

## THE DESERTERS.

The following narrative was found among the papers of Mr. Mason, Secretary to the Duke of Cumberland, who was victorious over Prince Charles Stuart at Culloden, although his name is never mentioned in Scotland without execrations for his inhumanity—yet he was not destitute of the common feelings of our nature.

There was in the ——— regiment two young soldiers above the common level, both from the same place, a town in Lancashire; and each had much friendship for the other. They had enlisted together from different motives: they marched together, and were inhabitants of the same tent. One, whom I shall call the lover, had enrolled his name through an uneasiness from being disappointed in what he thought all his happiness was centered; the marrying of a sweet girl of his own town, by whom he was much beloved. Her relations were inexorable, and his hopes in vain. The other, a lad of spirit, believing the soldier's life as fine as the recruiting officer had described it, willing to see wars, accompany his friend, and serve his country, likewise accepted the King's pictures, and was enrolled in the company. He was called the volunteer. He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. She was much grieved at this step, which he had taken without her privy or consent; but being in an easy situation, and not wanting his assistance for her support, she lamented only through affection for him. The widow sent forth her son with tears and blessings; the maid eyed her lover from a distant window, (a nearer approach not being permitted,) and beat time to his steps with her heart till he was out of sight; and then sent her soul after him in a deep sigh. They had not been long in the camp before the volunteer had woful proof of the wide difference between the ideal gentleman and soldier, which he had dressed up in his imagination, and the miserable half starved food for powder. As for the lover, he was insensible to hardships of the body; the agitations of his mind absorbed his whole attention. In vain had he endeavoured to fly from the object of his love: he brought his person only, leaving his thoughts and his heart behind him, and was absent from himself in the noise and bustle of the day, as in a silent midnight watch, or when stretched upon his bed at night. They communicated their situation to each other, and took the fatal resolution to desert. Thus winged by love, and urged by fear, the hills of Scotland flew from their heels, and they had arrived at a valley within a mile of their own town, when they were overtaken by a horse pursuit, and reconducted to their camp. A court-martial was held, and they were condemned to die; but the General ordered, as is usual in such cases, that they should cast lots, and only one of them suffer. At the appointed time the ring was formed—the drum placed in the centre, with the box and dice upon its head—and the delinquents made to enter.

The horrors which sat brooding on their souls, the preceding night, and were now overwhelming them at the awful crisis, were strongly painted in their wan and pallid countenances. Their friendship was real and sincere, but not of that fabulous and heroic kind as to wish to die for each other; each wished to live; and each was disquieted at the thought that his safety must be built on the welfare of his friend. They alternately requested each other to begin. The lover looked earnestly at the little instruments of death, took them in his trembling hand and quickly laid them down. The officer was obliged to interpose, and command the volunteer to throw; he lifted the box in the right hand, then shifted it to the left, and gave it to his right hand again; and as if ashamed of weakness or superstition, cast his eyes upwards for a moment, and was in the act to throw, when the shrieks of female sorrow struck his ear, and in burst, from an opposite part of the circle, the widow and the maid—their hair dishevelled and their garments, by travelling, soiled and torn.

What a sight was this! the mother and son on one side of the drum, and the maid and lover on the other! The first transports of their frantic joy, on finding them alive, was soon abated by the dreadful uncertainty of what was to follow. The officer was a man who did not hurry the volunteer to throw. He put his hand to the box of his own accord, his mother fell prostrate upon the earth, as did also the maid; and both, with equal consistency and fervour, poured forth their different prayers.

He threw nine: a gleam of imperfect joy lighted upon the widow's face; and she looked, as you might suppose her to have done, if standing on the shore, she had seen her son shipwrecked, buffeting the waves; when presently he gains a raft and is paddling to shore, and already she thinks to feel his fond embrace, but still is anxious lest even some envious billow should snatch him forever from her eye. Meanwhile the lovers giving up all for lost, were locked in each other's arms, and entreated to be killed thus together on the spot. She was held from him by force. He advanced towards the drum with much the same air as he would have ascended a ladder for his execution. He threw ten! the maid sprang from the ground as if she would leap to heaven; he caught her in his arms: they fainted on each other's necks and recovered only to faint again. The volunteer was the least affected of the four; and all his attentions were employed about his mother, whose head was on his lap:—but she was insensible to his care. Soon after the women had rushed into the ring, an officer had run to the Duke's tent, to inform him of the uncommon tenderness of the scene. He accompanied the officer to the spot, and standing behind the first rank, was an unobserved spectator of the whole transaction. He could hold out no longer: he came into the circle, raised the widow, and echoing in her ear, "he is pardoned," restored her to life and happiness together. Then turning to the lovers, he commanded them to go immediately to the chaplain, to be united by that tie which death only dissolves. He always declared he felt more pleasure from this action than from the battle of Culloden. He shed tears, but they were not those of Alexander, when he wept for more worlds to conquer.

## THE SNOW.

The fair, the light, and the sparkling snow,  
By gentle breeze or whirlwind driven,  
Thou seek'st the changeful world below,  
And wend'st thy way from heaven:—  
O! thou may'st shame the purest heart,  
For Purity itself thou art!

The virgin snow—the chaste, the free,  
The myriad-winged—the stainless white;  
The mountain's brow is wreathed with thee,  
As with a wreath of light:  
And garments of the vestal bride,  
Are very darkness by thy side.

For thou dost clothe our parent Earth  
With matchless robes, and bid'st her throw  
Ten thousand radiant sunbeams forth—  
Bright as the gems that glow  
Above the purple throne of Night—  
When thou hast killed the morning light.

Thine icicles in radiance bright,  
In hollow caves and ancient halls,  
Are hung like chrysal lamps of light,  
That gladden festivals;  
Thy floor of frost work thou hast spread,  
Clear as the ocean's coral bed.