

some diurnal documents of past events, by stitching together a few pages of the incoherent Curry, or detaching a few splinters from the ponderous Plowden, that any one will entitle himself even to a smile from the Muse of History, unless it be when she reads the title-page of this performance. We are more inclined to look forward than with the suspicious, timid, and reverted eyes of the hare, and to indulge in a hopeful confidence of the future. We like to rise from our humble retreat, like the lark, eager to invest herself in the first rays of the sun, while the rest of the world is involved in darkness, and the shadow of death. This may be called the flight of poetry, but it is referable, as we think, to a sound political philosophy.

There have some happy effects occurred from the revolutionary calamities of the times. These great events have had a powerful sway over the human mind, not merely agitating the feelings, but in all classes and descriptions of society, *lessening the intellect*. Europe has of late been a great school, in which the most knowing of the upper ranks have acquired information. It is among the upper classes, most particularly, that a change and improved knowledge has taken place with respect to the true nature and constitution of civilized society, the mutual relationship and reciprocal dependence of every class of the community. In consequence of this advancement of the public understanding, a greater degree of *fellows-feeling* has been diffused through society, in part, no doubt, owing to that sense of common danger which draws the interests, and with them the affections more closely together; but still, in greater part to be ascribed, as we are willing to believe, to a gradual revolution which has been of late silently and secretly taking place, among the proprietors of political power. A new growth of sentiment and behaviour, of principles and practice, has sprung up in that class, as a consequence of the peculiar circumstances of the times, and vegetates, as it were, on the lava of the French revolution.

We could illustrate this, in many particulars, but the progress of the Catholics in their claims, supplies a prominent instance. The panic of the day drove the ruling power into the Penal Laws. The panic of the day has driven the same power to repeal them. Mr. Pitt was probably an *early convert* to the Catholic claims; because, he must, *early*, have seen the necessity of consolidating all the physical strength of these kingdoms, against that power which was the grand object of his fears, and

which he hated with the inveterate enmity of a true Englishman. Mr. Fox was too great a philanthropist, to be a very good or a very popular Englishman. He was the representative of MAN. Had the human race been assembled in a vast plain, to choose a single delegate for the commonweal of human kind, Charles Fox would have been chosen by the universal acclamation of every nation, with *one* exception. Mr. Pitt studied the character of his country, and identified himself with its pride, and its partialities, above all, with its natural enmity against France.

Charles Fox was a friend to the Catholics, from the comprehension of his understanding, and the benevolence of his heart. William Pitt became their friend from his fears, and even this true *English* politician, became, a second time, in his life, impressed with the necessity of awakening the energies of the *whole* people; not so much the expediency, not so much the justice, but the *necessity* of kindling those sparks of truth, happiness and freedom, which impartial heaven has scattered on the ground of the human character, in all religious professions, and in every condition of life.

It is good for governments to be put upon their resources. The American Revolution, in the first instance, as Mr. Parnell has observed, but the French revolution more impressively, has had this effect. The first of all resources, but too often the last resorted to, is, what in periods of extreme danger, can be found, and found only in the hearts and hands of an united population, sensible of the value of their rights, and willing to die in defending them. It will, in our minds, be no small compensation for the calamities of the times, if they have, indirectly, contributed to re-instate our long suffering countrymen, in the full enjoyment of the constitution, no longer the prerogative of a party, but the common right of every member of the British Empire. The Catholics will then, no doubt, discharge their great debt of gratitude to those Protestants who have exerted themselves in their cause, and, in particular, will acknowledge their obligations to Mr. H. Parnell. X.

*Marmion; a tale of Flodden Field, by Walter Scott, esq. 8vo. pp. 317; second edition; Edinburgh, Constable; London, Miller, & Co. 1808, price 12s. boards.*

FEW modern poems have given rise to greater variety of opinion than this second production of the celebrated Scot-

tish Poet. Its beauties and defects are so balanced and blended, that unlimited praise or condemnation would be equally unjust. The mind, elevated and rising above itself at the perusal of some passages, soars into the sublimer regions of fancy, when its flight is suddenly repressed by others directly contrary, and again is as unexpectedly raised to a greater degree of elevation by some sudden burst of genius more bold and animating than the first.

This unevenness of character which pervades the whole poem, whether considered in its general plan, or in detached portions, must be attributed in part to the nature of the subject, but is partly owing to the fault of the writer. Of all the various kinds of poetry, metrical romance admits of the greatest latitude. Epic, dramatic, didactic, and descriptive poetry have determined limits, from which they must not deviate; but that of which we now speak is solely referable to none of these, and therefore at first sight may appear to be bounded only by the extent and powers of the writer's imagination. But this is not the case. Custom, indeed, has given it a wide scope: it has been hitherto looked upon as an inferior department, and therefore not so strictly subjected to the rules of criticism. But when a writer appears endued with powers sufficient to elevate it above its former rank, and thus to fix a new era in the history of poetry, he gives the tone to all his successors, and determines the rules which are to guide them in their compositions. That this is the case may be inferred from what has taken place in those species which are now regulated by certain fixed unalterable maxims. Homer, Theocritus, and Horace who perfected the several departments of poetry to which they applied themselves, are the models to all succeeding poets, whether epic, pastoral, or satyric, and are also the sources whence critics have derived their rules. So far does this respect to their authority extend, that their defects are not only often uncensured, but frequently admired; what in others would be called blemishes, in them are beauties. Enchanted with their excellences, we first overlook, and at length admire their faults. Hence it follows that when any author enters into a new field, or so improves the old that it becomes in some measure new, he should be doubly attentive to give it the highest degree of improvement; not only on account of his own reputation but because imitators, unable to attain his excellence, will ape his failings, and the original will thus in some manner be answerable for

all the mutilated embryos which it has indirectly brought into being.

It is not however to be inferred from what has been just said, that legendary poetry is wholly unrestrained. Though not bound by strict rules, it must not be concluded that it is not subject to some. It partakes of the epic in an inferior degree, as also of the decriptive and didactic. In whatever parts, therefore, it coincides with each of these, it is in some measure to be regulated by their rules. The unities of time, place, and action, as also the introduction of episodes and machinery, and the selection and delineation of characters are here to be observed as in the epic. From this, however the latitude of description allowed in romance allows it frequently to deviate, but here the rules of description take effect. The prefaces to each canto are of the didactic kind. It may indeed be proper matter of question whether these are admissible, or ought not rather to be considered as excrescences sufferable only in infancy, but to be pruned away when maturer judgment corrects the fervour of imagination. That this should be so we may argue from analogy. Tom Jones, one of the first legitimate English novels, and perhaps still the best, was ushered into the world with these appendages. But they were soon dropped, as most probably will our prefaces also, and from the same cause. The composition of these is attended with greater difficulty than the rest. In the narration, the variety and succession of incidents are of themselves sufficient to keep the attention alive; often, indeed, they please even when devoid of ornament. But here the writer must depend solely on his own resources: he has no external aid to relieve the weakness of his own powers. This part therefore, if not excellent, must be tedious.

But if prefaces are to be considered as necessary to a poem of this nature, they ought certainly to be linked to it in some manner. Though they do not form a part of it, they ought to bear some relation to the subject. They should be modelled on the plan of the lyrical chorus to the ancient tragedy, which was introduced to mark the pauses between the different parts of the drama, yet while it served to relieve the spectator, it still kept his attention directed to the plot. But Mr Scott's prefaces, can be compared to nothing but the songs or dances introduced *ad libitum* between the acts of a modern play, which only serve to display the voice of the singer or the agility of the dancer.

Before we proceed to the examination of

this poem in detail, we must further remark, that Mr. Scott is so circumstanced as to appear under an inevitable, and in our opinion, a very unjust prejudice. Having no former standard to which we can refer, we can only judge of him by himself, comparing his present with his former essay, and deciding by comparison. Such a decision must unavoidably be unfavourable to the latter. Attracted by the novelty of the Lay of the last Minstrel, our imaginations were taken by surprise, and captivated before they could be on their guard. For the succeeding attempt we are prepared: we may be pleased and gratified, but not dazzled; we are no longer blinded by its faults; we are at liberty to decide coolly: such a state of mind, with the bulk of readers, who in general judge from first impressions, must be unfavourable. Besides, as the human understanding is in a perpetual progress, it requires that what is intended to please it must proceed with equal pace. The adage *non progredi est regressi*, is no where so strongly exemplified as in works of fancy, in which if the last born be not superior, it must be inferior. We leave to speculators on the anatomy of the human mind to develop the causes of this, it is enough for us to state a well known effect, and to apply it to the present case.

The conclusion we would draw from it is this. Marmion has not obtained that sudden celebrity with which the Lay of the last Minstrel was hailed. This we attribute to the two preceding reasons, the want of novelty, and of that striking superiority of merit, which would raise it above competition with its elder brother. But we will venture to say that were the Lay of the last Minstrel and Marmion to exchange places, the latter would have gained all the applause which has been bestowed on the former; and on the contrary, the former would not have obtained an equal degree of admiration as the latter has at present. To those who have read both we leave to determine the justice of this observation.

We shall now proceed to examine the poem before us by itself, and on its own merits, in hopes, that what has been premised will not be useless in guiding the reader's judgment: pointing out what we conceive to be particular beauties, and marking the errors as they occur.

In the choice of a fable, Mr. Scott seems to have followed that rule, by which, according to some modern critics, the great masters of heroic poetry were guided. According to them, these writers wishing

to exemplify some line of conduct, as the bad effects of discord, or the blessings attending piety, fixed upon an historical occurrence, by means of which it might be illustrated; not deducing the moral from the narrative, but applying the narrative to the moral. In like manner, Mr. Scott, desirous of displaying the manners and customs of the Borderers in the feudal times, has pitched upon an historical event, in the relation of which, his knowledge of these subjects might be unfolded. He is more intent on the introduction of circumstances in which he can display his peculiar talents, than on the general arrangement of the whole. Hence arises obscurity in the narrative, and an inartificial method of connecting the several incidents.

The subject chosen as the foundation of this romantic tale, is the celebrated Battle of Flodden Field, in which James IV. of Scotland, and all the flower of Scotch nobility fell. This era, though confessedly well chosen for a poet, does not, in our opinion, reflect much credit on Mr. Scott as a patriot. To choose as his subject the disastrous battle, which, by depriving the Scotch of the means, or even the hope of ever again maintaining themselves against their powerful adversary, decided the well-disputed, though unequal struggle that had so long subsisted between the two nations, is very inconsistent with that *amor patriæ*, that zeal for the honour of his country, which glows so vehement in the breast of every Scotchman. On contemplating it in this view, we feel somewhat of the same sensation as if we were told that an Irishman had chosen for the groundwork of an epic poem, the landing of Strongbow, or the surrender of Limerick.

Marmion, the hero of the poem, is entirely a creature of the author's imagination. He is introduced as being sent ambassador from the English to the Scottish court, to inquire into the cause of the extraordinary military preparations making by the latter. The poem commences with his arrival at the castle of Norham, a frontier town of England, where he stops, and applies to the governor for a guide.... The view of the castle, as he approaches, is beautiful. It is in description that our poet principally excels, though his love for it sometimes leads him into prolixity. Of this we shall be necessitated to produce some instances, but the present passage is not one of them.

Day set on Norham's castle steep,  
And Tweed's fair river, broad and deep,  
And Cheviot's mountains lone

The battled towers, the Donjon Keep,  
 The loop-hole grates where captives weep,  
 The flanking walls that round it sweep,  
 In yellow lustre shone.  
 The warriors on the turrets high,  
 Moving athwart the evening sky,  
 Seem'd forms of giant height :  
 Their armour, as it caught the rays,  
 Flash'd back again the western blaze  
 In lines of dazzling light.  
 St. George's banner, broad and gay,  
 Now faded, as the fading ray,  
 Less bright, and less, was flung ;  
 The evening gale had scarce the power  
 To wave it on the Donjon tower  
 So heavily it hung.  
 The scouts had parted on their search,  
 The castle gates were barr'd :  
 Above the gloomy portal arch,  
 Timing his foot-steps to a march,  
 The warrior kept his guard ;  
 Low humming, as he paced along,  
 Some ancient border gathering song.

The first appearance of Marmion is in the same style.

Along the bridge Lord Marmion rode,  
 Proudly his red roan charger trod,  
 His helm hung at the saddle bow ;  
 Well by his visage you might know  
 He was a stalworth knight, and keen,  
 And had in many a battle been ;  
 The scar on his brown cheek reveal'd  
 A token true of Bosworth-field ;  
 His eye-brow dark, and eye of fire,  
 Show'd spirit proud, and prompt to ire ;  
 Yet lines of thought upon his cheek,  
 Did deep design and counsel speak.

His forehead, by his casque worn bare,  
 His thick moustache, and curly hair,  
 Coal-black, and grizzled here and there,  
 But more through toil than age ;  
 His square turn'd joints and strength of  
 limb

Show'd him no carpet-knight *so trim*,  
 But, in close fight, a champion grim,  
 In camps, a leader sage.

The person here described is by no means that perfect character which some critics think essential to the hero of a romance. The military qualities shine conspicuous in him ; but in the more peaceful virtues he is far from perfection. He had, according to the poet, seduced a nun named Constance from her convent, who for some time attended him as a page, but attracted by the fortune and personal charms of Clara De Clare, a young lady of noble birth, he afterwards neglects her. This latter lady was attached to a knight named Ralph De Wilton, whose merits seem to have given him a much better

claim than his rival to the first place in the poet's as well as the lady's good opinion ; but the opinions of poets and ladies sometimes differ from those of other people. Marmion devises a scheme to ruin his rival ; and for this purpose employs his discarded mistress to convey forged letters of a treasonable nature among De Wilton's papers, and arraigns him before the king on the credit of these. The accusation is decided by single combat. Marmion is victorious : De Wilton degraded and forced to quit the kingdom.

In this state of exile, he passes his time in travelling as a pilgrim through different parts of Europe. It afterwards appears that Constance had lent her assistance in this plot, merely to gain an ascendancy over her inconstant lover, by being mistress of a secret which affected his honour and his life. She now repents of its success, and engages with a monk to poison Clara ; in this she is disappointed ; and Marmion disgusted with her treachery, and no longer attracted by her charms, rids himself of her by delivering her up to the superiors of the convent from which she had eloped.

These circumstances, which occurred before the time when the action commences, are introduced by way of episode in different parts, but are here summed up, for the better perceiving the chain of the narrative.

We now return to Nerham castle. After a long description of our knight's attendants, not forgetting even their "hosen black, and jerkins blue," the ceremonies of his reception, the feasting, in which Homer himself is out-done, and other points of equal moment, Marmion asks for a guide to the Scotch court. Many are proposed and rejected. And here are thrown out several sportive sallies against the manners of the clergy of that age. At length a palmer is recommended as the fittest person for the office, who proves to be De Wilton, but so disguised as to be unknown even to his former enemy. His appearance, as being a principle actor, is particularly noticed. After enumerating the different articles of his dress, in a manner which leaves nothing to be supplied by the reader's imagination, the poet thus portrays his person.

Where as the palmer *came in hall*,  
 No lord or knight was there more tall,  
 Or had a statelier step withal,

Or look'd more high or keen ;  
 For no saluting did he wait,  
 But strode across the hall of state,

As he his peer had been :  
 But his gaunt frame was worn with toil,  
 His cheek was sunk, *alas the while !*  
 And when he struggled at a smile,  
 His eye look'd haggard wild.

With this conductor Matmion leaves the castle, and, after a recital of the ceremonies attending his departure, particularized in a manner that would have done honour to Scudery himself, the canto closes.

(*To be concluded in our next.*)

*A short and Easy Method with the Deists, wherein the certainty of the Christian Religion is demonstrated, by infallible proof, from four Rules, which are incompatible to any imposture that ever has been, or that can possibly be ; in a letter to a friend. By the Rev. Charles Leslie, 8vo. p.p. 44. Reprinted by D. Anderson, Belfast, 1808.*

THE reprinting of works of merit must afford great pleasure to every true friend of learning, and should always be encouraged. We are happy in finding that the author whose compositions once gratified us, is again introduced to our notice. It is like meeting an old friend with a new face. We renew our enjoyment by the perusal of pages, which ensure the certainty of improvement. Like the revisiting of scenes in which we once delighted, we feel the double pleasure of reviving the recollections of the past, and enjoying in others the repetition of that admiration which we ourselves once experienced when the view first presented itself to our eye gilded with all the charms of novelty.

The short treatise before us is the production of a once celebrated divine ; and of itself would tend, as far as so short an essay could, to prove the merit of the writer. It is a concise and clear argument in favour of the truth of Christianity, given, as is intimated, at the instance of a friend, who wished, without being led into a labyrinth of controversies, to have one single proof to oppose the attacks of its adversaries. This the writer does in a masterly manner. He establishes the truth of the matters of fact relative to our Saviour, by four rules which can never unite in an imposture ; and thence naturally deduces the truth of the doctrines. But though we think his method good, and his arguments strong, we are not inclined to think that this or any such treatise can answer the purpose for which it was written. "For though," to use his own

words, "every truth is one, and therefore one reason for it, if it be the true reason must be sufficient, yet our sight is so feeble, that we cannot always come to it directly, but by many inferences, and laying of things together." These inferences and deductions are each a separate argument, to be handled by itself, which must inevitably lead the inquirer into that variety of discussion which it was his wish to avoid by the discovery of one single proof.

To this one reason he subjoins some additional collateral proofs, and from them draws several conclusions, some of which we would be inclined to scrutinize, did not our plan prevent us from entering upon any thing which savours of controversy.

In a word, though this tract cannot supersede the necessity of larger treatises to those who wish to be thoroughly acquainted with the proofs of Christianity, it may serve as a useful guide to beginners to direct the train of their studies, and will give satisfaction to the minds of such as are not inclined to dive more deeply into this subject.

*The Twelve, a Poem, in three Cantos. Dublin, Printed by Thomas Burnside, 1808. p.p. 55. Price, 2s. 6d.*

THIS is a satirical poem on our Irish Judges. Three or four are praised, the others are in different degrees censured. Of the applicableness of the praise or the censure, we acknowledge ourselves, from our provincial situation, and our defective acquaintance with forensic pursuits, disqualified from judging. We take up the poem as a literary work, and, in this point of view, we venture to offer some remarks. We regret the present state of the printing art in Dublin ; it is low indeed. They labour under some disadvantages, but they too readily sink under discouragements, and find an excuse for their want of exertion, in a complaint of the evils of the Union.

This whining complaint is heard every where in Dublin. Like the countryman whose cart stuck fast in the mud, and who complained of the badness of the roads, and vainly called on Hercules for help, they content themselves with declaiming against the Union, and neglect those habits of individual exertion, by which only their situation can be bettered. Let them print better—let them make the printing trade respectable—and energy