

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

BERANGER'S LATEST LYRIC.

THE following is a translation of what is supposed to be Beranger's latest composition. It is understood to have been sent as a competing poem to a gentleman in this country who had offered a munificent prize for the best poem on the Battle of Stirling. It has been translated by a gentleman who has undertaken to superintend the publication of the poems which were unsuccessful in that competition. The volume is, we believe, ready for the press, and contains poems, by almost all the celebrated poets of the day:

STIRLING BRIDGE—WALLACE.

"You cannot pass!" was the stern reply of the Scottish sentinelle.

To those who came from England's host, King Edward's terms to tell.

"O soldier," cried the friars then, "beware our Sovereign's wrath!

Beware how you dispute to-day his army's onward path!

Go tell your chief to send away his forces from this place,

And yield himself, as well he may, to Edward's kingly grace!"

"You pass not by!" was still the cry of the Scottish sentinelle;

"Tell Surrey that his threats have failed our gallant hearts to quell;

We throw him stern defiance back across that sluggish flood,

Whose waters e'er the day has closed shall purpled be with blood;

We came not here to threaten, we came to win with our right hand.

The speedy disenfranchisement of our own dear mountain land."

"Ha! pass we not?" said fierce Warrene, then let the cliffs know

We'll drive them from their rocky perch with sword and spear, and bow;

They think, the boors, to emulate the deeds done in the pass

Of old Thermopylae, with great and good Leonidas!

But forward now my gallant bands, o'er stream, and bush, and brake

And let the Scottish rebels see how great is their mistake."

"They must not pass!" now ran adown the forming Scottish ranks,

As Surrey's armies spread themselves along the river's banks;

A fierce invader's meed be theirs on this eventful day,

And Scotland, yours a grand renown that ne'er can pass away.

See, see, the northern shore they seek, the northern bank they gain;

Down, Scotchmen, from the crag, and sweep their leopards from the plain.

"They must not pass!" was still the cry of Scotia's men-at-arms;

And rising o'er the clash of steel and war's most dire alarms,

It sounded on the battle-plain and eowed their Southern foes,

And long before that autumn day had reached its cheerless close,

Of that great host that crossed the Forth so gay and full of life,

A shattered broken few were all that 'scaped the deadly strife.

They did not pass. The North was saved, and Scotland from that time

That Stirling Bridge was won, now dates her glorious golden prime;

For on that bloody day was gained the freedom of her land,

And fadeless wreaths around her brows were twined by Wallace's hand,

By his who raised old Scotland's name till Roman stars grew dim;

Are monuments required to keep alive the fame of him?

CASTLE SHEURENDORF.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.

In a secluded valley of the lower Rhine country stands the ruins of an ancient castle, so old that even tradition has forgotten when it was built. Nothing remains of it now but a few archways, portions of massive walls, and the lower story of two round towers. Bits of wood work adhering in the walls here and there, show that its final destruction was by fire, which did its work most thoroughly. Yet even in its present ruined condition, it may easily be seen that the builders of it designed it for a long and strenuous service; and though battered and fallen, though the ivy climbs over its crumbling towers, knitting its curious fingers between the loosened stone-work, though its foundations gape with many mouths, as if in weariness of long warfare, yet unless man comes in to hasten its doom, it bids fair to defy another hundred years before finally yielding up the ghost. The ancient moat is merely a little grassy hollow, scarcely deep enough for a child to hide in, and of course every trace of its draw-bridge was gone long ago. The archway of the principal gate may still be seen in one of the

remaining towers, but in a very precarious condition, and no one but a gipsy, or a school boy in hunt of birds' nests, would venture to pass through.

There is something about this old castle which makes it uncomfortable for nervous people to pass near it after nightfall, though, as far as I have heard, this is no fault of its own, for it is as quiet and peaceful an old ruin as exists anywhere, but mainly on account of certain very ancient traditions of terrible cruelties enacted in its subterranean dungeons. It is even said by those who have ventured in, that there are deep pits within the enclosure of its walls, and dark archways leading into the solid rock, and that if one only stays five minutes in one of these, he will see sights enough to freeze his blood with horror; which I dare say is the truth. But the phenomenon is not confined to old castle pits. Any large gloomy cellar will be as good for such experiments. But the wilderness of the ruin contributes to this feeling, while stories of crimes committed there since it was last inhabited, make the sight of it more dreadful to the peasantry than a murderer's bier by night. A handful of gold would not bribe the poorest of them to venture near it, except during broad daylight. He would see a ghost in every white stone, and the shaking of the ivy would sound like voices of the dead, or the rustle of shrouds. Yet after all, it is a harmless old ruin. Children might gather flowers at its feet, and the laborer find a cool retreat in its shadows during his noon-day meal. Like many a man and woman in this queer world of ours it must suffer on account of the misdeeds of others with whom it has been connected. Poor, lonely old castle!

There are times indeed when one cannot help thinking it must be happy: as when the ivy puts forth its tender shoots, and the young leaves talk and play together in the warm, sweet light of May and June. How they checker its old sides with playful shadows, and bring the soft winds to whisper round its corners. The birds build by scores within it, and keep it lively for at least three months out of every year. And certainly I do not know of a lovelier haunting spot for a poet, on a clear night in June. Mysterious whisperings everywhere around, coming and going, like sighs from the old vanished ages. Fantastic visions of something—you may not see what—playing in the chinks of the ruined walls, where the moonlight strikes. And over all, like the ivy, hangs a dreamy sense of long ago, with a thousand stories and legends fluttering forth like leaves—Wouldst like one of those leaves? Here it is, dear reader! plucked expressly for thy gratification.

A little less than a hundred years ago, this old castle was inhabited by the household of Baron Von Sheurendorf, a worthy member of that large class of German nobles whose titles by much outweigh their purses. Partly on account of his poverty, and partly from his natural disposition, the Baron lived in strict retirement, never visiting his neighbors, and rarely seeing them at his castle. His domestic affairs, since the death of his wife, had been under the charge of his only daughter, Madeleine, a beautiful girl, and just as good as she was beautiful, and who, at the date of our story, was just entering her eighteenth year. Many a manly heart grew faint at thought of her, and gladly would have laid itself, and all it possessed, at her feet, for one smile or one word from her lips. But for many hearts made sorrowful, only one was made glad; and as fortune would have it, the youth who bore that heart belonged to a family between which and the Barons Von Sheurendorf there had existed an hereditary feud for two or three generations. I forget what caused it, but no matter. It was probably some trifle, as a jest, or even a scornful look; for quarrels are plants that thrive best when their roots have very little soil to nourish them. The feud was fierce enough for Madeleine to wish to keep her secret for the present from her father's knowledge, believing with love's true confidence, that time would bring all things to a sweet and happy issue. Walter von Hegen, her lover, in the overflow of his new happiness, was not quite so discreet as might have been wished, and his comrades soon discovered that Madeleine had promised him her hand as soon as her father's consent could be obtained. This discovery was fraught with dangerous consequences, for Walter's life was repeatedly threatened by a hot-headed youth, who went by the gentle name of Fiery Will, and who had aspired to the good fortune which his friend had won. Finding Walter on the alert, however, and perhaps fearing the consequences of an open attack upon his life, Will at length resorted to other means for attaining his ends; and what these were must be explained.

At that time the whole region between Aix la Chapelle, Maastricht and Wassenberg was infested by a numerous and singularly disciplined band of robbers, who held their own against the people and the government for more than twenty years. They never appeared except by night and generally only when it was stormy, so that the people used to say when the sun went down behind clouds, and other signs gave prophecy of bad weather before morning, "the gnats will be out to-night"—meaning the bandits, for it was currently reported and believed among the peasantry, that they had sold

themselves to the devil, who in consideration of having an eternal lien on their souls, consented to supply them with demon goats for coursers, upon whose backs they could jump from Aix la Chapelle to Wassenberg, as easily as a grasshopper would spring a yard! During those twenty years, not a night set in but it brought terror, if nothing worse, upon all the farmers within the infested districts. Even castles were sometimes plundered, and if resistance was made, murder and frightful cruelties were certain to follow. There was a terrible myrtery connected with the initiation of new members, which told with strong effect upon the superstition of the peasantry. It was said that deep in a pine forest, never penetrated except by the robbers, stood a solitary chapel, dedicated to the evil one; and there, on tempestuous nights, when it rained, and lightened and thundered, and the wind swept the branches with a mighty roar, dreadful gatherings were held, and the novices renounced God and salvation, and received a fatal mark on their bodies, which signified that they had given themselves up to the service of Satan. True or not, this superstition led the ignorant peasantry to hold the bandits in great awe, and it was no doubt encouraged for that purpose by the leaders.

It must not be supposed that the hand of justice lay idle while all this crime was going on. The gallows and the wheel were erected at every crossing, and neither was ever allowed to go hungry long at a time. But the severest measures proved insufficient to check the evil. The robbers increased in number and audacity, and that too when the most strenuous and even cruel measures were taken to put them down. Their leaders managed with consummate adroitness to conceal all outward show of organization. The members of the order never separated from the rest of the community, nor were there any great dens of them, to be discovered and broken up. They mingled by day with other men, apparently good, honest citizens, earning their livelihood like the rest, by the sweat of the brow. But the shrill whistle at night drew them forth, masked like demons, and armed to the teeth, to plunder, murder, and burn! The community was well aware of all this; yet as the robbers were distinguished by no outward sign, and indeed knew each other only by means of a single watchword, and as they used the utmost caution in leaving their homes and returning, it was very rare that any one of them was caught. Still more rare was it to find one who would reveal, even under the severest torture, the names of any one of the band. The name of the great chief and leader could not be discovered, and most people believed him to be the devil himself.

Now Castle Sheurendorf stood almost in the centre of the infested districts, but up to the time of my story, had not been molested by the robbers, and the Baron probably expected to live out a quiet old age, and at last to die as quietly, in his old ancestral home. But this was not to be. One night large fires were seen from the castle in the distance; the next night others were perceived in another direction, and it was improbable that the robbers would leave the neighbourhood without paying their respects to Baron Von Sheurendorf, however willing he might be to dispense with the honor, and as the third evening set in, the whole household began to feel their hearts beat quicker than ordinary in their bosoms. But they could do nothing but wait.

During the early twilight, Madeleine went out upon the little grassy terrace, which once had been a bank of the moat, and sitting down looked over the fields towards her lover's home. The last fires had been in that direction, and her thoughts were perplexed between fears for his safety, and apprehensions of what might come in the ensuing night. Yet there was something in her heart which told her that her lover was to be with her soon; and though she knew the robbers would come, she knew too that he would be there to protect her. It was a strange mixture of presentiment, alarm and confidence. She scarcely could tell whether she was afraid or not. But she was sure her lover would come; for her heart told her so.

And he did come. The twilight had deepened into dusk, when she heard a stir in the bushes, and starting up was about to fly, when her steps were arrested by a low whistle, and the next moment a tall, manly figure was at her side and she found herself fondly clasped to a breast heaving with emotion.

"Ah, come, Walter?" said Madeleine, half disbelieving her very senses. "What brings thee here to-night?"

"What but love of thee, dearest? Fiery Will has joined the bandits—I know him in spite of his mask;—last night my home was burned, and my life attempted. I know who led the band, and that to-night they will be here. I have come to give you warning, and what protection I can."

"But my father, Walter?"

"He will not repulse me, dear child; for I will tell him frankly what has brought me hither."

"Ah, Walter," said Madeleine, leaning her head on his breast, "my heart told me of this danger, and also of thy coming. I knew thou wouldst come!"

Fondly Walter drew her more closely to his heart, and in that moment felt himself fired to thrice his former manhood. For what more exalts a man than a woman's love?

"But come, Madeleine," said he, after a moment of quiet breathing, "we must go to your father, for no time should be lost. The goats are not want to be dilatory."

They found the Baron walking to and fro in his chamber, apparently in deep thought. He turned on hearing the door opened, and seeing Madeleine with a man by her side, uttered an expression of surprise. Walter stepped forward.

"Baron Sheurendorf," said he, "though the son of your enemy, I am your friend, one who would also be a son to you, if you would permit. Nay, hear me, through," as the Baron made an impatient gesture, "this very night I may have to prove myself one."

"Do you fear the bandits?" cried the old man, quickly guessing what he meant, for he was thinking for them himself.

"I do," and then related the affair of the previous night. Baron Sheurendorf heard him through, all the while keeping his eyes fixed on the young man's face, as if to read his very soul. Walter endured the gaze without shrinking, for he was true. "Here's my hand," Sheurendorf, at length; "I see you already have my daughter's." Madeleine looked into her father's face, with tears of exquisite joy, while the two men shook hands, and from enemies became father and son.

"Let us lose no time barring the doors," said Walter, after a moment's pause; "at best the old castle is none too strong. I think—"

Here he was interrupted by the entrance of an old servant, who looking suspiciously at the new comer, signified his wish to speak privately with the Baron. Sheurendorf bade him speak out, for the stranger was a trustworthy friend.

"Well," said Martin, "as I was making my round to see that all was right, I saw two men in the dusk near the gate, standing quite still. Knowing that they had no business there, I crept up softly on my hands and knees, until near enough to hear what was going on. One of them was John Bangal the fiddler, who comes to all village dances. I heard him say it was just the night for an attack, and that the other whom he called Will, must be on hand with ten or twelve men at midnight, and he would meet him in the cope by the hill with as many more. We'll try the strength of that old door, said he, and then muttered something about an old miser, and heaps of treasure—"

And the other swore a great oath that he cared for no treasure here but our sweet young mistress yonder. I am glad she has a stalwart friend here, to-night, though God knows that I would fight for her to the death. Ay, shrink up to his side dear lady! and let him put his strong arm around your waist. But I must not stand here prating at this foolish rate. Young Master, if you mean to help us, the outer door needs barring, and one cannot do it alone."

"Stay here with your father, Madeleine," said Walter, kissing her tenderly; "I will soon return." He then followed Martin to attend to the barricading of the doors. As was common in ancient castles, the approach to the outer door from within was through a narrow passage, which was easily defended, before guns came in to use, by three or four men against a hundred. The door was of oak, barred with iron; but it was splintered and cracked, and the hinges were loosened by the crumbing of the stone-work. It was seldom closed, indeed, except in winter, to keep out the drifting snow, an inner one being commonly used. Walter and Martin now shut the great door, and an immense ado it made about it, cracking and grinding on its rusty hinges. A heavy wooden bar was then placed across, in sockets made for the purpose in the stone, and two or three empty boga-heads were rolled up from the cellar and placed behind it, and being weighted with stones, formed a very respectable barricade. The inner door was left open for the present, in order to give room for firing through the outer one, but means were at hand for instantly barring it. The stout oaken window shutters were closed and fastened, and when this was done, the castle was ready for defense as far as it could be made so.

The next thing was to arrange some means for escaping, should the barricade be forced, and here both Walter and Martin were in great perplexity. At length, Martin bethought him of an ancient subterranean passage, leading from the cellar, where they might possibly find a hiding place, though it had not been opened for twenty years, and it was no doubt choked with stones and rubbish. Walter would explore; and taking a lantern, went down into the old musty cellar, followed by Martin. From the main apartment, a narrow door led into a small low closet, which Martin indicated as the entrance to the archway. Walter saw nothing but bare walls, mouldy and hung with cobwebs, but the servant pointing to a cross in the stone, from which he had brushed the dirt, told him to strike there with the hammer that lay in the corner. He did so, and a trap door sprung open, disclosing a narrow, well like passage, with stone steps, leading down into the darkness. A rush of damp air, and a flock of astonished bats, made them start back.