

LITERATURE, &c.

FROM BELL'S MY OLD PORTFOLIO.

FRUIT IN THEIR SEASONS,
STRAWBERRIES AND CREAM.

Away with thee, blithe April! away with thee into the green church-yard of the past! Thou art of those whom we love, yet can part from with scarce a sigh! Thou art the young Aurora of the year hastening to tell of brighter hours, and even as thy soft voice whispers of their coming, they steal upon us, and thou art forgotten in their effulgence. Away with thee, bright May! I am an angler, and I love thy glancing streams winding down the hills, where not a lingering snow-breeze dares to tempt the brightness of thy skies! I am an angler, and I owe thee, sweet May! many an hour's forgetfulness of all the world—many a waking dream and glorious vision, wherein hope was truth, and life eternity! Away with thee, deceiver. June, unequalled June, is blazing full in the meridian. See how the old ancestral woods extend in gladness their umbrageous arms! See, how the golden flowers, in countless millions, spring up with a sudden impulse of life and joy on every green bank, and in each quiet sequestered glade! Hark! the music of universal nature rings through the air! There is a voice in every fleecy cloud—an unseen spirit of melody in every passing zephyr. The lakes, the rivers, and the seas, lo! they are liquid light! Saw you that unforgotten sunset—those purple gleams upon the mountain—those blessed vistas opening into the far west! Then the soft soothing of the twilight hour—when the bee is asleep in his honied cell, and the imperial butterfly rests on the bosom of the dew-besprinkled rose—when not a sound steals on the rapt ear but the beating of the sleepless heart, exquisitely awake to a consciousness of its own felicity! Hail to thee, loveliest June! Thy smile awaited me at my birth; may it rest upon me at the hour of death—may it cast its sunshine into my grave as my coffin descends into the earth, and the few who loved me look upon it for the last time!

The fruits—juicy, rufescent, and luscious—are swelling into ripeness. I think not of the fruits of more tropical climates, I speak only of those of my own country. I take no heed of Italy with its grapes! I care not for Spain with its oranges! I am most profoundly indifferent towards Turkey and Asia with their olives and citrons!—I write only for the inhabitants of Great-Britain and Ireland; and if they, or merely some millions of the select few, will read me with attention, I shall consider myself sufficiently rewarded. I was a child once;—reader! so were you. Do you recollect the day and the hour when the soul exciting influence of strawberries and cream first flashed on your awakened mind, and you felt that life had not been given you in vain? I was just seven years old—my previous existence is a blank in my memory—when I first spent a June in the country. It was then that I started into life. In the blind ignorance of infancy, I may at some earlier period have swallowed a few red pulpy balls, presented to me on a blue plate by an aunt or grandmother, and by them denominated 'strawberries,'—but never, never till my seventh year was I aware how large a proportion of human happiness may be comprised in the melting luxuriance of one mouthful! Sugar, cream, and strawberries! Epicurean compound of unimaginable ecstasy! Trinity of excellence! producing the only harmonious whole known to me in all the annals of taste! The fresh vigour of my youthful palate may have yielded somewhat to the deadening effect of time, but the glorious remembrance of those profound emotions, excited by my first intoxicating feast on strawberries and cream, is worth every other enjoyment that now floats down 'life's dull stream.' Look for a moment at yonder rosy group of smiling prattlers. I love 'he rogues for the enlarged and animated countenances with which they gaze upon the red spoils before them. Never speak to me of gluttony. It is a natural and a noble appetite, redolent of health and happiness, and I honour it. There is genius in the breathing expression of those parted lips which, now that the good dame is about to commence her imperial division, seem to anticipate, in a delightful agony of expectation, the fullness of the coming joy. Observe with how much vigour that youthful Homer grasps his silver spoon! Did you suppose that those rose bud lips could have admitted so vast a mouthful? Yet down they go—the innocent strawberries—down that juvenile œsophagus, and as Shakspeare would express it, 'leave not a wreck behind!' Turn your gaze on that Sappho—what unknown quantities of cream and sugar the little cherub consumes! 'Cold on the stomach!' Phoo! The idea is worthy of a female septuagenarian, doomed to the horrors of perpetual celibacy. If she speak from experience, in heaven's name give her a glass of brandy, and let her work out her miserable existence in fear and trembling. If there be a merrier party of bon-

vivants at this moment in Christendom, may I never enter a garden again! True it is, and of verity, that at this very moment, there are prime ministers sitting down to cabinet dinners, and seeing in every guest another step up the ladder of ambition; at this very moment the professional epicure is hanging over a board covered with all that is *recherche* in the annals of gastronomy; at this very moment the bride of yesternight takes her place of honour, for the first time, at the table of her rich and titled husband. But there are traitors at the statesman's banquet;—there is poison and disease within the silver dishes of the epicure;—there are silent but sad memories of days past away for ever, strewed like withered flowers round the heart of the young bride! In short, there is misery every where save in the immediate presence of that living garland of happy children. Yet the dark arrow is on the wing—the barb hath already singled out its victim, and I see it advancing through the dimness of futurity. In a few months the golden tresses of that bright eyed boy will fall in lank and matted strings over a cold damp brow. He is one of many; but he is not loved the less by his own fond parents. Long nights will they watch by his feverish couch, and clasp his little burning hands in theirs; and gaze with full hearts—too full for speech—upon the fading lustre of his face. Yet will his young manly spirit still struggle against the grasp of pain. With the pure and confiding affection of childhood, he will throw himself into his father's arms, and look up into his face, and smile, and prattle cheerfully of his innocent hopes and pleasures. One morning the sun will shine through his curtains, but his eyelids will remain unclosed; the birds, whose glad carols waked him to life and merriment, will sing unheeded. His pale cheek moves not on his pillow—his feeble hand is stretched unconscious by his side. Not a sound is in the darkened room but the frequent sobbing of his almost broken-hearted mother, and the soft steps of his little rosy-faced brothers and sisters, who, with fingers pressed on their lips, steal to his bed, and gaze, for the first time, on death, and wonder why Willy, who was the favourite of them all, should thus be taken away from them. A few days more, and they will lay him in the earth, and the unseen power of decomposition seizes greedily on his prey. Few knew the happy boy, and none loved him but his parents; the temporary blank in their affections is soon filled up by the survivors, and ere a year elapses, his merry smile and voice of gladness live but faintly in the memory. By the busy world his existence was unknown, and his absence is unfelt; the wonder rather is—not that he is now no more, but that he should have ever been. And what art thou, young spirit of delight? Hast thou passed away like a foam bell on the waters?—or shall we meet with thee again wandering in the brightness of yonder golden planet.

On the whole, I am not sure that strawberries ought to be eaten when any one is with you. Although your companion be the dearest friend you have on earth, his presence is apt to generate a feeling of restraint, a consciousness that your attention is divided, a diffidence about betraying the unfathomable depth of your love for the fruit before you, a lurking uneasiness lest he should eat faster than yourself, or appropriate an undue share of the delicious cream; and this state of mind is invariably the prelude to a strong, though undivulged desire that the best friend you have in the world were at any distant part of the globe he might happen to have a liking for—Kamskatka or the South Sea Islands. But oh! the bliss of solitary fruition, when there is none to interrupt you—none to compete with you—none to express stupid amazement at the extent of your god-like appetite, or to bring back your thoughts, by some silly and obtrusive remark, to the vulgar affairs of an unsubstantial world. Behold! the milky nectar is crimsoned by the roseate fruit! What a flavour! and there is not another human being near to intrude upon the sacred intensity of your joy! Painter—poet—philosopher—is not the *ta kalon* (Gr.) consecrated there? Happiness divided into equal proportions by that silver spoon, glides gloriously down the throat!

'O! mortal man, who liveth here by toil'
eat strawberries and cream! Eat, for June cometh but once a year! eat, for there is yet misery in store for thee! eat, for thy days are numbered! eat, as if thou wert eating immortal life! eat, eat, though thy next mouthful terminate in apoplexy!

My dream of strawberries hath passed away! The little red rotundities have been gathered from the surface of the globe, and man's insatiate maw has devoured them all! New hopes may arise, and new sources of pleasure may, perhaps, be discovered; the yellow gooseberry may glitter like an amber bead upon the bending branches—the ruby cherry may be plucked from the living bough, and its sunny side bruised into nectar by the willing teeth—the apple, tinted with the vermilion bloom of maiden beauty, may woo the eye, and tempt the silver knife—the golden pear, melting

into lusciousness, soft as the lip, and sweet as the breath of her thou lovest most, may win for a time thy heart's idolatry—the velvet peach or downy apricot, may lull thee into brief forgetfulness of all terrestrial wo—the purple plum, or sun-beam coloured *magnum bonum*, may waft thy soul to heaven—or, last of all, thy hot-house grapes, glowing in their bursting richness, may carry thee back to the world's prime, to the faun and dryad-haunted groves of Arcady, and lap thee in an elysium of poetry and music—but still the remembrance of thy first love will be strong in thy heart. Pamper thy noble nature as thou wilt, with all the luxuries that summer yields, never, O! never will the innermost recesses of thy soul, cease to be inhabited by an immortal reminiscence of 'Strawberries and Cream!'

TRIFLES.

"TRIFLES are not trifles when they please," is a sentence very common in the mouths of the wise-acres of the present day; so, if the trifling ebullitions of our fancy be not satisfactory, it is no fault of ours. The world has, of late, had no reason to complain of a lack of serious matter; a little trifling may, perhaps, have the effect of rousing it from the somnolent affections of the more substantial food on which it is in the habit of subsisting.

From what, we would ask, do one half of the people in the world draw the largest share of enjoyment, from philosophy, the mathematics, science, or the learning of the schools? No, from trifles. Your trifler is the only happy being; he abstracts his mind from all that is heavy and painful, and seizes with avidity upon all the delusive, fleeting novelties that rise in his path; the excitement is strong so long as it lasts, and no effort of memory is requisite to keep it up; for, should the bubble burst in his grasp, no matter, he can run after another; he cries vive la bagatelle! and he is happy.

Let us take a peep at the ball-room, the native atmosphere of trifling and triflers. Where would a philanthropist wish to find a set of more beautified-looking faces than these. Mark, how the eyes of the matron, as well as the youthful sparkle with the pleasure which they are pursuing; see, how they bound and caper, light as furies, threading their mazy way, with spirits so elevated that they scarcely seem to feel the floor under them. Look at that beautiful young creature, with brow so fair, and open, and an eye pure and clear as the bright cerulean, which speaks of deeper things hidden in that fair bosom, of treasured thoughts, which, though sacred to herself alone, are profound; and fervent, and holy as the whisperings of angels. Her soul is lofty; and her ideas, perchance, are ever and anon wandering to him who has just her partner in the dance; yet, for all this, her happiness is visible in the celestial smile which illuminates her lovely countenance. Nor does the more staid, matronly female opposite less enjoy the glee of the moment, though the cares of years have wrinkled her forehead and blanched her cheek, and, mayhap, rendered her all unused to the trifling mood; yet does her meek eye gleam with, of late, unwonted lustre, as the feelings of her girlish days come over her awakened mind. And now she glances to the next set, and contemplates, with the fond eye of maternal affection, the graceful figure of her son, as, with playful ease, he winds his sweet sylph-like, little partner through a thousand convolving evolutions. Yon gray-haired beau does not seem amongst the least pleased of the assembly; his smiling red face, and formally courteous manners, speak of the still gallant and jolly old bachelor of the old school. He enjoys the remembrance of former days, his conquests and his love affairs; and, though his lady-killing bow be rather worn out, yet he still delights to fight his battles o'er again.

'Do shoulder his crutch, and show how fields were won.'
And what is a quadrille, after all? Ask yon sallow, vinegar-faced individual who sits in the corner, and looks upon the joyous assembly with a jaundiced eye of bitter disdain. Ask him, and he will tell you, that it is a trifle too childish for his notice.

Well, shall we adjourn with the company to the room where the PETIT SOUPE is laid out? It looks elegant;—tasteful; and what are its ornaments? More elegant trifles. "Mr Little, shall I trouble you for a small portion of trifle?" Mr Little does not catch the precise meaning of the lady. "I am sorry to say, madam, that there is no tripe on the table." Hear the loud laugh, loud as good breeding will allow, and don't omit to mark the grave, demure face of Mr Sententious, who hates trifles.

Quick pass we to a different scene, the domestic circle of Mr. Hopeful and his charming family. Imagine the small, neat, well-furnished, little parlour, the blazing fire, and the little ET CERERAS which compose the comfortable. The sofa is drawn up opposite the chimney, and, at one end of it, is placed the father, with his little cherub girl upon his knee, and, at the other end sits his happy spouse, with one arm, thrown over her little, fat, rosey-cheeked son, whose head rests upon her shoulder. Two others, a boy, and a girl, of more advanced age, are seated on each side. The father has finished his daily avocations, and the young Hopefuls have all said their tasks. "Come, Thomas," says the former, "have you no new conundrums for us this evening?" "Yes father; why is a Hebrew in a fever like a diamond?" "Because—stop Thomas till I guess; because—I'll give it up." "Because he is a Jew-ill!" "Ha! ha! ha! that's very good, Thomas. Now I'll puzzle you with a charade that papa is made. Shall I, father? Well,

"Within the bosom of the mother earth
You'll find my first, for there it has its birth;
Those who have riches for my second thirst.
Search for my second where you find my first.
My whole is found in Scotia's warlike land,
Resistless in the tartan'd chieftain's hand.
"Guess that; you can't. Well, the first is CLAY; the second, MORE; for every one who has riches would like to have more, and the whole is CLAYMORE."

These are trifles, but such trifles are the component parts of happiness. The sage, the politician, and the pedantic scholar may, while pursuing their laborious researches, turn up their learned noses in contempt, yet, I will maintain, that your true trifler is the only man who has his due share of pleasures in this world.

And what, after all; are those pursuits which create such a bustle in this great globe of ours? They are trifles. When Delo-