

Literature, &c.

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OLD TREES.

[From an article entitled "Rambling Records of People and Places," we take the following extract.]

There is something, even to the most uninterested spectator, very moving in the sight of a noble tree lying prostrate—we are, ourselves, so puny and ephemeral in comparison, in stature, strength, and duration! Our little span of life with all its hopes, struggles, passions, and ambition, dwindle into such insignificance when we contemplate the patriarch of the forest, who has seen generation after generation of human beings spring up, flourish, and decay, and who, in green vigour still, will yet look down upon fresh generations for long years after we have crumbled into dust. An irresistible feeling of veneration fills the mind at the thought. And when we consider the length of time it takes to form the lusty trunk and giant limbs—the slow gradual growth—the spring showers, the summer suns, autumn dews and wintry storms, that have passed over its honoured head—the children that have sported beneath its shade—the cattle that have sought shelter from the blast—the innumerable birds, the countless myriads of shining insects, that have found a home and sustenance among its pleasant branches; when we think of all this, it seems almost sacrilege to fell a fine old tree. The produce and the existence of ages demolished in a few hours! A living, acting being, "done to death;" its teeming bosom, giving sweet promise of buds, and leaves, and glorious verdure—or, still sadder sight, that verdure, in fresh and full luxuriance, doomed—from "dancing lightly on the topmost spray," in the clear azure of heaven, and reflecting the sunbeams on every bright green silken leaf, to lie a crushed and withering mass, soiled and bedabbled in the mire.

[From the Poetical Remains of the late Mrs James Gray, (Mrs M. A. Brown,) we select the following sweet piece of prose.]

IMPLORATION.

Oh! for one hour of rest! Would I could feel
A quiet, dreamless slumber falling on me,
And yet be conscious that my strong appeal
To heaven for mercy had that blessing
won me!

How could I love to know each limb was still!
To have no sense except that I was sleeping.

To feel I had no memory of past ill,
No vision tinged with smile or weeping.
Vain yearning! Ever since the spirit came
Into the bondage of this mortal frame,
It hath been restless, sleepless, unsubdued,
And never hath known a moment's quietude!

How I have courted rest—rest for my soul!
Flung by my books, and cast my pen
away,
And said—"No weary wave of thought shall
roll,
To lift my spirit from its calm to day!"
Then I have gone into the dim, green wood,
And laid me down upon the mossy earth;
And straight a thousand shapes have risen and
stood
Around me, telling me they took their
birth
From my own soul; and then farewell to rest!
For if they're fair I woo them to my breast,
And if they're dark they force them on my
sight,
Standing between my spirit and the light.

And I have gone, in the still twilight hour,
And sat beneath the lindens, while the
bee
Was murmuring happily in some near flower;
But then I could not rest for ecstasy.
And I have lain where the wide ocean hea-
veth;
But here no quiet sleeps my feverish head,
For many a buried image my heart giveth
At the low, spell like moaning of the main,
Like that great sea delivering up her dead.
I may not wholly rest!—before my brain,
When my eye doth close, fit a thousand dreams,
Like insects hovering o'er tree-shadowed
streams.

Alas! there is no rest for One, whose heart
Time with the changeful pulse of nature
keepeth;
Who hath in every blossom's life a part,
And for each leaf that Autumn seareth,
weepeth!

No rest for that wild soul that fits its tone
To every harmony that nature maketh—
That saddens at her winter evening's moan,
And like her at the voice of thunder quak-
eth,
Nor may the spirit rest, while yet remain

Unknown the mysteries that none attain
In this dim world. Another state of being
Shall make us, like to Him who made, all
seeing
And then may rest the soul, when its calm
eye
At one view comprehends eternity!

[From a Review of Miss Martin's new work of
"St. Etienne," in the same periodical, we
make the following selections.]

STATE OF AFFAIRS IN FRANCE IMMEDIATE-
LY AFTER THE REVOLUTION.

The horrors of the Reign of Terror merely illustrate the law of nature, that the action and reaction must always be proportionate to each other. For ages the country had been inhabited by two nations—the nation of nobles, and the nation of peasants; they lived in a state of antagonism; they were actuated by different interests. On one side were privileges, power, wealth, and honours; on the other side poverty, degradation, and slavery in all but the name. What wonder, then, if when the hour of change came, the people hailed it with delight, and mistook revenge for justice? First came anarchy, and then the iron despotism of the *Comité du Salut Public*. The establishment of the latter was the most important measure of the Convention; it was the first return to social organization—the first apparent recognition of the distinctions of functions in a government—and the first fruits of their dear-bought knowledge, that the people cannot at the same moment make the laws, execute the laws, and obey the laws. When it was instituted, France stood on the verge of annihilation; the army had been driven from the entrenched camp at Famars by the Austrians, the northern frontier towns were invested, the garrison of Mayence had capitulated, and a Spanish army occupied the country round Bayonne. Against this host of disasters the Convention was called to make head; and the fierce energy with which it addressed itself to the task soon proved that it possessed powers equal to the crisis. It was cruel and blood-thirsty, but determined, and perhaps better fitted for the time than a milder and more scrupulous government. Reserving to itself the legislative functions, it imparted unity to the executive by the institution of the *comité*, and, by enforcing the *levée en masse* of the nation, it drove the invaders from the violated soil of France.

THE BATTLE OF TORFOL.

As yet the artillery had taken no share in the action. It had been a regular steel and lead affair, for the Vendean army had not arrived, and Kleber's field-pieces had remained in his rear, engaged in a deep narrow road, from which he could not disengage them. At length, after three hours of incessant conflict, Charrette pushed out a party to seize the pieces which were guarded by a battalion of the national guard of Niever; they were unsteady raw recruits, and they gave way. Kleber fell back to protect his battery. His column instantly choked the narrow roads, they became unmanageable, and were so separated that they were singly and unsupported exposed to the Vendean attack. Lescure's band rushed on cut down the cannoniers, and turned the pieces on the Mayençais.

The day was won; the Mayençais retreated, but it was only Kleber's skill and obstinate valour which caused the rout to become a retreat. Slowly he retreated, facing about and extending wherever the ground permitted, and still on his rear like hounds on the boar at his last struggle; three times they charged along his whole line, and as often were repulsed with loss. The *tirailleurs* crouched in the grass, took their aim at five paces, with such fatal certainty, that a train of dead marked Kleber's road; but all was ineffectual. For nine miles he continued his masterly retreat, but he knew that human nature could not long carry his soldiers through the ordeal, and therefore he halted on the Bridge of Boussay, and unlimbering two eight-pounders, saved with difficulty, he pointed them on the Vendéens, and summoning Colonel Chouard, he said, "Farewell, my friend, you and your battalion must die here!"

"Yes general, adieu!" said the devoted hero, as he wrung Kleber's hand. The Mayençais crossed the bridge and filed off on the road to Clisson at a quick step, while Chouard prepared to die. The Vendéens were so near that, concealed by a hedge, Laroche-noire heard all this short colloquy. It excited his warmest sympathy. The Vendean army closed on the bridge. Lescure ordered Laroche-noire to charge Chouard's battalion. He obeyed; the eight-pounders cut lanes through his band, yet he rushed on under the fusillade, and was met by the crossed bayonets of the gallant defenders of the pass. Again he urged his band to the assault, and was again driven back. Both parties paused for breath, and observed each other with the respect men feel for brave enemies.

"You cannot drive us from our position, chief!" cried Chouard to Laroche-noire.
"I can only do what you would do, colonel, were you in my place!" replied Laroche-noire. He made another effort, and failed.
"Lescure," he said, as he retired from the pass, "some one else must butcher these brave men—I cannot do it!"

He retreated, and Lescure's *tirailleurs* soon laid the last of the gallant battalion dead on the bridge. But their end was gained—Kleber was safe at Clisson before the pursuers could pass over their bodies. Such was the celebrated battle of Torfol.

Let us hurry down the accelerating stream

which, as we sweep onward toward the close, grows more and more turbid with the horrors of the time. The Vendean army has crossed the Loire; has fought forward into Brittany—has reeled back shattered and demoralised from Angers—has haunted the right bank of the Loire for a week, like a ghost, stretching its arms in vain across that impassable Acheron. The last rally of expiring freedom and manhood has been made on the march of Savenay—the insurrection is at an end, and Carrier has now to discharge the duties of Republican justice. Laroche-noire, his wife and daughter, await their doom, their only consolation being that they are guided by Fontanier. The Marquis de Pomenars, ignorant of their contiguity, as they of his, groans in captivity in another cell. The fatal morning has come—Laroche-noire has the death of a soldier vouchsafed him, and falls by a volley from the company of his friend. Dreadful office of friendship, to be able only to protect those you love from outrage in death, by assisting at their execution! Such is the task of Fontanier; he must see the sentence of the revolutionary tribunal carried into effect. Revolting duty!—death with them would be preferable; but then who would remain to protect their daughter—and Ida is not included in the sentence? You see, therefore, the situation of the parties; and now we place you in the hands of Miss Martin:—

The victim was hurried down to the court, followed by Fontanier, whose brain was become almost dizzy from what he had seen and suffered. Nothing but the dreadful necessity of sustaining himself for the sake of others could have preserved his reason through the horrors of that morning.

One of those long low carts then used to convey the victims to execution was waiting, drawn by a black horse, and surrounded by a crowd of the lowest and most brutalized populace of Nantes, who gathered, hooting and shouting, to witness the execution of the wife, as they had just witnessed the death of the husband. A murmur ran through the mob as she appeared. Her beauty and her courage touched the most hardened.

The jailer assisted her to mount the cart. She looked round to discover the cause of the delay which took place.

"Get out the rest of your load, jailer!" cried the carter; "I have work to do at the other prison—a fine batch of priests!"

"Here they are," replied the jailer, as four turnkeys issued from the prison, leading forth Josephine's companions in death. She looked at them, and recognised the Marquis de Pomenars and the venerable priest, the cure Alard.

"Oh, mon pere, do we meet here? It is indeed a blessing to meet, that I can receive your holy exhortations."

"Daughter, grieve not—my day of toil is over, I am about to receive my hire, and to enter into everlasting rest."

She bent her head and received the old man's blessing. When he entered the cart, De Pomenars shrank from her glance. She turned to him and said gently—"I forgive you—I will pray for you—you may yet be pardoned on high."

The cart proceeded towards the river, to the fatal spot of embarkation, where several boats were moored at the quay. In one of them four boatmen sat holding their oars upright. The rabble still surrounded the vehicle; they had forgotten their transitory spasm of better feelings, and now stared at their victims indifferently and jeered among themselves.

"Let us marry them, I say," cried one ruffian; "they will make a handsome couple!"

He drew from his pocket a long strap which he had often used to couple two prisoners before they were launched into the water. This cruelty the demons who invented it called a republican marriage.

"Yes," cried another, "and we will make the old raven croak out the ceremony in his kitchen Latin—come along!"

"I will give the bride away," shouted a third fellow.

The cart stopped at the verge of the Loire. The prisoners were ordered to descend. They obeyed, and stood together silently waiting the pleasure of their executioners.

He felt as if the scene which he beheld were rather a frightful phantasmagoria than a reality.

"That murky sky, from which a pale bleached, watery light fell scantily on the white snow clad hills—that dark, tomb-like, silent town—that turbid, muddy river, covered along its shores, and in every cove where the water rested, with sheets of greenish ice, from which the middle of the river was kept free by the motion of the current, and by the passing of the many boats plying night and day. He looked sickening and shuddering at all this. A pestilential exhalation hung over the river; troops of dogs, run wild, roamed howling along the shore, seeking their horrible prey, the body of some victim of the preceding night: and over a shallow near an island a cloud of ravens hovered, sometimes settling on some object which lay in the water, and then, as the wave washed over it, rising with hoarse screams, waiting till the retreating wave allowed them to pounce again or their quarry."

The boat floated slowly down the stream, and the boatmen lay on their oars reserving themselves for the pull up the river. Fontanier could not speak, and scarcely could he smother his sobs. De Pomenars maintained his stern resolution even to the last. His long regretful gaze on the earth and sky, his compressed mouth and gloomy brow, alone betrayed his feelings.

"Yonder is the place," said one of the boatmen, pointing across the nearest headland to a reach of the river, which spread broad and deep like a lake. They glided on. Fontanier's agonizing sensations were similar to those we experience in a feverish dream, when we fancy that we are hurried along with irresistible velocity towards some dreadful abyss. The old man suddenly raised his voice, in the solemn chant ordained for the burial service. His voice was feeble, but the strength of his hopes and resignation aided him, and it gathered firmness as he proceeded to chant that inspired outpouring of confidence in the midst of trouble—of rejoicing in the midst of adversity—the psalm *de profundis*. Josephine joined him in thus chanting their own funeral service. As the last words died on their lips, the boat lay drifting slowly on the surface of the lake like river. The appalling moment was come.

De Pomenars rose; as the corporal advanced to him—"Begone," he exclaimed, proudly waving him away. He gave one long, last look to the wintry landscape, and one shorter glance to his companions.

"Adieu, my friends! farewell life!" he exclaimed, and folding his arms on his breast, he sprang into the Loire. The water closed over his head. The boat, spurred by his foot, darted back for a space, and then returning floated over the faint circles which marked his watery grave. He rose no more, his iron resolution enabling him to refrain from the instinctive struggles of that horrible death.

"Heaven have mercy upon his soul, and upon ours," said the priest fervently.

The corporal seized him, pushed him off the gunwale of the boat, and the whirling waters smothered his prayers. He rose once and sunk for ever.

Josephine took Fontanier's hand. "Comfort Ida, watch over Romain—my last prayers are for them." Her voice was choked, her glance became wild, her lips quivered, the horrors of her doom seemed now for the first time present to her. The corporal assisted her to mount on the gunwale.

"Henri, I come! Lord, receive my spirit!" The soldiers pushed her in. She sank—rose again. Stanislas sprang forward, and would have plunged in to save her. The soldiers seized him—he was pinioned in their grasp. He clasped his hands over his eyes in agony.

"It is all over; you may look up now, Monsieur," said the corporal.

Stanislas looked up fearfully. He could not see clearly; the grey water seemed stationary and immovable, while the livid sky and earth appeared to swim before him; he thought the boat was whirling round rapidly, and then a sickness came over him—he fainted.

[From a Review of M. Thiers' new work, entitled "The Consulate and the Empire," we copy the following graphic sketch of two celebrated characters.]

FOUCHE AND TALLEYRAND.

"Fouche," says M. Thiers, "was a personage of intelligence and cunning, neither actually good nor bad, thoroughly conversant with mankind, especially with the worst, despising all alike, employing the police to foster disturbance, as well as to track its course, ready to bestow his patronage on any in want of it, and making friends for himself and the government in turn; he never exaggerated a peril, and knew well how to distinguish between a rash and dangerous man: he might have been a great minister had his sentiments been elevated, and if this calmness had any other source than utter indifference to good or evil, or his activity any nobler motive than the passion for meddling; his countenance intelligent, but vulgar, was the index of the qualities of his heart and head. What a contrast to him was Talleyrand! Born of a high family he was originally destined for the profession of arms, an accident condemned him to the priesthood; he had no taste for his new calling, and successively changed from prelate to courtier—to revolutionist—to emigrant—and, lastly, became the foreign minister of the Directory, some trace of each condition in life attaching to him as he went; for there was something of the bishop, of the grand seigneur, and of the Revolutionist always about him. Having no very settled opinions, he possessed a moderation which hated extravagance; his agreeability was the result of a wit, pointed and delicate as Voltaire's conveyed in language as pure, and even more polished; he could in turn become fascinating or disdainful, argumentative or indolent; the most seductive of negotiators, but without a particle of personal interest, and even still less of study or labour in his efforts; his object was to please; in a word he was rather an ambassador than a minister, and therefore well suited him whose agent he was. One merit he indeed possessed, he loved peace under the government of a master who gloried in war. He was gifted," says M. Thiers, "with a 'parcasse utile' a happy phrase, of signal service to the First Consul, whose vehemence of speech and redundancy were well controlled by the easy indolence of his polished associate."

From Blackwood's Magazine.

[From an article in this periodical entitled "North's Specimens of the British Critics," we select the following remarks on Milton and his writings.]

To an Englishman recollecting the political glories of his country, the Seventeenth Century often appears as the mother of one great