

LITERATURE, &c.

MARTIN WERNER.

A SKETCH.

THE shades of evening were beginning to creep darkly over the surrounding objects, ere Martin Werner laid down his brushes and palette. His easel was placed so as to catch every ray of light that fell from the solitary window that illuminated the room in which he sat. He had been working all the day to finish his picture, and it was with a heavy sigh that he now desisted. But his sigh was not one of despair, for his nature was sanguine, and there was a buoyancy in his soul that had never yet deserted him. This might have resulted from the consciousness of a genius that must either at the present or a future time, find its reward in the applause of thousands; or it might be only the light-heartedness of youth and health. But certainly, to look at himself and his abode, most persons would have said that Martin Werner had great cause for melancholy. The apartment was large and cold, but he consoled himself by saying that he could not complain of having no room to woe in; and though the window would not open to admit air as well as the yellowish light by which the painter worked, yet draughts poured in from every direction, which, he said, kept up a constant circulation of fresh air. No fire cast a cheerful glow over the desolate region, and the corner opposite the empty grate was occupied by a lowly bed, beside which stood a large chest, containing the painter's wardrobe. Martin Werner had laid aside his colors, and was carefully searching for something that lay at the bottom of his chest. At length he dragged forth the object, and proceeded to the window to examine its contents. It was a leathern purse, and from it he drew—carefully wrapped in a paper to preserve its lustre—a shining coin. In a happier hour he had been attracted by its brightness, and had determined never to part with it. But now the hand of stern necessity was held forth; he had tasted no food all day. He gazed upon it, and for a moment a tear dimmed his eye; for it recalled distinctly his mother, in her distant home; his brothers, tossing on the fickle and deceitful waves; and his sisters, even now perhaps, thinking how their brother's pictures would be admired and gazed at in the great city. The whole course of his life passed as in a dream before him. Again he was at the cottage home which had sheltered his infancy; again he heard the shouts of the happy urchins who had been his playmates; again he wandered from them, and stood alone with nature—the blue vault above and the lovely earth beneath; he heard the gurgling of the thousand streamlets—the roar of the distant ocean—the songs of the wild birds—and high overhead the lark, to him the sweetest songster of them all, sending forth its notes, distinct and clear, while the straining eye could scarce perceive the motion of its fluttering wings. All the haunts of his boyhood passed like the scenes of a magic lantern before him; and with them the train of happy associations that were connected with each individual spot.

'I cannot part with it,' he said unconsciously aloud surely such a dream of happiness is worth starving for. Besides, my picture will be finished to-morrow, and I can wait till then.'

With this heroic resolution he replaced his treasure; and folding his arms, he stood at the window whistling one of the little plaintive airs of his country. Group on group of chimneys, of all shapes and sizes, formed the most prominent feature in the landscape before him; and houses with flat roofs and steep roofs, a strange heterogeneous mass of buildings, through which the eye in vain wandered for some pleasing object on which to rest. Among them however our artist's imagination went to work. Lofty domes and stately palaces arose at the waving of the magic wand of his fancy—forms of beauty and loveliness, wandering amid gardens of luxury and delight, while angel messengers bore peace and happiness to their solitude. From these visions of bliss he turned to the destruction of worlds and empires, and the awful depths of the infernal regions—the gigantic billows overhanging the shuddering group of devoted wretches collected on a rock during the great deluge, or the conflagration of the great cities, doomed by the will of Heaven to destruction.

Again his dreams were painfully interrupted by the pangs of hunger; he thought that sleep might lull him into insensibility to them, and stretched himself on his bed. But sleep came not; and after tossing about for some time, he started up and sought through several streets the shop of a baker. One he at last espied, and hastily entered. The shopkeeper cast a suspicious eye upon his customer, for his clothes were not so new as they had been, and were besides covered with divers spots and patches of paint, which did not by any means add to the gentility of his appearance. Our artist demanded a loaf, in payment of which he laid down his last bright coin. The baker took it, scruti-

nized it, turned it over and over, then dashed it violently against the board, and declared it a counterfeit. 'A counterfeit!' exclaimed the painter dismally. But fearing that his tone and look might betray his circumstances, he added carelessly, at the same time laying down the coveted loaf, 'well it is of no consequence; I don't happen to have another with me now, good night, sir.'

Affecting an independent swagger, he left the shop and hastened down the street; but, had he looked back, he would have seen the sharp face of the baker peering after him, as he muttered to himself, 'You don't happen to have any more with you now, sir. Ay, ay, you're a pretty scamp, I warrant you; and I shall look twice at your money if ever you come to my shop again.'

Martin Werner hastened home. Till that hour he had not known absolute want, and even his buoyant spirits threatened to desert him at the approach of grim penury. Once more he ransacked his chest, for in one corner he remembered to have seen a crust. He found it; it was mouldy and covered with dust; but he shook that off, and ate it with a keen relish; then got into bed, and slept more soundly than he who has supped upon all the delicacies that wealth could procure.

The morning sun was shining brightly upon him through the window, when he awoke. He leaped from his bed, exclaiming, as he hastily dressed himself, 'the crisis of my adversity is past! I have climbed the steep hill, and shall now descend to the fair, sunny vale, on the other side. The sun shines gaily on my morning's work; I will take it an omen—a prognostic of brighter days to come!'

Under these favourable auspices he finished his picture. It was sold, not certainly for its full value as a work of art, but for more than the young and unknown artist had ventured to hope. Success did follow. Each succeeding production of his genius brought fresh fame and profit to the painter; and in after years, when he became the favoured of kings and princes, when his pictures were admired by nations, and purchased by governments, he thought with mingled feeling of pleasure and pain, of the mouldy crust which he had so contentedly eaten, in his lonely and desolate garret.

FROM 'POEMS CHIEFLY RELIGIOUS,' BY THE REV. H. F. LYTE, M. A.)

THE EVENING HOUR.

SWEET evening hour! sweet evening hour!
That calms the air, and shuts the flower;
That brings the wild bee to its nest,
The infant to its mother's breast.

Sweet hour! that bids the labourer cease;
That gives the weary team release,
And leads them home, and crowns them there
With rest and shelter, food and care.

O! season of soft sounds and hues,
Of twilight walks among the dews,
Of feelings calm, and converse sweet,
And thoughts too shadowy to repeat!

Yes, lovely hour! thou art the time
When feelings flow, and wishes climb;
When timid souls begin to dare,
And God receives and answers prayer.

Then trembling through the dewy skies
Look out the stars, like thoughtful eyes
Of angels, calm reclining there,
And gazing on his world of care.

Sweet hour! for heavenly musing made—
When Isaac walked and Daniel prayed;
When Abraham's offering God did own;
And Jesus loved to be alone.

FROM SKETCHES OF HISTORY, LIFE AND MANNERS IN THE WEST, BY JAMES HALL.

AN INCIDENT ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

In the spring of 1787, a barge belonging to Mr Beausoliel had started from New Orleans, richly laden with merchandize, for St. Louis. As she approached the Cottonwood creek, a breeze sprung up and bore her swiftly by. This the robbers perceived and immediately despatched a company of men up the river for the purpose of heading. The manœuvre was effected in the course of two days, at an island, which has since been called Beausoliel's island. The barge had just put ashore—the robbers boarded, and ordered the crew to return down. The men were disarmed, guards were stationed in every part of the vessel, and she was soon under way. Mr Beausoliel gave himself up to despair. He had spent all he possessed in the purchase of the barge and its cargo, and now that he was to be deprived of them all, he was in agony. This vessel would have shared the fate of many others that had preceded it, but for the heroic daring of a negro, who was one of the crew. Cacasotte, the negro, was a man rather under the ordinary height, very slender in person, but of uncommon strength and activity. The colour of his skin and curl of his hair, alone told that he was a negro, for the peculiar characteristics of his race had given place in

him, to what may be termed beauty. His forehead was finely mouldered, his eyes snail and sparkling as those of a serpent, his nose aquiline, his lips of a proper thickness; in fact, the whole appearance of the man, joined to his own character for shrewdness and courage, seemed to indicate, that, under better circumstances, he might have shone conspicuous in the history of nations. Cacasotte, as soon as the robbers had taken possession of the barge, began to make every demonstration of uncontrollable joy. He danced, sang, laughed, and soon induced his captors to believe that they had liberated him from irksome slavery, and that his actions were the ebullitions of pleasure. His constant attentions to their smallest wants and wishes, too, won their confidence, and whilst they kept a watchful eye on the other prisoners, they permitted him to roam through the vessel unmolested and unwatched. This was the state of things the negro desired; he seized the first opportunity to speak to Mr Beausoliel, and beg permission to rid him of the dangerous intruders. He laid his plan before his master, who, after a good deal of hesitation, acceded to it. Cacasotte then spoke to two of the crew, likewise negroes, and engaged them in the conspiracy. Cacasotte was cooke, and it was agreed between him and his fellow conspirators, that the signal for dinner should be the signal for action. The hour of dinner at length arrived. The robbers assembled in considerable numbers on the deck, and stationed themselves at the bow and stern, and along the sides, to prevent any rising of the men. Cacasotte went among them with the most unconcerned look and demeanour imaginable. As soon as he perceived that his comrades had taken the stations he had assigned them, he took his position at the bow of the boat, near one of the robbers, a stout, herculean man, who was armed cap-a-pie. Every thing being arranged to his satisfaction, Cacasotte gave the preconcerted signal, and immediately the robber near him was struggling in the waters. With the speed of lightning, he went from one robber to another, and in less than three minutes he had thrown fourteen of them overboard. Then seizing an oar, he struck on the head those who attempted to save themselves by grappling the running boards, then shot with the muskets that had been dropped on deck, those who swam away. In the mean time, the other conspirators were not idle, but did almost as much execution as their leader. The deck was soon cleared, and the robbers that remained below were too few in number to offer any resistance.

Having got rid of his troublesome visitors Mr Beausoliel deemed it prudent to return to New Orleans. This he accordingly did, taking care when he arrived near the Cottonwood creek to keep the opposite side of the river. He reached New Orleans, and gave an account of his capture and liberation to the governor, who thereupon issued an order, that the boats bound to St. Louis in the following spring, should all go in company, to afford mutual assistance in case of necessity. Spring came, and ten keel boats, each provided with swivels, and their respective crews well armed, took their departure from New Orleans, determined, if possible, to destroy the nest of robbers. The boats were rowed to shore in a line, and those appointed for that purpose, landed and began to search the island in quest of the robbers, but in vain! They had disappeared. Three or four flat boats were found in a bend of the creek, laden with all kinds of valuable merchandize—the fruits of their depredations. A low hut was discovered—the dwelling of the robbers—in which were stored away numerous cases of guns, destined for the fur trade, ammunition and provisions of all kinds. The greater part of these things were put on board the boats and restored to their respective owners at St. Louis.

This proceeding had the effect of dispersing the robbers, for they were never after heard of. The arrival of ten barges together at St. Louis, was an unusual spectacle, and the year 1788 has ever since been called the year of the ten boats.

CHOICE OF A WIFE

A beautiful young woman, with a sublime fortune, is not to be sneezed at in the nuptial sheets—unless it be to give the dear creature an opportunity of saying 'God bless you!' An ugly old woman, on the other hand, in the stocks, isto be scunnered at, in a similar predicament, were it but to induce you to allow her separate maintenance, and all the privieges of a bachelor. The world knows we are engaged; but, were we offered our choice of two lovely beings—both beautiful—but the one, sole child of an eminent banker, and the other, the last of a second series of daughters raised, as the Americans say,—not forced,—from the time-honoured bed of a country gentleman impatient of widowhood, whose ancestors had killed their own mutton from time immemorial, we should, unless her hair was very red indeed, take unto our bosom the dowierless damsel, were it only for the pure delight of seeing her, at an expense, 'taking off her marriage clothes,' or, in other words, providing herself with a tasteful *trousseau*. In short, we would take her with rapture into our arms, though she had just ashift to her back, and one pair of elastic garters! Like the moon, without a cloud—or, like the moon veiled in clouds—her beauty would thus be ours, too, inasmuch as we should be the sin that illuminated the lovely orb. Think, but for a moment, of your bride buying, out of her own dower, you being farthingless, and receiving discount for ready money, not only for the four-post bed, but all the rest of the furniture—nay, the very house to which you bring her home, and of which, with a face of the most brazen assurance, you tell her to consider herself the mistress—she having, considerably, bought up the ground rent, and introduced gas! The degradation of never being permitted, while you breathe, to put on or to take off your breeches, without the consciousness that she paid for them, (and, consequently is entitled to wear them, *ad libitum*.) whether velvet or fustian—so inexorable is the law of the association of ideas. Far rather, so help us Heaven, would we wear kilts till we dropped into the grave. *Blackwood's Magazine.*