

harm than good. Some of these authors have painted their characters in false colours. Instead of representing mankind, as it really is, they have portrayed monsters under a human form: attributing words and actions to their heroes and heroines, which, from their extravagance, could never be realised in nature; and placing them in situations far beyond the verge of probability. In this way they have "overstepped the modesty of nature," substituted the marvellous for the true; and given false and distorted pictures of men and events, more calculated to mislead than to improve. To the author of *St. Ronan's Well*, nothing of this kind can be attributed. He always paints from nature; and if he has in his previous works introduced imaginary beings, it has been more to show the belief which existed at the time he writes of, than for any other reason. His works are valuable for the historical facts they contain: many of the incidents he describes, are noted with a degree of accuracy, and a minuteness of detail, which are not to be found in many of the most authentic histories of the times we are possessed of. His minute accounts of those characters which were engaged in some of the most important political events of the country, and the secret and private feelings which influenced their behaviour during that time, are portrayed with an accuracy, which perhaps no other writer has attained. The beautiful and glowing description of scenery which he has often given, will tend to attract the attention of travellers to the country of which he writes, and render it an object of research for the curious, even more than it has hitherto been. At the same time the very general diffusion of his writings, combined with the pleasing manner in which he has interwoven historical facts and interesting occurrences, will extend a knowledge of the varied policy under which the country has been in former times. And it deserves to be mentioned, that although he has given a true account of some party feelings, which operate even at the present day, he has never, we believe, allowed his enthusiasm to carry him so far as to incur blame from the existing adherents of those parties.

His Novels, as was already mentioned, have all a reference to some particular period of time, and in some specified place. The one now before us comes nearer our own times than any of the preceding. The events of *St. Ronan's Well* are stated as happening little more than twenty years ago; a circumstance, which has allowed our author to delineate modern character; and, we believe, it is the first time he has done so. As a specimen of his talents in this line, he thus describes Lady Penelope Penfeather, one of his heroines, what in modern language would be called a blue stocking dame.

"She was the daughter of an earl, possessed a showy person, and features which might be called handsome in youth, though now rather too much pronounced to render the term proper. The nose was become sharper; the cheeks had lost the roundness of youth; and as, during fifteen years that she had reigned a beauty and a ruling toast, the right man had not spoken, or, at least, had not spoken at the right time, her ladyship, now rendered sufficiently independent by the inheritance of an old relation, spoke in praise of friendship, began to dislike the town in summer, and to 'babble of green fields.'

"About the time Lady Penelope thus changed the tenor of her life, she was fortunate enough, with Dr. Quackleben's assistance, to find out the virtues of *St. Ronan's spring*; and, having contributed her share to establish the *Urbis in rure*, which had re-