

THE DONKEY RACE.

WHAT an exciting scene is that which our engraving represents! By voice and gesture the rustic jockeys are urging on their donkeys—donkeys which seem to take as much interest in the sport as the youngsters on their backs. Surely

triumph! it seems a matter of small importance who wins the race, but there is the same panting for success, the same strenuous exertion in the lads, as we notice in the higher and loftier struggle of life. In the same spirit men engaged of old



DONKEY RACE. FROM A PAINTING BY GAINSBOROUGH.

the foremost one will win by something more than "a neck;" his rider snaps his fingers in anticipated triumph, and while the rival waves his bonnet in the air, and pats the neck of his almost exhausted animal, it is clear at a glance that victory is not for him. There is a crowd of people watching the race ready to shout a welcome to the winner, and to bestow on the successful candidate the promised reward.

What a struggle for victory! what painstaking for a

in the Olympic games; to win applause gladiators fought within the Colosseum of proud Rome; the poet sings, the painter paints, the soldier faces danger and death. A palm of victory in the distance is the object ever kept in view, a goal starred and luminous to be attained. And the same spirit which animates and governs the world astir, is seen here in the donkey race.

Gainsborough, whose biography at some future period we

intend presenting to our readers, has pictured a truly English scene, and has done so in his own inimitable style. Nature was his teacher, the woods were his academy, and he was an apt disciple, an ardent lover of art, a keen observer of all that surrounded him, and an accurate copyist of his models. His models came not from the antique; they were found in villages, and fields, and poor men's homes. His excellence was his own, the result of his own particular observation. Whatever he undertook he executed in a manner peculiar to himself: and whatever might be the object of his study, whether the form of a woodcutter, a peasant child, or a girl attending pigs, he did not attempt to raise the subject, nor did he lose any of that natural grace which was so eminently characteristic of his designs. If, in his excursions, he found a character that he liked, and whose attendance was to be obtained, he ordered him to his house; and from the fields he also brought into his painting room stumps of trees, weeds, and animals of various kinds, and drew them, not from memory, but immediately from the objects. He even framed a kind of model of landscapes on his table, composed of broken stones, dried herbs, and pieces of looking-glass, which he magnified and improved into rocks, trees, and water; all exhibiting the solicitude and extreme activity that he had about everything relative to his art, so that he wished to have everything embodied, as it were, and distinctly before him, neglecting nothing that could contribute to keep his faculties alive.*

He was ardently devoted to his pursuits: this feeling he cherished even to his dying day. Art and artists occupied his thoughts, and the last words he uttered were characteristic of this love:—"We are all going to heaven, and Vandyck is of the party."

* Pilkington.

THE PAINTER OF PISA.

IN THREE PARTS.—PART THE FIRST.

THE chapel of the convent of St. Augustine at Pisa had lately been decorated and repaired, till it now rivalled in magnificence the splendours of the cathedral itself. In place of the simple rails which had surrounded the great altar, there rose a costly screen around the sanctuary; pillars of variegated marbles, sculptured friezes instinct with noble forms, graceful columns, solemn monuments laden with the pride of heraldry, silver lamps, and all that art and wealth could devise to subdue the mind and enthral the senses, was there lavished in full pomp and panoply.

It was mid-day. The chapel was deserted,—the air was yet heavy with perfumed incense,—the last tones of the organ vibrated through the aisles,—the echoing footfall of the latest loiterer had scarcely died in the distance,—then silence and solitude alone remained.

Yet one man was there. He was standing behind a pillar, occupied upon a fresco. His dress was of the humblest, and his work of the most unambitious description, yet there was a power in his face, and a dignity in his appearance that promised something higher than the serge doublet and ill-paid drudgery of the inferior workman; poverty, toil and discontent were written on that pale and thoughtful brow. He stopped frequently at his work, and seemed wrapt in gloomy thought—he resumed his pencil again and again with desperate resolution, and as often threw it down again with impatient scorn,—at last, as if overcome by his emotions, he descended hastily from the scaffolding, and paced rapidly the centre of the church. Then the agitation which possessed him appeared gradually to become quieted, his steps calmer, his brow clearer, and finally he sat down beside the reading desk, and laid his burning forehead upon the Bible which laid open before him. When he raised it the whole expression of his countenance had become changed, his cheeks glowed, his eyes seemed inspired with an unearthly brightness:—"Father!" he exclaimed, "I thank thee! Thou hast breathed Thy spirit into mine. Thou wilt aid me to portray Thy glory upon earth: the Bible in all its majesty, in all its power, shall be the subject of my labour: angels and demens in countless multitudes, heaven and earth, punishment

and reward. Thy glory and the life eternal shall speak Thy praise from the canvas of Thy servant! I feel it—my hand will not fail me—the past shall be forgotten—poverty, neglect, fatigue shall not be remembered—envy and injustice shall touch my soul no more, in the brightness of the coming fame!"

A deep sigh near him roused Marcello from his golden dream, and, turning with alarm, he saw a brother of the convent standing by his side. This old man, austere and venerable, was regarding the painter with a look full of compassionate benevolence. "My son," said he, "I have heard you, and you are suffering."

"More than I know how to tell you, father."

"And yet you have invoked the aid of God: you have faith?"

"Faith, but not hope, my father," said the painter, "and without hope life is a long and weary day—a sterile land—an accursed tree whose fruits are dust and ashes when we gather them!"

"Alas! my son, you are young," said the monk, kindly, "and but a few moments since you dreamt of a future full of divine glory and prosperity! Dream and hope again."

"You mistake me—I am no longer young. Time writes the age of man upon his heart. I have desired, and it has been denied unto me; I have tasted of anguish and bitterness; my soul is worn with hope, as the lute of the minstrel is worn with age, and whose strings at length give forth but harsh and broken sounds. I have dreamed of a work which shall immortalise my name, but have I courage to undertake all that I design? Oh that, like my father, I had remained an humble fisher, casting my nets upon the ocean for my daily bread! Father, while yet a child, there came a painter to my lowly home; that man recognised in the rude outlines which the fisher-boy had traced with charcoal on the walls the germs of natural genius, and offered to become my protector. I fell at his knees—I kissed the hem of his garment—I worshipped him as a divinity, and prayed, with all the eloquence of passion, for the permission of my father. It was granted; sublime was the concession of that poor fisherman: he deprived himself of the active arms that aided him in his employ, that mended his nets, and cultivated his scanty garden. He had but one son, and he loved him well enough to part with him. But ere I went, my master said to me,—'Boy, hast thou courage and constancy?—canst thou endure hunger and cold, and vow thy youth to a martyrdom without rest or reward?—canst thou venture all for the love of thy divine art and the future glory? The bread of the artist is watered with tears.' And I have found it so. He died, and from an artist I became an artisan. The world believed me not when I sought to justify my claims. All that I had done had gone forth with the name of my master. I was branded as an ignorant pretender, when I pointed out to them my share in his paintings. Obstacles surrounded, disappointments met me at every turn, and the flower of hope withered in my heart. Still I have faith—still I believe in glory, and believe that it may yet be mine!"

"Glory!" repeated the monk, in a tone of sorrowful pity; and, without combatting the fatal delusions of that word, pointed solemnly to a grave-stone on which the painter was standing, and which bore this inscription:—

"HIC JACET CAPPERONI, PICTOR."

The characters were well nigh obliterated; soon they would be distinguishable no longer, and the spot would be forgotten. Marcello looked down upon them mechanically; but he was wrapt once more in his dream, and he comprehended them not.

PART THE SECOND.

Two years had passed away: the glorious luxuriance of an Italian summer clothed the earth with a gorgeous mantle of verdure and flowers. Pisa had all the appearance of a festival. Perfumes floated on the air; noble lords and ladies thronged the public walks; others, followed by their retainers, with falcons on their wrists, went forth to the chase; nobles and commoners, soldiers and peasantry, gave themselves up to