

Poetry.

THE DYING IMPROVISATORE.*

BY MRS. HEMANS.

"My heart shall be pour'd over thee—and break."
Prophecy of Dante.

The spirit of my land!
It visits me once more!—though I must die
Far from the myrtles which thy breeze hath fann'd,
My own bright Italy!

It is, it is thy breath,
Which stirs my soul e'en yet, as wavering flame
Is shaken by the wind; in life and death
Still trembling, yet the same!

Oh! that Love's quenchless power
Might waft my voice to fill thy summer sky,
And through thy groves its dying music shower,
Italy, Italy!

The nightingale is there,
The sun-beam's glow, the citron-flower's perfume,
The south-wind's whisper in the scented air—
It will not pierce the tomb!

Never, oh! never more,
On thy Rome's purple Heaven mine eye shall dwell,
Or watch the bright waves melt along thy shore—
My Italy, farewell!

Alas!—thy hills among,
Had I but left a memory of my name,
Of Love and Grief one deep, true fervent song,
Unto immortal Fame!

But like a lute's brief tone,
Like a rose-odour on the breezes cast,
Like a swift flush of day-spring, seen and gone,
So hath my spirit pass'd!

Pouring itself away,
As a wild bird amidst the foliage turns
That which within him triumphs, beats, or burns,
Into a fleeting lay:

That swells, and floats, and dies,
Leaving no echo to the summer woods
Of the rich breathings and impassioned sighs,
Which thrill'd their solitudes.

Yet, yet remember me!
Friends! that upon its murmurs oft have hung,
When from my bosom, joyously and free,
The fiery fountain sprung.

Under the dark rich blue
Of midnight heavens, and on the star-lit sea,
And when woods kindle into Spring's first hue,
Sweet Friends remember me!

And in the marble halls,
Where life's full glow the dreams of beauty wear,
And Poet-thoughts embodied light the walls,
Let me be with you there!

Fain would I bind for you
My memory with all glorious things to dwell;
Fain bid all lovely sounds my name renew—
Sweet Friends, bright land, farewell!

* Sestini, the Roman improvisatore, when on his death-bed at Paris, is said to have poured forth a farewell to Italy, in his most impassioned poetry.

OH! BRING ME BACK TO MY NATIVE HOME.

Oh! bring me back to my native home,
Beyond the dark blue waters;
Waft me again where I love to roam
With Erin's bright-eyed daughters.

Oh! I long again my bowers to see,
With roses wildly springing:
Oh! I long to hear the merry glee
Now in my bowers singing.

Oh! I long to look on that clear sky
That used to shine above me;
I pine for the deep and tender sigh
From lips that truly love me.

Place me again in my fav'rite bark,
Whose sails are lightly swelling;
And over the bounding billows dark
I'll fly to my fairy dwelling.

Miscellanea.

BURNING OF A RICH HINDOO WIDOW.

The following are the particulars of the suttee which took place yesterday morning at Sulkoah. The widow was a young and interesting looking woman, and at the death of her husband, at his bequest, had become possessed of a fortune of three lacs of rupees. She was a native of Balasore, of the Tampoli caste. Her husband was a respectable man, in the employ of Government, and possessed of considerable landed and other property. From the moment of his death the widow declared her determination to attend him on the

funeral pile, a resolution which she has kept in a manner which seems incredible.

During the day she distributed to the poor and to her servants, money to the amount of 3,000 rupees, besides dispersing all her jewels among her relations; and just before mounting the pile she made her will with perfect composure. She was visited by many people on Friday, all of whom endeavoured, more or less sincerely, to divert her from her object, but she had "eaten the oath," which cannot be recalled, had twined the holy toolsee branch in her hair, and the world and all its concerns were to her as nought.

At an early hour on Saturday a large crowd had collected; the greatest order and decorum prevailed throughout the immense multitude, who, though certainly brought there by curiosity, exhibited wondrous little of that propensity in their faces. "A stupid moment motionless they stood," and might have stood for hours, or until the important matter of cooking, &c. should be despatched; while the poor miserable object of this portentous preparation was to be seen seated on a wicker frame placed on the ground by the side of her dead husband, whom she continued still, as she had done all night, to fan with a bunch of flowers.

As the sun rose, the poor infatuated creature became most impatient for the magistrate's despatch, who on these occasions, always attends to prevent the employment of any constraint, and see justice done. Seven o'clock came, and eight, but no word of the necessary order. With very different feelings, yet with no less intensity of anxious expectation, did the widow enquire, from time to time, for this important person, than the Newgate criminal for the arrival of the Sheriff.

He came—a fine-looking man, with an immense black beard and bushy eye-brows, which hid from observation the penetrating glance of a pair of very intelligent grey eyes. Carrying in his hand the document which, under legal authority, permits such things to take its course, and in a manner the most forcible and touching, he now pointed out to the woman the sin and folly of the course she was about to follow—explained to her, by reference to their own shasters, the absurdity (or at least the non-necessity) of such a proceeding—assured her of protection if she should still incline to change—and appealed to the imploring faces, and the tears of her people around, for a testimony of the truth of his arguments.

The woman listened attentively, and replied fully, calmly, and steadily. She treated such motives as wealth, rank, and kindred, with disdain, and with much apparent reason, appealed to her total indifference to all sublunary things, by the disposal she was about to make of them.

She argued for half an hour, apparently with much earnestness; and, but for the "recollections" to which she very fluently gave utterance of previous existences, and previous immolations, the conviction would have fastened upon me that she actually believed her own future destiny as being perfectly fixed, since in most glowing language and with a smiling countenance, she talked of the glories and the happiness which awaited her in the heaven of heavens, which she was now going to enter trebly purified, as gold three times tried.

When told that no compulsion should be employed, to enforce the observance of her vows, her answer was, in disdain, "Upon compulsion!! No! I shall leap into his arms."

Accordingly the body was now moved and laid upon the pile, the widow carrying the feet, which she frequently kissed and placed on her head. She then went down to the river to bathe, and returned dressed in a gay and expensive scarlet satin tunic, and wearing a crown of beads. Some momentary pangs heaved her bosom, as she saw the frightful reality of her condition before her—her lips for a moment quivered, but she speedily rallied, and with the most perfect composure, and a hand already blistered to the bone to show her courage, and of which not one sinew quivered, she prepared a cake of rice and plantains, which she placed on the mouth of the corpse. She then poured some holy water over his face, walked several times round the pile, throwing around, from a vessel which she carried under one arm, parched rice, and exhibiting in her countenance the most perfect satisfaction with herself. She, without assistance from any one, composedly climbed up, placed herself by the side of her husband, clasped his putrid body with her limbs, and placed his head on her arm.

A Bramin threw a sheet over them, whispered a few words to the devotee, and retired. Several attendants now began hastily to pile up the altar and its sacrifice with wood.

Some English gentlemen who were present indignantly interfered to prevent this, and a few minutes elapsed, during which the right arm of the devotee was raised, and continued steadily beckoning to the crowd, as if in the exercise of devotion. Oh! how the blood curdled at this renewed testimony of her resolution, having till now greatly doubted of the possible completion of the mortal sin.

'Tis fired—

All that of living or of dead remain,
In one wild roar expired.

Yet that came not from the flaming altar; unshackled by one cord, one straw, the victim's hand was seen amid the flames waving as before; and her voice (had it been possible amidst the yell of a worshipping multitude) might still have been heard as before, calling upon the name of her God.

"Invitum qui servat idem facit occidenti."

Howrah, April 6.

REFLECTIONS ON SNOW.

DURING winter, the dullest season of the year, the earth is often covered with snow. Every person sees it fall, but few take the trouble to examine its nature, or enquire into its use.

This is the general lot of those objects which we have commonly before our eyes, and from which we derive various advantages. Often, the things which deserve our attention most, are those which we generally neglect. Let us be wiser in future; and begin by reflecting a few moments on snow.

It is formed of very light vapours, which being congealed in the atmosphere, fall down afterwards in flakes of different dimensions. In our climates these flakes are often very large; but we are assured, that in Lapland the snow is very small, and resembles fine dust. This is doubtless occasioned by the great cold of that country. It is observed, that among us the flakes are large in proportion to the degree of cold; and that they become very small when it freezes intensely. The little flakes generally resemble hexagonal stars; but some have eight angles, others ten, and some are altogether irregular. The best way of examining them is to receive them on white paper: but hitherto little has been said satisfactory on the cause of these different forms. The whiteness of this meteor may be easily accounted for. Snow is extremely thin and light; consequently it has a great multitude of pores which are filled with air: it is besides composed of parts more or less, close and compact: such a substance does not permit the rays of the sun to pass through, nor does it absorb them: on the contrary, it reflects them with considerable force, and this is what makes it to appear white to us.

Snow as it falls is twenty-four times lighter than water. This is proved by melting twenty-four measures of snow, for they produce but one of water. For snow is not frozen water, but only frozen vapour. Snow evaporates considerably; and the greatest cold does not impede this evaporation. It has been doubted whether it snows at sea; but those who have performed voyages in the winter on the northern seas, have assured us that they have there met with much snow. It is well known, that the tops of high mountains are generally covered with snow: if a part of it melts, it is speedily replaced by new flakes. As the air is much warmer on the plains, than it is on the mountain tops, it may rain on the former, while it snows heavily on the latter.

Snow has a variety of uses. As the cold of winter is more injurious to the vegetable kingdom than it is to the animal, plants must perish, were they not protected by some covering. God has so ordered it, that the rain which in the summer fell to cool and nourish the plants, should fall in winter under the form of soft wool: which covers the vegetables, and protects them from the rigours of the frost, and chilling blasts of wind. Snow has a certain degree of warmth; but so temperate as not to stifle the grain. And, as it contains, like all other vapours, different salts, which it drops when thawed, it contributes much to the fertilization of the earth. When, therefore, the snow melts, it becomes a fruitful moisture to the earth; and at the same time, washes away from winter seeds and plants whatever might prevent, or injure their growth. What remains of this snow-water, helps to supply springs and rivers, which were diminished during the winter.

These reflections may be sufficient to convince us of the goodness of God, which is manifest in the meteor of which we have spoken. We see plainly that winter has its advantages, and that it is not such a gloomy season as many imagine. Let us raise our hearts in gratitude and joy to that beneficent God, who even from snow and clouds, pours down blessings and abundance upon the earth. Our complaints and murmurs are insulting to the Divine Government; and they are the more criminal, because we may in every occurrence behold the footsteps of the wisdom and goodness of God.—*Sturm.*

MANNA.

At the sitting of the *Academie des Sciences* in Paris, on the 4th of August, M. Thenard submitted to the inspection of the Members a substance, which he had received for that purpose from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was a specimen of a kind of celestial manna which had fallen from the clouds in Persia, at the beginning of the present year, in such abundance, as stated to the French Consul in Persia, by a Russian General who had witnessed it, that the earth to a large extent was completely covered, to the depth of six inches. Cattle of every description, particularly sheep, ate of it with avidity, and even bread was made, which was perfectly fit for the nourishment of man. The Academy recognized in this article, a nutritious lichen, already described by botanists, and which must have been carried to the spot by some peculiar phenomenon which occurred in the region of Persia in the year 1824.

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JOHN SIMPSON.

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