altar and a home:
Each little bookshelf where thy works
Are carefully enshrined,
There is thy trophy, there is left
Thy heritage of mind.

How many such delightful hours
Rise on our sadden'd mood
When we have owed to thee and thine
The charm of solitude!
How eagerly we caught the book!
How earnestly we read!
How actual seemed the living scenes
Thy vivid colours spread!

And not to one dominion bound
Has been thy varied power;
In many a distant scene enjoyed—
In many a distant hour.
In childhood turning from his play,
In manhood, youth, and age,
All bent beneath the enchanter's wand,
All owned that spell—thy page.

Read by the glimmering firelight,
In the greenwood alone,
Amid the gathered circle—who
But hath thy magic known!

Laid in the cottage window-seat,
Fanned by the open air,
Left by the palette and the deek,
Thou hast thy readers there.

Actual as friends we know and love,
The beings of thy mind
Are, like events of real life.

In memory enshrined:
We seem as if we heard their voice,
As if we knew their face—
Familiar with their inward thoughts,
Their beauty and their grace.

As if bound on a pilgrimage,
We visit now thy shore,
Haunted by all which thou hast gleaned
From the old days of yore.
We feel in every hill and heath
Romance which thou hast flung;
We say, 'I was here the poet dwelt,
'Twas there of which he sung.

Remembering thee, we half forgot
How vainly this is said?
There seemed so much of life in thee,
We cannot think thee dead.
Dead! dead! when there is on this earth
Such waste of worthless breath;
There should have gone a thousand lives
To ransom thee from death!

Now out on it! to hear them speak
Their idle words and vain
As if it were a common loss
For nature to sustain.

It is an awful vacancy
A great man leaves behind,
And solemnly should sorrow fall
Upon bereaved mankind.

We have too little gratitude
Within the selfish heart,
Else with what anguish should we see
The great and good depart!
Methinks our dark and sinful earth
Might dread an evil day,
When Heaven, in pity or in wrath,
Calls its beloved away.

A fear and awe are on my soul,
To look upon the tomb,
And think of who are sleeping laid
Within its midnight gloom.
What glorious ones are gone!—thus fight
Doth vanish from our spheres:
Out on the vanity of words!
Peace now, for thoughts and tears!

THE FIRST DEBT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

MAURICE was a young man who had a thousand times stood on the brink of the abyss, but had never been engulfed. The idol of the saloons, where his opinion was law, Maurice, the penniless Maurice, was, even in this money-hunting age, the admiration of all the women, and the envy of all the men. But this fortune was too good to last. Destiny had in store for him some bitter moments, and when misfortune pressed heavily upon him, he yielded to their force. One day, after an animated conversation with a young lady, who had come a hundred miles to see him for two days only; she took a pocket-pistol from under his pillow, and placing it against his forehead, exclaimed, 'Tis exactly the length! I have a strange inclination. Remember, sir, if ever you betray me, you shall die by this.' Maurice was a liberal, and yet, although a liberal, he was admitted to all the aristocratic assemblies in the Faubourg St. Germain. There was but one house where he did not visit. He waltzed twice with a rich widow, who was intimate with the family, and the next day received the following note:—

'Madame de Maunaire presents her compliments to Monsieur Maurice St. Georges, and will be happy to see him on Monday evening, 20th January, 1829.'

This note was in a lady's hand writing, upon gilt-edged paper, and exhaled all the perfumes of Arabia. At any other time, our liberal would perchance have noticed this remarkable attention, but at the present moment his mind was otherwise occupied. He had just parted with his mistress, who was obliged to return into the country. He did not observe that Madame de Maunaire had been a very fine woman, he merely thought that she was so no longer. As to her character we may deduce it from this history. Maurice finished by accommodating himself to the lady, and in a short time became an indispensable guest. One stormy evening he was sitting side by side with Madame de Maunaire. The weather was dreadful, one of those wintry nights when home seems doubly delightful. The baroness's drawing room was furnished with every thing that art could supply. The thick and noiseless carpet, the velvet cushions, the well-stuffed ottoman, and the tremulous and flickering light of the or-molu lamp, all conspired to produce in the youth, that state of mind and body so favourable to all the softer emotions of our souls. But amidst all this splendour, all this comfort, Maurice thought not of himself, not of the baroness, but of Elvira, of his own Elvira, whom he loved so dearly, and regretted sincerely. Suddenly the storm, the rain, the fire, and the remembrance of