

LITERATURE, &c.

Spirit of the Annuals for 1834.

FROM THE LONDON SPECTATOR.

THE parent of the Annuals, the *Forget Me Not*, is known by the red silk binding, more fragile, but perhaps more beautiful, than the enduring morocco of its greater competitors. The modest house of the preface tells us that this is the twelfth year of its appearance; but was it a prudent boast. What spinster beyond her teens could own to the possession of a complete series, with such a statement meeting one plump in the very first line? And yet what recollections does the statement call up! How many fair eyes, that hailed the then splendid novelty with wonder and delight, are now sealed in death, or dim with weeping over the death of the giver! How many presentation copies of the earlier volumes are treasured up as precious memorials of presenters, now scattered over the various regions of the earth, and whose return is distant or doubtful! Nay, where the course of love or affection has run smooth, in twelve years the child has grown into womanhood; the girl or woman into the happy wife, or, into the portly matron, mother and manager of a large family.

The literature of the *Forget Me Not* maintains its decent reputation: the workmanship is sustained throughout, and all the papers are passable. The numerous authors are well known in the world of Annual literature; though several—as Mrs. Gore, Mr. T. K. Hervey, and the Honorable Mrs. Norton—figure for the first time in Mr. Ackermann's pages. We, however, are not swayed by names; and we select our extract from the composition of the lesser stars. It is from a tale by Mr. Samuel Ferguson, called 'The Bridge of Tenachelle.' The country is Ireland; the story takes place during the days of the *Pale*; and the scene we select is one of pursuit and escape.

'We are pursued then, she cried, turning deadly pale; and the Earl's countenance for a moment bespoke hesitation whether to stop and support her at all hazards, or still to urge her on. 'We are pursued,' she cried, 'I know it, and we must be overtaken. Oh, leave me, Gerald! leave me and save thyself!' The Earl said not one word, but shook up her palfrey's head once more, and drawing his dagger goaded him with its point till the blood sprang.

'Oh, my poor Sylvio! was all that the terrified girl could say, as, stung from pain and reeling from weakness, the creature put forth its last and most desperate efforts.

They had struggled on for another minute, and were now topping the last eminence between them and the river, when a shout rung out of the woods behind. The lady shrieked, the Earl stuck the steel deeper into her palfrey's shoulder, and, stooping to his own saddle bow, held him up with his left hand, bending to the laborious task till his head was sunk between the horses' necks. 'Anna! he cried, 'I can see nothing for Sylvio's mane. Look out between the trees, and tell me if thou seest my men on the hill of Clemgauine.'

'I see,' replied the lady, 'the whole valley flooded from side to side, and the trees like islands in the water.'

'But my men, Anna? my men? look out beyond the bridge.'

'The bridge is a black stripe upon the flood: I cannot see the arches.'

'But, beyond the bridge,' he cried, in the intervals of his exertion, now becoming every moment more and more arduous; for the spent palfrey was only kept from falling by the sheer strength of his arm, 'beyond the bridge beside the pollard elm—my ten men—are they not there?'

'Alas! no my Lord, I cannot see them. But Mother of Mercies!' she shuddered, looking around, 'I see them now behind us! Another shout of mingled voices execrating and exulting, sounded from the valley as she spoke.

The Earl struck his brow with his gauntleted hand, yielding for the first time to his excess of grief and anguish; for he had raised his head, and had seen all along the opposite hills, the bare, unbroken solitude, that afforded neither hope of help nor means of escape. Yet he girded himself up for a last effort: he drew his horse close to the palfrey's side, and, 'Dear Anna,' he said, 'cast thine arms now round my neck, and let me lift thee on before me; black Memnon will bear us both like the wind—nay dally not, for the sensitive girl shrank for a moment from the proposal; 'remember, thy promise in the chapel on the rock,' and he pressed his arm round her waist, and at one effort lifted her from the saddle; while she, blushing deeply, yet yielding to the imperative necessity of the moment, clasped her arms round his neck, and aided in drawing herself up upon the black charger's shoulder. The palfrey, the moment it lost the supporting hand of the Earl, staggered forward, and, though relieved

of its burden, fell headlong to the ground. The pursuers were now so near that they could see plainly what had been done, and their cries expressed the measure of their rage and disappointment; for the strong war-horse although doubly burdened, yet thundered down the hill at a pace that promised to keep his start; and hope once more revived in the fainting hearts of the Earl and the lady.

'No, thanks to Heaven!' he cried, as he found the powerful charger's retching out under them, with renewed vigour, 'thank Heaven that struck down the slow paced loiterer in this good time! Now, Memnon, bear us! but over yonder hill, and earn a stall of carved oak and a rack of silver! Ah, the good steed! thou shalt feed him from thine own white hands yet, lady, in the courts of Castle Ley! Look back now, love, Anna, and tell me what they do behind.'

The lady raised her head from his shoulder, and cast a glance along the road they had traversed. 'I see them plying whip and spur,' she said, 'but they are not gaining on us; Red Raymond rides foremost, and Owen and the three rangers; I know them all: but, oh, Mary Mother, shield me! I see my father and Sir Robert Verdon: oh, speed thee, good horse, speed!' and she hid her face again upon his breast, and they descended the hill which overhung the barrow.

The old channel of the river was no longer visible; the flood had overspread its banks, and far across the flat howes on the opposite side swept along in a brown, eddying, and rapid deluge. The bridge of Tenachelle spanned from the nearer bank to a raised causeway beyond, the solid masonry of which, resisting the overland inundations, sent the flood with double impetuosity through the three choked arches over its usual bed; for there the main current and the back water rushing together, heaved struggling round the abutments, till the watery war swelled and surged over the rangewall and fell upon the roadwall of the bridge itself with solid shock, like seas upon a ship's deck. Eager for passage as a man might be, whose life and the life of his dearer self were at stake, yet, for an instant, the Earl checked his horse, as the long line of peninsulated road lay before him,—a high tumultuous sea on one side; a roaring gulf of whirlpools, foam, and gushing cataracts on the other. The lady gave one look at the scene and sank her head to the place whence she had raised it. As he felt her clasp him more closely and draw herself up for the effort, his heart shamed him to think that he had bleached from a danger which a devoted girl was willing to dare: he drove his spurs into his horse's flanks, and Memnon sprang forward on the bridge. The roadway returned no hollow reverberation now, for every arch was gorged to the keystone with a compact mass of water; and, in truth, there was a gurgling and hissing as the river was sucked in, and a rushing roar where it spouted out in level waterfalls that would have drowned the trampling of a hundred hoofs. Twice did the waves sweep past them, rolling at each stroke the ruins of a breach in the upper rangewall over the road, till the stones dashed against the opposite masonry, and twice were both covered with the spray flung from the abutments; but Memnon bore them on through stream and ruin, and they gained the causeway safe.

The Earl's heart lightened as he found himself again on solid ground, though still plunging girth-deep at times through the flooded hollows; but they passed the bankment also in safety, and were straining up the hill beyond, when the cries of the pursuers, which had been heard over all the storm of waters ever since their entrance on the bride, suddenly ceased. There was the loud report of an arquebuss, and Memnon leaped off all his feet, plunged forward, reeled, and dropped dead. Red Raymond's arquebuss was still smoking as he sprung foremost of his troop upon the bridge. Behind him came Lord Darcy, furious with rage and exultation. 'Secure him first,' he cried, 'secure him, before he gets from under the fallen horse; bind him hand and foot! Ah, villain, he shall hang from the highest oak in Clan Malir! and for her, Sir Robert, she shall be thy wife—I swear it by the bones of my father—before that risen sun hath set! Come on, and he gave his horse head; but suddenly his reins were seized on right and left by his attendants. 'Villains, let go my reins!' he cried, 'would you aid the traitor in his escape?' and striking the rowless deep into his steed, he made him burst from their grasp; but almost at the same instant, he pulled up with a violence that threw him on his haunches: for a dozen voices shouted, 'Back, Raymond! back!' and a cry arose that the bridge was breaking, and the long line of roadway did suddenly seem to heave and undulate with the undulating current. It was well for Lord Darcy that he did so; for the next instant, and before the horse's fore-feet had ceased to paw the air, down went the whole three arches with a crash, swallowed up and obliterated in the irresistible waters. Among the sheets of spray and flashing water thrown up by the falling ruin and whirlpools of loamy froth from the

disjointed masonry, and the tumult of driving timbers, and the general disruption of road and river, the musketeer and his horse was seen sweeping for one moment down the middle of the stream, then rolled over and beaten under water, and tumbled in the universal vortex out of sight forever.

Stunned, horrified, his horse trembling in every limb, and backing from the perilous verge abrupt at his feet, the Baron sat gazing at the torrent that now rushed past him. The frightful death he had escaped, the danger he was even then in, the sudden apparition of the river's unbridled majesty, savage and bare, and exulting in its lonely strength, all the emotions of awe, terror, and amazement, crowded on his soul together. His daughter and her lover—it may be her husband or her paramour—lay within a gun-shot upon the hill before his eyes, for Anna had thrown herself by the side of the fallen and unextricated Earl; but he saw them not, he thought not of them. He got off his horse like a man who awakens in sleep-walking, and grasped the nearest of his servants by the arm, as if seeking to make sure of the reality of their presence. 'Ha!' he exclaimed, this is a perilous flood, Geoffrey; we must have the scrap of the ditch looked to. But how is this? Ho, villains! where is my daughter? O fiends of hell, am I here?' and he started at once to a full consciousness of his situation. He tore off his helmet and heavy breast plate, but his servants crowded round him and withheld him from the river; for he cried, that he would swim the torrent himself if none else would. 'Dogs,' cried he, 'take off your hands! would you aid the rebellious girl—the traitor's leman—the leman of a Geraldine! Raymond, reload your arquebuss—red-hound, where is he—Ho, villains! where is he?—Ha! drowned? O slaves and cowards, to let him be lost before your eyes and stand idly by! Owen Garrebogle, thou art my foster-brother; Sir Robert Verdon thou has been my son in bounties numberless; will you see me robbed of my child in my old age, nor strike a stroke for gratitude or fealty? Is there no one here will venture in for the love of my father's son?'

At this last appeal, his foster-brother threw off his cloak, 'Give me your hands, comrades,' he said to his companions, 'for, though the barrow were a river of fire, I would go through it for the love of Mac Roger More.'

Second in the order of time is the *Souvenir*, which has completed its tenth year. The editor, we think judiciously, considers this a sufficient period for the duration of a series that, like birth-days and other returning aras, may involve at times very awkward chronological remembrances. Next Christmas we are promised an alteration, 'with such improvements in its plan and arrangement as past experience has suggested.' We cannot, this year, pay the *Souvenir* the compliment of saying that it wears as well as its elder sister. The literature is somewhat flat both in prose and poetry. The editor has furnished nothing of his own, save an extract from another work. Some few pieces appear from the pen of Mary Howitt; but they want the truth and pastoral simplicity which generally characterize her pen. Her husband, however, has turned his researches for the *History of Priestcraft* to good account, and presented us with a tale of the early ages of Christianity, ere the preachers of the new religion had risen to the pomp and dignity of established churchmen. The scene is laid in Sweden; the contest is between the secular worship of the state—the priestcraft of the Pagans—and the new and lowly religion of Christ, such as it existed in the primitive ages. We will take our extracts from this tale, entitled 'Alof and Henneka,' and from Miss Pardoe; giving the *pas* to the lady and the muse.

THE POLISH CHILDREN.

'The last diabolical act of the Russian policy has been to intoxicate the children of the condemned Poles, in order that they may sing while on their way to the mines.'—Extract of a Letter.

FORTH went they from their father-land,
A fallen and fettered race,
To find upon a distant strand,
Their dark abiding place.
Forth went they—not as freemen go,
With firm and fearless eye;
But with the bowed-down mien of woe,
As men go forth to die.

The aged in their silver hair;
The young, in manhood's might;
The mother, with her infant care;
The child, in wild affright—
Forth went they all—a pallid band,
With many an anguished start:
The chain lay heavy on their hand,
But heavier on their heart!

No sounds disturb'd the desert air,
But those of bitter woe,
Save when at times re-echoed there
The curses of the foe.
When, hark! another cry pealed out—