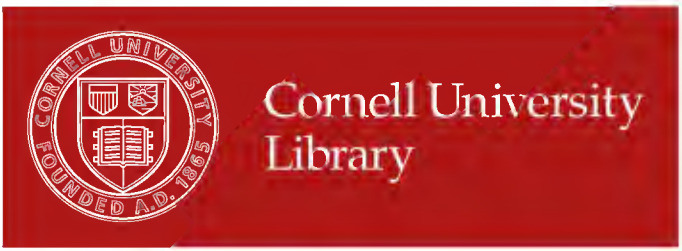

OUR ANNUAL EXECUTION

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PRECEDED BY

A WORD ON THE ANNUALS

BY

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

PHILADELPHIA
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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

"A WORD on the Annuals" was printed in *Fraser's Magazine* for December, 1837, and was ascribed to Thackeray's pen "with what amounts to absolute certainty" by Mr. Charles Plumptre Johnson in the *Athenæum* for March 19, 1887, and, afterwards, in "The Early Writings of Thackeray," London: 1888 (page 43). Mr. Johnson's opinion was based upon the reference to Yellowplush on page 760 of the magazine; but confirmatory evidence, if any were needed, is to be found in "Our Annual Execution," in which the writer refers to "having belaboured one or two of them [the Annuals], twelve months since," proving, at least, that both articles were written by the same hand. Mr. Melville includes this paper in his bibliography, but did not, for some unknown reason, reprint it in "Stray Papers," nor has it ever been reprinted elsewhere.

"Our Annual Execution" appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* for January, 1839. In it, it will be noticed, the reviewer pauses a moment to introduce the correspondence of Miss Rosalba de Montmorency (another Thackeray pen-name, by the way), who ventures to send to the editor of *Fraser* two ballads, both parodies on "Wapping Old Stairs,"—"The Battle-Axe Polacca" and "The Almacks' Adieu." Both of these ballads were afterwards included by Mr. Thackeray in the edition of the Ballads published with the "Miscellanies" in 1855, the title of "The Battle-Axe Polacca," however, being changed to "The Knightly Guerdon," and in reprinting, also, Mr. Thackeray omitted the last line of each stanza. "The Almacks' Adieu" was reprinted without alteration.

This *Fraser* paper has thus far escaped the notice of all the bibliographers, and, as late as 1899, Mr. Williams, in his admirable "Bibliography" contributed to the Biographical Edition of the Works of Thackeray, states that

these two ballads "do not appear to have been published anywhere previously"; that is, before 1855. Nevertheless, "Our Annual Execution," with the two ballads in question, had appeared once in an edition of Thackeray's Works, being printed in the "Miscellanies," Volume V, published by Fields, Osgood, and Company, Boston: 1870 (pages 116–126). This reprint was marred, however, by numerous errors and omissions. Apparently this paper appeared then only to disappear again, for it has never been reprinted elsewhere, and even Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, the ultimate successors of Fields, Osgood, and Company, failed to include it in their edition of Thackeray published in 1889.

Both of these papers are reprinted from the pages of *Fraser's Magazine* exactly as they originally appeared, with no changes in either spelling or punctuation.

"We must have his *opera omnia*," exclaimed Dr. John Brown in his appreciative essay on

"Thackeray's Literary Career," written, by the way, mainly by Henry H. Lancaster, Esq., and printed in the *North British Review* for February, 1864, and these characteristic papers are here reprinted in a limited edition, for the benefit of those who, thirty-seven years later, are still in sympathy with the dictum of Dr. Brown and Mr. Lancaster.

ALMON DEXTER.

A WORD ON THE ANNUALS

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A PARCEL of the little gilded books, which generally make their appearance at this season, now lies before us. There are the *Friendship's Offering* embossed, and the *Forget Me Not* in morocco; *Jennings's Landscape* in dark green, and the *Christian Keepsake* in pea; *Gems of Beauty* in shabby green calico, and *Flowers of Loveliness* in tawdry red woollen; moreover, the *Juvenile Scrap-book* for good little boys and girls; and, among a host of others, and greatest of all, the *Book of Gems*, with no less than forty-three pretty pictures, for the small sum of one guinea and a half.

Now, with the exception of the last, which is a pretty book, containing a good selection of modern poetry, and a series of vignettes (which, though rather small, are chiefly from good sketches, or pictures), and of *Jennings's Landscape Annual*,* which contains the admi-

* Jennings's Landscape Annual for 1838: Spain and Morocco. By Thomas Roscoe. Illustrated from Drawings by David Roberts. 8vo. London, 1838. Jennings.

rable designs of Mr. Roberts, nothing can be more trumpery than the whole collection—as works of art, we mean. They tend to encourage bad taste in the public, bad engraving, and worse painting. As to their literary pretensions, they are such as they have been in former years. There have been, as we take it, since the first fashion for Annuals came up, some hundred and fifty volumes of the kind; and such a display of miserable mediocrity, such a collection of feeble verse, such a gathering of small wit, is hardly to be found in any other series. But the wicked critics have sufficiently abused them already; and our business, therefore, at present, is chiefly with the pictorial part of the books.

The chief point upon which the publishers and proprietors of these works have insisted, is the encouragement which they have afforded to art and artists, by keeping them constantly before the world, set off by all the advantages of a pretty binding, a skilful engraver, and a poet, paid at a shilling a-line, more or less, to point out the beauties of the artists' compositions, and to awaken, by his verses or his tale,

the public attention towards the painter. But the poor painter is only the publisher's slave: to live, he must not follow the bent of his own genius, but cater, as best he may, for the public inclination; and the consequence has been, that his art is little better than a kind of prostitution: for the species of pictorial skill which is exhibited in such books as *Beauty's Costume*, the *Book of Beauty*, *Finden's Tableaux*, &c. is really nothing better.

It is hardly necessary to examine these books and designs one by one—they all bear the same character, and are exactly like the "*Books of Beauty*," "*Flowers of Loveliness*," and so on, which appeared last year. A large weak plate, done in what we believe is called the stipple style of engraving, a woman badly drawn, with enormous eyes—a tear, perhaps, upon each cheek—and an exceedingly low-cut dress—pats a greyhound, or weeps into a flower-pot, or delivers a letter to a bandy-legged, curly-headed page. An immense train of white satin fills up one corner of the plate; an urn, a stone-railing, a fountain, and a bunch of hollyhocks, adorn the other: the picture is signed Sharpe,

Parris, Corbould, Corbaux, Jenkins, Brown, as the case may be, and is entitled "the Pearl," "la Dolorosa," "la Biondina," "le Gage d'Amour," "the Forsaken One of Florence," "the Water-lily," or some such name. Miss Landon, Miss Mitford, or my Lady Blessington, writes a song upon the opposite page, about water-lily, chilly, stilly, shivering beside a streamlet, plighted, blighted, love-benighted, falsehood sharper than a gimlet, lost affection, recollection, cut connexion, tears in torrents, true-love token, spoken, broken, sighing, dying, girl of Florence; and so on. The poetry is quite worthy of the picture, and a little sham sentiment is employed to illustrate a little sham art.

It would be curious to know who are the gods from whom these fair poetesses draw their inspiration (and, whatever be their Castaly, they have, as it were, but to turn the cock, and out comes a ready dribble of poetry, which lasts for any given time), or who are the persons from whom the painters receive their orders. It cannot be supposed that Miss Landon, a woman of genius—Miss Mitford, a lady of exquisite wit and taste—should, of their

own accord, sit down to indite namby-pamby verses about silly, half-decent pictures; or that Jenkins, Parris, Meadows, and Co., are not fatigued by this time with the paltry labour assigned to them. Mr. Parris has exhausted all possible varieties of ringlets, eyelashes, naked shoulders, and slim waists; Mr. Meadows, as a humorous painter, possesses very great comic feeling and skill: who sets them to this wretched work?—to paint these eternal fancy portraits, of ladies in voluptuous attitudes and various stages of dishabille, to awaken the dormant sensibilities of misses in their teens, or tickle the worn-out palates of elderly rakes and *roués?* What a noble occupation for a poet! What a delicate task for an artist! "How sweet!" says miss, examining some voluptuous Inez, or some loving Haidee, and sighing for an opportunity to imitate her. "How rich!" says the gloating old bachelor, who has his bed-room hung round with them, or the dandy young shopman, who can only afford to purchase two or three of the most undressed; and the one dreams of opera-girls and French milliners, and the other, of the "splendid women" that he has seen in Mr.

Yates's last new piece at the Adelphi.

The publishers of these prints allow that the taste is execrable which renders such abominations popular, but the public will buy nothing else, and the public must be fed. The painter, perhaps, admits that he abuses his talent (that noble gift of God, which was given him for a better purpose than to cater for the appetites of faded debauchees); but he must live, and he has no other resource. Exactly the same excuse might be made by Mrs. Cole.

Let us look at the *Keepsake*,* which is in pink calico this year, having discarded its old skin of watered crimson silk. The size of the book is larger than formerly, and the names of the contributors (distinguished though they be) withdrawn from the public altogether; the editor stating, in a preface, that if the public like this plan, the mystery shall be sedulously guarded: if otherwise, in the next series the great names of the contributors to the *Keepsake* shall be published, as of old.

There are a dozen plates. A pretty lady, of course, by Chalon, for a frontispiece: next

* The Keepsake for 1838. Royal 8vo. London, Longman.

comes an engraving, called, touchingly, "The First." This represents a Greek kissing a Turkish lady; and, following it, is a third plate, with heart-breaking pathos entitled "*The Last.*" It is our old friend Conrad, with Medora dead in her bed; but there are some other words tricked up to this old tune: "What! is the *ladye* sleeping?" &c. We think we can recognise, in spite of the incog., the fair writer who calls Conrad's mistress a *ladye*. The next is a very good engraving, from a clever picture by Mr. Herbert. A fierce Persian significantly touches his sword; a melancholy girl, in front, looks timidly and imploringly at the spectator. Who can have written the history which has been tagged to this print? Is it Lord Nugent, or Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley, or Lady Blessington, or my Lord Castlereagh, or Lady Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Skeggs? It is of the most profound and pathetic cast, and is called "My Turkish Visit." We quote from it, chiefly to shew the manner in which these matters are arranged between writer and publisher: the tale itself is a perfect curiosity.

A lady introduces the supposed authoress

(for, though the *ego* is feminine in this tale, any one of the above-mentioned noblemen or noblewomen may have written it) to Namich Pasha, the Turkish ambassador at Paris. The authoress longs to see a real Turk, his excellency, Namich, not being enough Mahometan for her. Namich wears a skull-cap and a frock-coat; *her* Turk (dear enthusiast!) must have a turban, a yataghan, a pair of papooshes, a kelaat, a salamalick (for other Turkish terms, consult *Anastasius* and Miss Pardoe), and, perhaps, a harem to boot. The gallant Namich has the very thing in his eye; and the very next day the authoress, in a sledge (sledges were in fashion in Paris that year), drives *several miles down the Versailles road, to the kiosk of a Turkish diamond merchant.* O happy Lady Skeggs! what an adventure! what an imagination above all! Who but a first-rate genius could have invented such an incident, and found a kiosk, and a Turk domiciled in it, on the road to Versailles?

Her ladyship arrives at the kiosk, and thus describes its owner:

"Sooliman was a tall, powerful, but emaciated man, advanced in years, whose countenance bore the remains of much stern beauty; but his large dark eyes had that glaring restlessness which we are apt to ascribe to insanity; his black brows were contracted with severity, and his mouth bore a harsh expression amidst the flowing beard which surrounded it.

"His costume consisted of a long, full dress of violet-coloured cloth, under an open robe of dark green, the edges and hanging sleeves of the latter being bordered with rich sable; a fawn-coloured Cashmere formed his girdle, in which was placed a straight dagger; yellow pointed slippers, formed his garments, and on his head he wore a high cap, *or kalpak*, without ornament."

There he is, as fierce looking a Mussulman as heart could wish for; but a strange creature of a Turk, who in a kiosk at Versailles, with an abhorrence of all the innovations introduced by the grand seignior, and a determination to stick by old customs, has adopted *a Persian costume!* Barikallah, Bismillah, Mahomet re-

soul Allahi, as our friend Fraser * says, he is an Ispahanee, a Shuranzee, a Kizzilbash, and no mistake; but not a Turk. How does our lovely authoress explain the eccentricity?

Proceeding, however, with the interesting story, her ladyship is introduced by the powerful but emaciated Turk to his daughter, who is found in an apartment, of which we delight to give the following tasty description:

"Emerging from darkness, I was dazzled by the bright winter sunbeams pouring into one of the most brilliantly furnished rooms I had ever seen. On three sides it was fitted up with figured velvet sofas; but the south side was entirely in glass, painted in gay garlands, forming part of a conservatory, which was filled with blossoming orange-trees and bright exotics, emitting a delicious fragrance. Three or four beautiful birds were expanding their plumage to the light, whilst a *movable* fountain of per-

* Not the eminent publisher, but the agreeable writer of that name. In spite of the author's assertion (who obtained his intimate knowledge of Persian in a forty-three years' residence at Ispahan), we fancy the figure to be neither Turk nor Persian. There is a Jew model about town, who waits upon artists, and is very like Mr. Herbert's Sooliman.—O. Y.

fumed water threw up its wreaths of living diamonds at the entrance. There was no fireplace; yet, notwithstanding the chilly season, the artificial temperature resembled May; and in the centre of the room stood a golden brazier filled with burning scented woods. The velvet sofas were of *light green*, having golden flowers and tassels; a number of *pink* cushions piled near the window were worked in silver patterns; and one of *white satin, edged with down*, had *what I concluded was a Turkish name* embroidered in *seed pearls*."

This description alone is worth a guinea,—let alone twelve engravings, and a pink calico cover. Mr. Bulwer has done some pretty things in the upholstery line of writing; but, ye gods! what is *Pelham* to compare with our friend at the kiosk,—dirt, at which the delicate mind sickens—dross, pinch-beck, compared to this pure gold. In this kiosk on the Versailles road, nay, in one little chamber of it, we have, *imprimis*,

Four different kinds of scents, viz.,

1. Scented orange-trees;
2. Scented exotics;
3. Scented water in the movable fountain;
4. Scented fire in the golden brazier:

Three different kinds of sofas, viz., light green velvet and gold; rose-pink and silver; white satin, edged with down, and embroidered with seed pearls.

If this is not imagination, where the deuce is it to be sought for? If this is not fine writing, genius is dead! But we must not keep the eager public from the rest of the description, which sweetly runs on thus:

"The walls of white and gold were panelled, and inlaid in various arabesque devices; and, instead of the rough *plafond, too common* in French houses, the ceiling was richly carved and ornamented in *pale rose-colour and gold.*

"Having taken full time to remark all these wonders—for the negress had departed instantly—I approached a low table, on which were several books bound in velvet and gold; a writing-stand embossed with gems, with *a penholder imitating a feather, in pearls.* Beside

the table, *on a beautiful reading-stand,* and covered with a gauze and gold handkerchief, was a large volume, clasped with an amethyst, *which I concluded was the Koran.* While I was bending over it, I heard the door close at the other end of the room, and, on looking round, I felt that I beheld the princess of this fairy palace, Aminéh Hanoom, the daughter of Sooliman."

Talk of the silver-fork school of romance, gracious heavens! Give silver forks for the future to base grooms, or lowly dustmen. A silver fork, forsooth! it may serve to transfix a saveloy, or to perforate a roasted tator; but never let the term be used for the future to designate a series of novels which pretend to describe polite life. After this, all else is low and mean. Who before ever imagined a Mussulman writing with a Bramah *penholder;* who ever invented such jewels for an inkstand, or flung such a handkerchief over such a reading-stand?

The authoress (if *not* a she, it really is too bad) ingratiates herself with Miss Hanoom

[نوان دم], and sleeps with her on the very same night. The beauties of the drawing-room are outdone by the splendour of the best chamber.

"*Goumah* (the nigger girl before mentioned) having entered to attend us for the night, I accompanied Aminéh to her own apartment. I had an impression that the Turkish apartments were arranged with a simplicity strongly contrasting with their day-rooms; so that I was quite unprepared for the new splendour awaiting me.

"In two recesses, draperied with silk, were piles of mattrasses, covered in satin, edged with silver fringe; numerous pillows of spotted gauze *over pink satin* (we breathe again—it cannot be a man), and eider-down counterpanes covered with velvet. On Aminéh's couch the latter was of *apricot-coloured velvet*, with *her initials* in small pearls in the centre; at the side of each couch was placed a purple velvet prayer-carpet. A beautiful *ruby-coloured* lamp gave its soft light around; and long after Aminéh slumbered I remained in a waking dream, scarcely daring

to ask my delighted senses, can all these things be?" *

Sleep, happy Wilhelmina Amelia, we will follow thee no further.

But seriously, or, as Dr. Lardner says, *seriatim*, is this style of literature to continue to flourish in England? Is every year to bring more nonsense like this, for foolish parents to give to their foolish children; for dull people to dawdle over till the dinner-bell rings; to add something to the trash on my lady's drawing-room table, or in Miss's bookcase? *Quousque tandem?* How far, O Keepsake, wilt thou abuse our forbearance? How many more bad pictures are to be engraved, how many more dull stories to be written, how long will journalists puff and the gulled public purchase? It is curious to read the titles of the *Keepsake* prints, as they follow in order: after the three first which we have noticed come,

The Greek Maiden;

Zuleikha;

* Our friend Mr. Yellowplush has made inquiries as to the authorship of this tale, and his report is that it is universally ascribed in the highest circles to Miss Howell-and-James.

Angelica;

Theresa;

Walter and Ida (a clever picture, by Edward Corbould);

The Silver Lady;

and all (save the one which we have marked) bad—bad in artistical feeling, careless in drawing, poor and feeble in effect. There is not one of these beauties, with her great eyes, and slim waist, that looks as if it had been painted from a human figure. It is but a slovenly, ricketty, wooden imitation of it, tricked out in some tawdry feathers and frippery, and no more like a real woman than the verses which accompany the plate are like real poetry.

There are one or two shops in London where German prints are exhibited in the windows; it is humiliating to pass them, and contrast the art of the two countries. Look at the Two Leonoras, for instance, and contrast them with some of the heroines of Mr. Parris, or the plump graces of Mr. Meadows. Take his picture called the Pansies, for instance, in that delectable book the *Flowers of Loveliness*, and contrast it with the German print. In the latter,

nothing escapes the artist's industry, or is too mean for him to slur over or forget. The figures are of actual real flesh and blood; their dresses, their ornaments, every tittle and corner of the whole picture, carefully copied from nature. Mr. Meadows is, perhaps, more poetic; he trusts to genius, and draws at random; and yet, of the two pictures, which is the most poetical and ideal? those simple, lifelike, tender Leonoras, with sweet calm faces, and pure earnest eyes; or the fat indecency in "the Pansies,"* whose shoulders are exposed as shoulders never ought to be, and drawn as shoulders never were. Another fat creature, in equal dishabille, embraces Fatima, No. 1; a third, archly smiling, dances away, holding in her hand a flower—there is no bone or muscle in that coarse bare bosom, those unnatural naked arms, and fat dumpy fingers. The idea of the picture is coarse, mean, and sensual—the execution of it no better.

We have seized upon Mr. Meadows, for

* Flowers of Loveliness. Twelve groups of Female Figures representing Flowers. Designed by various Artists, with Poetical Illustrations by L. E. L. London, 1838. Ackermann.

he is the cleverest man of the whole bunch of artists to whom this style of painting is confided, and can do far better things. Why not condescend to be decent, and careful, and natural? And why should Miss Corbaux paint naked women, called water-lilies, and paint them ill? or Mr. Uwins design a group of females (the Hyacinths), who have limbs that females never had, and crouch in attitudes so preposterous and unnatural? Both these artists have shewn how much more they can do: it is only the taste of the age which leads them to degrade the talent with which they are gifted, and the art which they profess.

It is tedious to continue a criticism upon a subject which offers so little room for remark or praise. It is the test of a good picture, after seeing it once, to remember it involuntarily, as it were, and to distinguish it from a host of the inferior brood. Yet, in looking through those dozen volumes of Annuals, there is not one plate in the whole two hundred which can be recalled to memory the day after it has been seen. It is a shame that so much time and cleverness should be wasted upon things so

unproductive. In *Friendship's Offering** and the *Forget-Me-Not*,† there are, with the exception of the frontispieces, but two pictures of moderate merit—an Italian view by Stanfield, and a picture of Venice by Werner: all the engraver's skill and labour goes for naught, when employed upon the paltry subjects which illustrate the volumes. In Roberts' Annual, the prints are more successful; for the artist is skilful, and his drawings are far more easily copied in engraving than subjects of history or figures. The pictorial illustrations of the *Christian Keepsake*‡ and *Fisher's Drawing-room Scrap-Book*§ are, to speak with due reverence, humbug. Some of them have already figured in evangelical magazines, some in missionary memoirs, some in historical portrait galleries —some few are original; but the general character of the works is not original—the draw-

* Friendship's Offering, and Winter's Wreath: a Christmas and New Year's Present for 1838. London, 1838. Smith and Co.

† Forget-Me-Not: a Christmas, New Year's, and Birth-day Present, for 1838. Edited by Frederick Shoberl. London, 1838. Ackermann.

‡ The Christian Keepsake for 1838. Edited by the Rev. William Ellis. 8vo. London, 1838. Fisher.

§ The Drawing-room Scrap-Book. Dedicated to Queen Victoria. With Poetical Illustrations by L. E. L. 4to. London, 1838. Fisher.

ings have served, most likely, some profane purpose, before they were converted to pious use: and it is painful to read so frequently the name of religion *exploitée* in this instance to puff off old prints, and enhance publishers' profits. Of a similar degree of humbug is the *Juvenile Scrap-Book** — it comes from the same firm to which we owe the *Christian Keepsake*. The prints, with an affectation of novelty, and with new stories or poems to illustrate them, are poor and old. There is the old plate of the Princess Victoria, published two years ago, and the old plate of Carlisle Castle, and Gainsborough's milk-girl, and Duppa's Magdalen (or Carlo Dolce's), newly scraped up by the engraver, and with a fine new title. The unwary public, who purchase Mr. Fisher's publications, will be astonished, if they knew but the secret, with the number of repetitions, and the ingenuity with which one plate is made to figure, now in the *Scrap-Book*, now in the *Views of Syria*,† and now in the *Christian*

* Fisher's Juvenile Scrap-Book. By Agnes Strickland and Bernard Barton. London, 1838. Fisher.

† Fisher's Oriental Keepsake, 1838. Syria, the Holy Land, Asia Minor, &c. illustrated. In a series of Views drawn from Nature,

Keepsake. Heaven knows how many more periodicals are issued from the same establishment, and how many different titles are given to each individual print!

We have arrived almost at the end of the list. Mr. Hall's *Book of Gems** has far higher pretensions and merits than the rest of the collection. The paintings are new, and generally good, and the engravings are careful and brilliant—if they were but three times the size, both painters and engravers would have done themselves justice: the poetry is also very well selected; and the book may lie upon all drawing-room tables in the country, and not offend modesty or good taste. But what shall we say of *Gems of Beauty*† and *Finden's Tableaux?*‡ There is not a good picture among all

by W. H. Bartlett, William Purser, &c. With Descriptions of the Plates, by John Carne, Esq. Author of "Letters from the East." Second edition, 4to. London; Fisher.

* The Book of Gems: the Modern Poets and Artists of Great Britain. Edited by S. C. Hall. 8vo. London, 1838. Whittaker.

† Gems of Beauty, displayed in a Series of Twelve highly finished Engravings of the Passions, from Designs by E. T. Parris, Esq. With fanciful Illustrations in Verse, by the Countess of Blessington. 4to. London, 1838. Longman.

‡ Finden's Tableaux: a Series of Picturesque Scenes of National Character, Beauty, and Costume. From Paintings by various Ar-

the numerous illustrations to these gaudy volumes. We have not meddled with the prose or verse which illustrates the illustrations. Miss Landon writes so many good things, that it would be a shame to criticise any thing indifferent from her pen—Miss Mitford has made the English reader pass so many pleasant hours, that we must pardon a few dull ones. The wonder is that either of the ladies can write so well, and affix to this endless succession of paltry prints, verses indifferent sometimes, but excellent so often. In the work called *Fisher's Scrap-Book*, for instance, Miss Landon has performed a miracle—it may be "a miracle instead of wit;" but it is a perfect wonder how any lady could have penned such a number of verses upon all sorts of subjects, and upon subjects, perhaps, on which, in former volumes of this *Scrap-Book*, she has poetised half-a-dozen times before. She will pardon us for asking, if she does justice to her great talent by employing it in this way? It is the gift of God to her —to watch, to cherish, and to improve: it was

tists, after Sketches by W. Perring. Edited by Mary Russell Mitford, author of "Our Village," &c. London, 1838. Tilt.

not given her to be made over to the highest bidder, or to be pawned for so many pounds per sheet. An inferior talent (like that of many of whom we have been speaking) must sell itself to live—a *genius* has higher duties; and Miss Landon degrades hers, by producing what is even indifferent.

Here, however, rather late in the month, appear the *Children of the Nobility**—a charming series of portraits by Chalon, Bostock, and Maclise. The beauty of the collection is that the pictures are really from nature; while your Leilas, Lillas, and such trash, are but the offspring of a very poor imagination. O lovely, melancholy Miss Copleys! O sweet, fantastic Lady Somersets! O charming Lady Mary Howard! you are brighter than all the Gems of Beauty melted down, and all the Flowers of Loveliness in a bunch. This book is a real treasure. Mr. Chalon, our Watteau, has contributed the greater part of the series. Both

* Portraits of the Children of the Nobility: a Series of highly finished Engravings, executed under the superintendence of Mr. Charles Heath. From Drawings by Alfred E. Chalon, Esq. R. A., and other eminent Artists. With Illustrations in Verse, by distinguished Contributors. Edited by Mrs. Fairlie. First Series, 4to. London, 1838. Longman.

Mr. Maclise's drawings are admirable in truth and feeling; and the contributions of Mr. Bostock merit no less praise. These gentlemen, not the humblest among artists, will condescend to copy flesh and blood, and the consequence is that there is not a single bad drawing in the collection. Now, let us look at the *Book of Beauty*,* in which are many portraits likewise. The difference between the natural beauties and the artificial is quite ludicrous. Chalon's Ayesha, Meadows's Dolorida, and somebody else by Jenkins, are, of course, from imagination, and are, in consequence, the three worst plates of the book. Dolorida is neither more nor less than shameful—another of Mr. Meadows's fatties in a chemise. If it were but a good honest fat woman, dressed or undressed in real calico, we should not cry out; but the chemise is unnatural, and so is the woman, who has not even the merit of beauty to recommend her. Let the reader look, too, at the difference between Chalon's Ayesha, and Chalon's Mrs. Lane Fox; the former is a caricature of a wo-

* Book of Beauty, 1838, with highly finished Engravings. Edited by the Countess of Blessington. Royal 8vo. London, 1838. Longman.

man, and the other—it is difficult to speak of the other—such a piece of voluptuous loveliness is dangerous to look at or describe. The binding of this book, by the way, is perfectly hideous—it looks like one of Lord Palmerston's cast-off waistcoats.

*The Authors of England** are engraved in that admirable medallion style which has lately been invented by Mr. Collas. They are from reliefs by Weeks and Wyon, and are startling in effect and reality. This book can hardly be called an Annual, for it has a permanent interest, and is sure, we should think, of an extensive popularity. Artists alone should buy it as a study, for there is no better, in the science of light and shade, and line drawing. It is marvellous what effects and imitations of nature are produced by this method, by which the engravings look as real as the medals from which they are taken.

* The Authors of England: a Series of Medallion Portraits of Modern Literary Characters, engraved from the works of British artists, by Achille Collas. With Illustrative Notices by Henry F. Chorley. 4to. London, 1838. Tilt.

OUR ANNUAL EXECUTION

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THE best part of education in England used formerly to be the ROD. It made good scholars, brave soldiers, and honest gentlemen: it acted upon our English youth in a manner the most gentle, the most wholesome, the most effectual. It was applied indiscriminately, it is true; but were any the worse for it? Is there any man, of Eton or Westminster, who reads this, and can say that any part of him was injured by the rod-application? Not one? Is there any, to go a step further, who can say that he was not benefited? We pause for a reply. None? Then none has it offended. Blessings be on the memory of the rod! It is dead now: all the twigs are withered, all the buds have dropped off. It is a moss-grown and forgotten ruin, sacred only to a few, who worship timidly at the shrine where their fathers bowed openly, who still exercise the rod-worship, and cherish the recollections of the dear old times.

The critical rod, too, is, for the most part, thrown aside. This, however, was subject to

more abuses than the scholastic rod (which was applied moderately only, and to parts where the defences against injury are naturally strong); critics were too fierce with their weapon, and did not mind where their blows hit. A poor, harmless fellow, has been whipped unto death's door almost, when the critic thought that he was only wholesomely correcting him; another has been maimed for life, whom fierce-handed flagellifer had thought only to tickle. Such abuses came sometimes from sheer exuberance of spirits on the part of the critic (take the Great Professor, who, in fun, merely seizes on an unlucky devil, and flogs every morsel of skin off his back, so that he shall not be able to sit, lie, or walk, for months to come); sometimes from professional enthusiasm (like that which some great surgeons have, who cannot keep their fingers from the knife); sometimes, alas! from personal malice, when the critic is no more than a literary cut-throat and brutal assassin, for whose infamy no punishment is too strong. The proper method, finally—for why affect modesty, and beat about the bush?—is that particular method which WE adopt. If the subject

to be operated upon be a poor weak creature, switch him gently, and then take him down. If he be a pert pretender, as well as an ignoramus, cut smartly, and make him cry out; his antics will not only be amusing to the lookers on, but instructive likewise: a warning to other impostors, who will hold their vain tongues, and not be quite so ready for the future to thrust themselves in the way of the public. But, as a general rule, never flog a man, unless there are hopes of him; if he be a real malefactor, sinning not against taste merely, but truth, give him a grave trial and punishment: don't flog him, but brand him solemnly, and then cast him loose. The best cure for humbug is satire—here above typified as the rod; for crime, you must use the *hot iron:* but this, thank Heaven! is seldom needful, not more than once or twice in the seven-and-thirty years that we ourselves have sate on the bench.

Some such gentle switching as we have spoken of (mingled, however, with much sweet praise and honour for the meritorious) we are about to administer to the writers and draughtsmen for the Annuals of the present year. We

had intended to pass them over altogether, having belaboured one or two of them twelve months since, had not the rest of the London critics, as we see by the advertisements, chosen to indulge in such unseemly praises and indecent raptures as may mislead the painters, authors, and the public, and prove the critics themselves to be quite unworthy of the posts they fill. Bad as the system of too much abusing is, the system of too much praising is a thousand times worse; and praise, monstrous, indiscriminate, wholesale, is the fashion of the day. The critics, for the most part, are down on their knees to authors and artists: every twaddling rhymester who fills a page in an Annual, and every poor dabbler in art who illustrates it, turn out to be a Raphael, a Byron the Second; and the public—with respect be it spoken, in matters of art the most ignorant, the most credulous public in Europe—falls down on its knees in imitation of the critic, and to every one of his prayers roars out its stupid amen.*

* In matters of art, the public is entirely led by critics, or by names: for instance, in theatrical matters, what was the Kean mania of last season? The power of a name merely. Why is the

Thus we have been compelled to revert to the Annuals, for there are dangerous symptoms of a return to the old superstition, and unless we cry out it is not improbable that the public will begin to fancy once more that the verses which they contain are real poetry, and the pictures real painting: and thus painters, poets, and public, will be spoiled alike.

An eminent artist, who read those remarkable pages on the Annuals which appeared in this Magazine last year, was pleased to give us his advice, in case we ever should be tempted to return to the same subject at a future season. He had adopted the new faith about criticism, and was of opinion that it is the writer's duty only to speak of pictures particularly, when one could speak in terms of praise; not, of course, to praise unjustly, but to be discreetly silent when there was no oppor-

Olympic Theatre not so well attended during the absence of the fair lady who rents it? The performances are, if possible, better and smarter than ever; but the public has been accustomed to think Madame Vestris charming, and will have no other. Why was the opera of *Barbara*, at Covent Garden, the prettiest, the liveliest, the best acted piece, we have seen for many a day, unsuccessful—hissed even regularly? Because the public has a notion that Covent Garden is for tragedy only, and will not allow that it can produce a good musical piece.

tunity. This was the dictum of old Goethe (as may be seen in Mrs. Austin's "Characteristics" of that gentleman), who employed it, as our own Scott did likewise, as much, we do believe, to save himself trouble, and others annoyance, as from any conviction of the good resulting from the plan. It is a fine maxim, and should be universally adopted—across a table. Why should not Mediocrity be content, and fancy itself Genius? Why should not Vanity go home, and be a little more vain? If you tell the truth, ten to one but Dullness only grows angry, and is not a whit less dull than before,—such being its nature. But when *I* becomes *we* —sitting in judgment, and delivering solemn opinions—*we* must tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; for then there is a third party concerned—the public—between whom and the writer, or painter, the critic has to arbitrate, and he is bound to shew no favour. What is kindness to the one, is injustice to the other, who looks for an honest judgment, and is by far the most important party of the three; the two others being, the one the public's servant, the other the public's

appraiser, sworn to value, to the best of his power, the article that is for sale. The critic does not value rightly, it is true, once in a thousand times; but if he do not deal *honestly*, wo be to him! The hulks are too pleasant for him, transportation too light. For ourselves, our honesty is known; every man of the band of critics (that awful, unknown Vehmgericht, that sits in judgment in the halls of REGINA) is gentle, though inexorable, loving though stern, *just* above all. As fathers, we have for our dutiful children the most tender yearning and love; but we are, every one of us, Brutuses, and at the sad intelligence of our childrens' treason we weep—the father will; *but we chop their heads off.*

Enough of apology and exposition of our critical creed; let us proceed to business.

* * * *

The *Book of Royalty* * has the finest coat of all the Annuals, and contains, by way of illustration, a number of lithographic drawings,

* The Book of Royalty. Characteristics of British Palaces. By Mrs. S. C. Hall. The Drawings by W. Perring and J. Brown. London, 1839. Ackermann.

by Messrs. Perring and Brown, gaily coloured with plenty of carmine, emerald green, and cobalt blue. The pictures are agreeable, though not very elaborate—perhaps *because* not very elaborate; for the sketches of the above-named artists are far better than their pictures in a great book which is called *Finden's Tableaux of the Affections*,* and in which Messrs. Perring and Brown have had every thing in their own way. Nothing can be more false, poor, or meretricious, than the taste characteristic of these productions, which consist of female pages, in light pantaloons, dissolved in grief; Moorish ladies; Greek wives; Swiss shepherdesses; and such like. They are bad figures, badly painted, and drawn, standing in the midst of bad landscapes; the whole engraved in that mean, weak, conventional manner, which engravers have nowadays,—in which there is no force, breadth, texture, nor feeling of drawing; but only that paltry smoothness and effect which are the result of pure mechanical skill,

* Finden's Tableaux of the Affections. A Series of Picturesque Illustrations of the Womanly Virtues. From Paintings by W. Perring. Edited by Mary Russell Mitford, author of "Our Village." London, 1839. Tilt.

and which a hundred workhouse-boys or tailors' apprentices would learn equally well—better than a man of genius would do. But, what matters? The beauty of certain English engravings is, that they are so entirely without character, that one may look at them year after year, and forget them always; especially if a new set of verses appear every Christmas, being fresh illustrations of the old plates.

The dumpy little *Forget-Me-Not** opens with a very poor engraving, from a very poor picture by Parris, which is as flimsy as an engraving in the *Petit Courrier des Dames*, but not so authentic; and contains a dozen other pieces, of which "Pocahontas," by Middleton, and Nash's "Sir Henry Lee at Prayers," are perhaps the best specimens. This and the *Friendship's Offering* † are the last of the original Annuals: and a great comfort it is that the publishers and public have found out the mistake of size, and that the younger Annuals are in dimensions far more capacious than their fa-

* Forget-Me-Not: a Christmas, New Year, and Birth-day Present for 1839. London. Ackermann.

† Friendship's Offering and Winter's Wreath for 1839. London. Smith and Elder.

thers and mothers—young Jupiters, who have deposed the old paternal dynasty. Unable to say much for the pictorial part of the *Forget-Me-Not*, we are glad to find the literary contents much superior to many of the very biggest Annuals; and quote a piece of an admirable marine story, at which the reader cannot but be frightened:—

"The lad performed his task, and gave the result to the mate, who was seated before his log-book. 'Latitude, 3° 6′ N.; longitude, 63° 20′ 5″ E., sir,' said he, as the captain slowly opened the door of his cabin. It was instantly closed with the utmost violence, and the startled apprentice hurried away.

"The dinner hour arrived, and the steward summoned his chief. No reply was given, till the mate repeated that the table was served. 'I do not choose any dinner, Mr. Osborne,' was the reply: 'these warm latitudes take away my appetite. Let me have some soda-water.'

"The order was obeyed, and the solitary mate hurried over his meal in silence. The day passed on with its accustomed duties; and, to the as-

tonishment of every one, the captain appeared on deck with a more cheerful countenance than he had ever been seen to assume: he looked around and inhaled the cool breeze of the evening with apparent pleasure. He spoke kindly to the mate, and attempted to smile at the fine lad who had reported the progress of the ship. A gentle ripple curled against the sides of the vessel; and there was almost an air of gladness throughout her inhabitants, as she skimmed the surface of the deep blue waters.

"The next day, the mate, the apprentice, and the captain himself, prepared to make their observations. The sun reached its meridian, and the latitude was worked; the lad looked at the mate with astonishment—the latitude was the same as the day before. The quadrant dropped from the hands of the captain; but, as Mr. Osborne picked it up, he said, 'Perhaps we have had too much easting, sir; we will work the longitude.'

"'Ah, true!' said the captain.

"'I am sure,' said the helmsman, 'we have been steering N. E. by N. ever since yesterday.'

"'Hold your tongue,' said the mate. He and

the lad retired to the cuddy, and made their calculations; and the longitude proved to be the same as the day before.

"'There must have been some mistake,' said the mate; 'but we must enter it as such. She seems to be going along nicely now, however. But so she did yesterday,' thought he. 'What can be hanging over us?'

"No rest was taken by either master or mate the whole of that night: the latter paced the deck, and the former the cuddy, throughout the dreamy hours; and they met at breakfast without exchanging a word. Noon approached; and, as they took their stand, 'Now, my lad,' said the mate to the apprentice, 'we have been steering due north all night, and I think we shall find some difference.'

"Again did the sun, with its dazzling brightness, reach the southernmost point, and again did the mate and the apprentice look aghast at each other: the figures were the same; and yet the quadrants were in excellent order. The mate first recovered himself: 'For your life,' said he, in a low voice, 'tell this to no man, but see what your longitude is, and come quietly into

the cuddy with it, written on the edge of your quadrant. Again, I charge you not to utter a sound.'

"The lad sat down in a corner close to the door, and having performed his task, tremblingly presented it to the mate within, who was leaning his head upon his hand, as if buried in thought, but evidently knowing the result: he copied the figures into the log-book, left it open on the table, and quitted the cuddy with the apprentice. No sooner had they departed than the captain softly opened the door of his cabin, and, with stealthy pace, crept to the log: the same figures, three times repeated, saluted his eyes. A look of frenzied despair passed over his features; then, clenching his fist and striking his forehead, he rushed back into his cabin.

"A deathlike stillness reigned upon deck; the crew stared at each other with wondering and anxious looks; the mate seemed to gasp for breath as he sadly leaned over the gangway; the sky was bright and clear, and of that deep colour which is so beautiful between the tropics; not another living thing was seen in the equally clear and blue ocean; and that doomed

vessel, with her twenty-six souls, seemed to be the only speck in the vast wilderness around. Five minutes more, and the captain rushed on deck in a frantic state: 'Crowd on all sail, Osborne—let her stagger under it! By all the powers in Heaven, we will leave this accursed spot!'

"His orders were obeyed, and he himself lent a hand to facilitate their execution; his hat fell off; his long black locks blew from his ample forehead; his flashing eyes, his finely cut features, his muscular frame, seeming to possess superhuman strength; his sonorous, yet melodious voice, resounding from stem to stern, seemed to fill the vault above. But, crowd as they would, they were now sensible that the vessel did not move. The sea became smooth as glass; the canvass flapped listlessly against the masts: but still the ship did not roll as in a calm; she seemed to be out of the power of ordinary events.

"As the last rope was pulled, and the men could do no more, a loud ringing laugh was heard by every one; each thought it was his neighbour. A breeze passed over every won-

dering face; and still the sails flapped. But presently a small black cloud appeared in the horizon. 'A white squall!' said one of the men.

"'Take in all sail, stand by to cut the halliards,' cried the mate, 'or we are lost!'

"'A white squall do you call it?' said one of the men, sulkily. 'I call it a black one.'

"They looked round for the captain for orders, but he was gone; and they heard his door close with frightful violence.

"The black cloud came, and spread over a large surface immediately above the ship: it then opened, and two figures of frightful form descended from it, bearing between them a coffin, which they placed on the deck. One of them stationed himself by its side, with a huge hammer and several nails in his hand, and the other took the lid from the coffin. 'Charles Osborne!' exclaimed he. The mate advanced, and was laid in the coffin: it was much too narrow for him, and he was rudely pushed upon the deck. Another and another was summoned by name, till all the twenty-five had tried the dimensions: for some it was too short, for others too long; it was then too wide, or too slender in

its proportions: but, as each took his station in it, the figure with the hammer and nails stood with uplifted hands, ready to strike and to close the victim within it.

"Those who had clear consciences advanced with pale but calm countenances; others trembled violently. Those who had much to repent of were convulsed, and big drops of perspiration stood upon their foreheads. These were so near fitting, that the figures grinned with delight; they were even pressed down into the coffin, as if to stuff them in: but the demons, shaking their heads, violently tossed them out again, with an impatient gesture.

"At length the whole of the twenty-five had taken their turn; and, while they blessed their own escape, they anxiously fixed their eyes on the cuddy-door.

"'There is yet another,' said one of the demons, in a hollow tone: 'Come forth, Ferdinand Conder!'

"With erect mien and ghastly smile, the captain for the last time issued from his place of refuge, looking like a man who knew that his hour was come, but determined to meet

his fate with firmness. He gave one look of affection at the mate, and quietly laid himself in the coffin. In an instant the lid was closed over him; nine nails were driven in, with one blow to each: and, taking the coffin in their arms, the figures ascended into the black cloud, which closed over them. The vessel seemed to rise out of the waters; and as she returned to their surface with a mighty plunge, a tremendous rush and the word 'Murder' were heard above. The cloud disappeared, and all was still!"

The first and most important fact of the *Keepsake** is the binding. Hancock's India-rubber binding answers to a wonder, and displays the plates and the letterpress of the *Keepsake* as they never were displayed before: as for the latter, perhaps, the binding is a little too liberal towards it, for it compels one to read the text willy-nilly, and, of course, to grow angry over the silly twaddle one reads. How much better, in this respect, is the arrangement of the *Forget-Me-Not;* of which the copies before us will neither open nor shut, so

* The Keepsake for 1839. Edited by Frederick Mansell Reynolds. London. Longman.

cleverly has the binder arranged it. But "*revenons à nos Kipsicks.*" In the frontispiece figures Madame Guiccioli, a clever engraving by Thompson, after Chalon the monopolizer. Next follows:—

2. "The Unearthly Visitant." A beautiful picture, by Herbert; engraved by Stocks. This picture is in the very best style of English art, carefully drawn, well composed, graceful, earnest, and poetical; and we, the most ruthless critics in the world, are pleased to say, "Well done, Herbert!"

3. "The Shipwreck." A scene from *Don Juan.* By Bentley.

4. "Maida." By Miss Corbaux. Portraits, most probably. The child is pretty and graceful, like one of Sir Joshua's.

5. "Mary Danvers." Dyce. A charming, smiling, little girl. One of the very best figures that appear among the prints of the season.

6. "The Tableau," *alias* Beppo. Mr. Herbert never makes *bad* pictures, but this is not a very good one.

7. "The Battle-Field." Harding. Alp's midnight interview with Miss Minotti, from the

popular poem of the *Siege of Corinth.* Guns, ruins, horse-tails, moonlight, ghosts, and Turks. Not quite the best of Mr. Harding's works.

8. "Constantine and Euphrasia." A picture, by E. Corbould, in the fiddle-faddle style. This picture represents Conrad carrying off Gulnare in the most milk-and-water manner imaginable. The corsair has his right foot forwards, like Monsieur Albert; and Gulnare, in his arms, smiles like Mademoiselle Duvernay.

9. "The Reefer." Chalon. One of Mr. Chalon's pretty affectations. A young midshipman leans across the foretop-gallant yard, and turns towards heaven the largest pair of eyes ever seen. The dear little fellow's collar is sadly rumpled, and his hair entirely out of curl. Sweet fellow! Pray Heaven he don't catch cold!

10. "Mary of Mantua." Miss Corbaux. A beautiful head, but a droll pair of hands.

11. "Speranza appearing to Vane," *alias* Manfred. Meadows. Oh, Mr. Meadows!

And this is the *catalogue raisonné* of the *Keepsake* gallery for the present year: an improvement, decidedly, on the last, containing, for the most part, better pictures, and of a

better class. A great improvement, too, is in the *size* of the plates, which, since the first unlucky discovery of Annuals, have been expanding and expanding, until, at last, painter and engraver may hope for justice, and their hands need no longer be so miserably cramped as they have been.

So much for the plates of the *Keepsake;* and now for the poetry and the prose. We have bestowed praise enough on Mr. Herbert's "Unearthly Visitors;" a noble lady has composed the following verses to it:—

"The grave hath opened now, and hath restored
The lost, the loved, the lovely, and the adored.
Death! thou'rt the awful, thou'rt the mighty Death!
And who but trembles at thy power beneath!
But thou art *not* the almighty Death; thou'rt *not*—
Despite thy mastery o'er our troubled lot—
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
The unconquerable, the unconquered of the earth.
12 13
[*A good liberal measure for a decasyllabic line.*]
No! Praised be Heaven that called us this birth!
Love is the mightier! He thy bounds can break,
And bid the slumberers from the tombs awake.
What is this form, from thy dark realms set free,
That looks a sovereign thing o'er Fate and Thee?
That thus hath burst thy dull and dismal bound,
With beauty beatific clad and crowned?
Ay! *beatifically beauteous* there

She stands, than life more lovely far, and fair.
Spirit to spirit the long parted meet,
And solemnly, mysteriously, they greet.
The world recedes; gray Time draws back in fear—
Gray Time, a monarch and a master here,
With all his shadowy years, that *fleetly fly*
Before the presence of the Eternity:
Before the Eternity that looks in light,
From those calm eyes the spiritually bright.
Earth's son shakes off earth's pain-surrounding things;
His soul soars proudly on unfettered wings.
Spirit to spirit, the long parted meet,
And solemnly, mysteriously they meet!"

What can we say of these lines? They are "beatifically beauteous," and no mistake. One is puzzled to know whether they are the more clear in thought, or lucid in expression; one is puzzled, above all, to know why ladies will write such things, or editors of Annuals print them. Here are some more aristocratic

STANZAS.

By Lord J. Manners.

"Most beautiful! I love thee,
By thy eye of melting blue:
In life and death I 'll prove me
Faithful, kind, and true.

Most beautiful! I love thee,
By the heart that now I give:

O let my fond prayers move thee
To bid me hope and live!"

When it is recollected that the above lines were made by his lordship at six years of age, the reader will make every allowance for him; had he been six years older we might have been inclined to be severe. One more specimen let us give, from a sweet tale by the Honourable Grantley Fitzhardinge Berkeley, M. P., who says that, since he published an article in the *Keepsake*, in the year 1835—

"I have mingled much in the world, and, with a heart *cold and storm-worn* as the brow of Jura, sought out its associations, and affected to feel and be swayed by impulses and attachments, of which I only remembered the force; but which remembrance enabled me to act the part, or feign a reality, sufficiently to make my fellow-creatures believe I was as gaily, as gregariously inclined as they were. Had the undisguised truth been known, I stood amid the pliant and breeze-swayed forest of humanity, as the blighted and lightning-struck oak rears its dry and unmovable limbs above the sur-

rounding verdure of the wilderness; stretching forth my arms, and pointing alone to that blessed sky, to which, as it is the home of all blessed souls, I deemed my own, my sweet, my fascinating spirit of the Wye had, in all her loveliness, departed!"

O day and night! But he is a rare genius! Fancy the hero of the tale of the Honourable Grantley Fitzhardinge Berkeley standing "a blighted oak, amid the pliant and breeze-swayed forest of humanity!" "with a heart cold and storm-worn as the brow of Jura!" "rearing his dry and unmovable limbs above the surrounding verdure of the wilderness!" "stretching forth his arms, and pointing alone to that blessed sky!" * * where dwells the kindred spirit of Bayes! This man—we speak it as a Niagara cataract of impetuous emotion gushes softly from each eye, and an abysmal earthquake of storm-up-rooted feelings, and smouldering chaotic lava, heaves the tempestuous bosom—this is THE man of the Annuals! Amid the desert of contributors he stands, a huge and lonely pyramid, in solitary greatness. Let

the red simoom rage at his base, what cares he? Awe-stricken, the red simoom scuds screaming away, and the lustrous stars look calm upon his stalactitic apex! In a word (for if we were to keep the steam of our style *crescendo*, we might blow the Magazine and all Regent Street into atoms), as the *Athenæum* says, Mr. Berkeley "may now take his place," &c. &c. among the brightest spirits, &c. &c. of our time.

There are three landscape annuals, as before. The *Oriental*,* with engravings after sketches by Mr. Bacon; the *Landscape*,† which Mr. Holland has illustrated with Portuguese views; and the *Picturesque*,‡ which contains an elaborate description of Versailles, with numerous engravings after Callow, Mackenzie, and Collignon. All the letterpress of these books merits applause. Mr. Bacon tells pleasant Indian stories; Mr. Harrison has a store of Portuguese sketches

* The Oriental Annual. Containing a Series of Tales, Legends, and Historical Romances. By Thomas Bacon, Esq., F. S. A. With Engravings by W. and E. Finden, from Sketches by the Author. London, 1839. Tilt.

† Jennings's Landscape Annual; or, Tourist in Portugal. By W. H. Harrison. Illustrated by Paintings by James Holland. London, 1839. Jennings.

‡ Heath's Picturesque Annual for 1839. Versailles: by Leitch Ritchie, Esq. London. Longman.

and legends; Mr. Leitch Ritchie, finally, writes or translates a history of Versailles, which alone will give the reader a very tolerable smattering of French history. Mr. Bacon is not, we presume, artist enough to do more than sketch; so Roberts, Stanfield, and others, have been employed to complete the drawings. Mr. Callow's are capital designs for the *Picturesque;* and Mr. Holland is a welcome addition to the landscape painters. His drawings are not quite so glib and smooth as those from more practical hands; but they are, perhaps, more like nature, and certainly less mannered, than the excellent, though exaggerated, performances of some of the seniors in the art.

Mr. Fisher has employed, as usual, the aid of L. E. L. to set off his old plates, many of which we recognise as having been shifted from a work published by Mr. Tilt into the *Drawing-room Scrap-book* * and *Juvenile* † ditto: not, however, that there is any harm in so doing; for, luckily, such is the character of Eng-

* Fisher's Drawing-Room Scrap-Book for 1839. With Poetical Illustrations by L. E. L. London. Fisher.

† Fisher's Juvenile Scrap-Book for 1839. By Agnes Strickland and Bernard Barton. London. Fisher.

lish art, such a beautiful vapidity pervades the chief portion of the pictures submitted to the public, that to remember them is a sheer impossibility: we may look at them over and over again, year after year, *Scrap-book* after *Scrap-book*, and never recognise our former insipid acquaintances; so that the very best plan is this of the Messrs. Fisher, to change, not the plates, but just the names underneath, and make Medora into Haidee, or Desdemona, or what you will. As for the poets, they are always ready, and will turn you off a set of stanzas regarding either or every one of the characters with ingenuity never failing.

Here, *à propos*, comes a letter which has been slipped into our box, written on pink paper, in a hand almost illegible, without the aid of a magnifying glass, smelling of musk, and signed "Rosalba de Montmorency."

To the Editor of Fraser's Magazine.

Sir,—In making you *mes complimens empressés*, allow me to state how *flattered and proud* I should feel if the accompanying *chansonnettes* could appear in the pages of your *Recueil.*

I have presented them, I confess, to the editors of one or two of the Keepsakes, in humble hope, that, amid the poetesses of our clime, the humble Rosalba de Montmorency might be permitted to rank—a *wild flower* amidst the *gorgeous blossoms* which form the *dewy coronal* that binds the lofty brow of the female Poesy of England! Say, sir, have I or have I not drunk of the Castalian cup?

In almost the same words did I address myself to the editors of the Annuals above *hinted at.* They replied not—responded not—answered not. In vain I have cast o'er their *gilded and illuminated* page an eye of fever; *my* strains were not permitted to be heard in their *exclusive temples,* or swell the chorus of England's *aristocratic* minstrelsy.

Will you, sir, succour a damsel in distress? Yes, your true heart I know responds to the echo! Will you tell me, are not my stanzas as *impassioned,* ay, as *fashionable,* as those of my *gemmed* or *coronetted* sisterhood, whose passion-songs twine round so many a page?

The *idea* of the little stanzas I enclose is not altogether new. A strain oft sung by vulgar

mariners has, I know not how, come to my ears; and as I thought I discovered in the coarse garment which envelopes them some *lurking gems of poesy*, these I have extracted, and set them in *more appropriate* guise. Should you accept them, 'twill be the proudest moment in the existence of

ROSALBA DE MONTMORENCY.

P. S.—My real name is Miss Eliza Slabber, Margaret Cottages, Buffalo Row, Hick's Street West, Upper Cuttle Place, Camden Town; where, if you write, *please address.*—E. S.

My first is in the *romantic* style, and has been sung with much applause at —— Rouse, esquire's, the Eagle Tavern, City Road, and other fashionable assemblies, by a celebrated *female vocalist* who shall be nameless. It is called

The Battle-Axe Polacca.

Untrue to my Ulric I never could be,
I vow by the saints and the blessed Marie.
Since the desolate hour when we stood by the shore,
And your dark galley waited to carry you o'er,
My faith then I plighted, my love I confessed,
As I gave you the BATTLE-AXE marked with your Crest!
Eleleu! in the desolate hour!

When the bold barons met in my father's old hall,
Was not Edith the flower of the banquet and ball?
In the festival hour, on the lips of your bride,
Was there ever a smile save with THEE at my side?
Alone in my turret I loved to sit best,
To blazon your BANNER and broider your crest.
Eleleu! in the festival hour!

The knights were assembled, the tourney was gay!
Sir Ulric rode first in the warrior-*melée*.
In the dire battle-hour, when the tourney was done,
And you gave to another the wreath you had won!
Though I never reproached thee, cold, cold was my breast,
As I thought of that BATTLE-AXE, ah! and that crest!
Eleleu! in the dire battle-hour!

But away with remembrance, no more will I pine
That others usurped for a time what was mine!
There's a FESTIVAL HOUR for my Ulric and me;
Once more, as of old, shall he bend at my knee;
Once more by the side of the knight I love best
Shall I blazon his BANNER and broider his CREST.
Tralala! for the festival hour!

The little turn from *eleleu* in the first three stanzas to *tralala* in the last has been admired very much, and is considered *by judges* as a beautiful *alternation* from *grief* to *joy*. It is *quite in the regular* way of modern poets, I assure you. Now follows a *sprightly ditty*. A *French friend* has kindly inserted several

phrases, and the whole is pronounced quite fashionable. It is called

The Almacks' Adieu.

Your Fanny was never false-hearted,
And this she protests and she vows,
From the *triste moment* when we parted
On the staircase at Devonshire House!
I blushed when you asked me to marry,
I vowed I would never forget;
And at parting I gave my dear Harry
A beautiful vinegarette!

We spent, *en province*, all December,
And I ne'er condescended to look
At Sir Charles, or the rich county member,
Or even at that darling old duke.
You were busy with dogs and with horses,
Alone in my chamber I sat,
And made you the nicest of purses,
And the smartest black satin cravat!

At night with that vile Lady Frances
(Je faisois moi tapisserie)
You danced every one of the dances,
And never once thought of poor me!
Mon pauvre petit cœur! what a shiver
I felt as she danced the last set,
And you gave, *oh, mon Dieu!* to revive her,
My beautiful *vinegarette!*

Return, love! away with coquetting;
This flirting disgraces a man!

And ah! all the while you're forgetting
The heart of your poor little Fan!
Reviens! break away from those Circes,
Reviens for a nice little chat;
And I've made you the sweetest of purses,
And a lovely black satin cravat!

There: Is it not *the thing* now? Perhaps you will like to see the vulgar ballad on which I have founded my strains? It is so paltry and low, that were it not for curiosity's sake I really would not send it.

"Still your —— I'll wash, and your grog too I'll make."

Improper stuff! I am really almost ashamed to write it.

Wapping Old Stairs.

"Your Molly has never been false, she declares,
Since the last time we parted at Wapping Old Stairs;
When I vowed I would ever continue the same,
And gave you the 'BACCO-BOX marked with your name.
When I passed a whole fortnight between decks with you,
Did I e'er give a kiss, Tom, to one of the crew?
To be useful and kind with my Thomas I stayed,—
For his trousers I washed, and his grog too I made.

Though you promised last Sunday to walk in the Mall
With Susan from Deptford, and likewise with Sal;
In silence I stood your unkindness to hear,
And only upbraided my Tom with a tear.

Why should Sal or should Susan than me be more prized?
For the heart that is true it should ne'er be despised.
Then be constant and kind, nor your Molly forsake;
Still your trousers I'll wash, and your grog too I'll make."

* * * * *

Although we do not agree with Miss de Montmorency as to the merits of the piece last quoted—one of the simplest and most exquisite ditties in our language,—we are quite ready to acknowledge that her parodies are to the full as original and spirited as the chief part of the verses in the Annuals. Here, for instance, are some verses by a clever lady—a beautiful lady—a lady of rank, which we quote, because they have been quoted and admired by some of our contemporaries.

"*The Letrilla.*

When the knight to battle went,
Leaving her he loved so well,
How the maid grew pale and pined
None might witness, none could tell.
Weep! the while I sing!

Through the gardens like a ghost
All the evenings she would creep.
Fears, not dreams, her pillow strew'd—
Ah, that youth should fail to sleep!
Weep! the while I sing!

Still she hoped—the tower would climb,
Whence she saw him ride away—
There to watch for casque and plume
Glancing in the evening ray.
Weep! the while I sing!

There she watch'd; but tidings came—
Wo is me!—by Moorish guile
Fell the knight! A broken flower
Marks her tomb in minster-aisle!
Weep! my song is done!"

Weep! my song is done, indeed! On the contrary, one is by no means sorry to arrive at the conclusion, and only weeps that the song should ever be begun. Miss Montmorency Slabber has quite as much pathos as the Spanish "Letrilla;" and her pathetic *refrain* of "Eleleu" to the full as touching as the burden of the latter ditty. We have chosen the words because they really are good and smooth, not from a desire to seize upon the worst portion of the silly bits of clinquant strung together, and called gems of beauty. It is a harmless, worthless little book, as ever was seen. All the pictures are poor. Except Dyce's "Signal," and Cattermole's "Duenna," not one is worth a penny.

In *Fisher's Scrap-Book*, Miss Landon has

some pretty verses; and we give a set from the same publication, which shew that, among the annual contributors, at least *somebody* can write good, honest, manly lines. Such verses are perfectly intoxicating, after so much fashionable milk and water.

"*The Sack of Magdeburgh.*

When the breach was open laid,
Bold we mounted to the attack:
Five times the assault was made,
Four times were we beaten back.

Many a gallant comrade fell
In the desperate *melée* there;
Sped their spirits ill or well,
Know I not, nor do I care.

But the fifth time, up we strode
O'er the dying and the dead;
Hot the western sunbeam glowed,
Sinking in a blaze of red.

Redder in the gory way
Our deep-plashing footsteps sank,
As the cry of 'Slay! slay! slay!'
Echoed fierce from rank to rank.

And we slew, and slew, and slew—
Slew them with unpitying sword:
Negligently could we do
The commanding of the Lord?

Fled the coward—fought the brave,
Wailed the mother—wept the child;
But there did not 'scape the glave
Man who frowned, or babe who smiled.

There were thrice ten thousand men
When the morning sun arose;
Lived not twice three hundred when
Sunk that sun at evening close.

Then we spread the wasting flame,
Fanned to fury by the wind:
Of the city, but the name—
Nothing more—is left behind!

Hall and palace, dome and tower,
Lowly shed and soaring spire,
Fell in that victorious hour
Which consigned the town to fire.

All that man had wrought—all—all—
To its pristine dust had gone;
For, inside the shattered wall,
Left we never stone on stone.

For it burnt not till it gave
All it had to yield of spoil:
Should not brave soldadoes have
Some rewarding for their toil?

What the villain sons of trade
Earned by years of toil and care,
Prostrate at our bidding laid,
By one moment won, was there.

There, within the burning town,
'Mid the steaming heaps of dead,
Cheered by sound of hostile moan,
Did we the joyous banquet spread.

Laughing loud, and quaffing long,
With our glorious labours o'er:
To the sky our jocund song
Told the city WAS NO MORE."

The reader knows the name that is signed to these verses—that of the Standard-bearing Doctor: not Gifford, the learned Doctor; not Southey, the polyglot Doctor; not Bowring, the encyclopædian Doctor; not Dennis—THE DOCTOR, in short, and long life to him!—the man who reads, writes, and knows every thing, and adorns every thing of which he writes—even Homer. Modesty forbids us to mention his name; but it hangs to the end of certain translations from the *Odyssey*, to which we refer the public, and which may be found in this very Magazine.

And now, after the Doctor's fierce lyrics, let us give some of Mr. Milnes's stanzas; which ought to have appeared among the other extracts from the *Keepsake*, but that they are fit for much better company.

"SONG.

By R. M. Milnes, Esq., M. P.

I wandered by the brook-side,
I wandered by the mill;
I could not hear the brook flow,
The noisy wheel was still;
There was no burr of grashopper,
No chirp of any bird;
But the beating of my own heart
Was all the sound I heard.

I sat beneath the elm-tree,
I watched the long, long shade,
And as it grew still longer,
I did not feel afraid;
For I listened for a footfall,
I listened for a word;
But the beating of my own heart
Was all the sound I heard.

He came not—no, he came not!
The night came on alone,
The little stars sat one by one,
Each on his golden throne;
The evening air past by my cheek,
The leaves above were stirr'd;
But the beating of my own heart
Was all the sound I heard.

Fast, silent tears were flowing,
When something stood behind;

A hand was on my shoulder,
I knew its touch was kind:
It drew me nearer, nearer—
We did not speak a word;
But the breathing of our own hearts
Was all the sound we heard."

Kissing, actually! Oh, Mr. Milnes, you naughty, naughty man!

* * * * *

The diversion made by Miss Slabber has occupied us so long, that we are obliged to bring our remarks abruptly to a close, with the briefest possible notice of the remaining Keepsakes. The *Amaranth* * is remarkable for the very bad engravings it contains, and the excellence of its literary department. The *Children of the Nobility* † contains Landseer's beautiful picture of Miss Blanche Egerton, and no more. In the *Book of Beauty*, ‡ most especially to be

* The Amaranth: a Miscellany of Original Prose and Verse, contributed by distinguished Writers, and edited by T. K. Hervey. London, 1839. Baily.

† Portraits of the Children of the Nobility. A series of highly finished Engravings, executed under the superintendence of Mr. Charles Heath, from Drawings by Alfred E. Chalon, Esq. R. A., Edwin Landseer, Esq. R. A., and other eminent Artists; with Illustrations in Verse by distinguished Contributors. Edited by Mrs. Fairlie. Second Series. London, 1839. Longman.

‡ Heath's Book of Beauty for 1839. Edited by the Countess of Blessington. London. Longman.

admired is the most beautiful, smiling, sparkling Duchess of Sutherland; Lady Mahon, who looks beautiful, gentle, and kind; and Lady Powerscourt, whose face and figure seem to be modelled from Diana and Hebe. Oh, Medora, Zuleika, Juana, Juanina, Juanetta, and Company!—oh ye of the taper fingers and six-inch eyes! shut those great fringes of eyelashes, close those silly coral slits of mouths. Avaunt ye spider-waisted monsters! who have flesh, but no bones, silly bodies, but no souls. And ye, O young artists! who were made for better things than to paint such senseless gimcracks, and make fribble furniture for tawdry drawing-room tables, look at Nature and blush! See how much nobler she is than your pettifogging art!—how much more beautiful Truth is than your miserable tricked-up lies. More lovely is she than a publisher's bill at three months—a better pay-mistress in the end than Messrs. Heath, Finden, and all the crew. The world loves bad pictures, truly; but yours it is to teach the world, for you know better. Copy Nature. Don't content yourselves with idle recollections of her—be not satisfied with

knowing pretty tricks of drawing and colour—stand not still because donkeys proclaim that you have arrived at perfection. Above all, read sedulously REGINA, who watches you with an untiring eye, "and, whether stern or smiling, loves you still." Remember that she always tells you the truth—she never puffeth, neither doth she blame unnecessarily. Recollect, too, that the year beginneth. Can there be a more favourable opportunity to pour in with your subscriptions?

One word more. Thank Heaven, the *nudities* have gone out of fashion!—the public has to thank *us* for that.

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NO. [illegible]