

OUR TABLE.

ESTHER, A SACRED DRAMA; WITH JUDITH, A POEM—BY MRS. E. L. CUSHING.

THE above is the title of a neat volume, from the pen of one with whose literary labours the Canadian reader is well acquainted, the pages of the *Garland* owing much of their interest to her valuable and valued contributions.

The poet assigns himself no severer task than the weaving together a connected chain of incident and adventure, so as to form a *perfect* acting drama. The eye of the painter must be united to the imagination of the poet, that in the grouping of his figures they may appear like animated pictures drawn from nature, and transferred to the canvass by the very perfection of the limner's art. If, however, the prize be won, the poet can raise no more enduring monument to his fame. He pours the passions which agitate the mind, and sway the actions of men,—he holds “as 'twere, the mirror up to nature,” unveils the hidden springs of action, and forces upon each a conviction of what, in like circumstances, might have been the bearing and conduct of—himself.

This drama, however, is not intended for the stage, or we should give as our opinion that it is scarcely fitted to produce effect. It does not admit of that rapid change and stirring incident which give such influence to the *acted* drama. Its beauty will be more appreciated and better seen, when quietly reading, it may be a lone, or to one listener only, when the delicate riches of its poetic thought may be permitted to sink deeply into the heart it is so well calculated to stir.

To those who have read the *Garland* it will be unnecessary to speak of the ease and elegance which characterise the writings of the gifted authoress of this beautiful drama. With these they will be equally familiar with ourselves; but independently of all former acquaintance with her style, and after having endeavoured to bring to the consideration of the work that unbiassed consideration which is so necessary to the due fulfilment of the critic's duty, we freely recommend the work to universal perusal, as every way honourable to the name of its authoress; and as reflecting lustre upon the country which is her chosen home.

The plot is simple, and it is simply and naturally developed. There is no attempt at the mystery or mystification which has of late been supposed to form an element in dramatic success. The incidents are consequent on each other, and come upon the reader imperceptibly, as the natural results of the events which have preceded them. The language is eloquent and beautiful—deeply imbued with the spirit of poesy,—fit language to tell the tales of the sunny land where the scene is laid—the gorgeous and “glorious east.”

The land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime—

where the most perfect of all poetry had its birth—where the Prophets of old drank their inspiration from the fountain of all that is sublime in heaven and lovely upon the earth.

We will not attempt an analysis of the drama, in which we could not do it justice, but that our commendations may be fully warranted we quote a scene at random. It has reference to the heroine, who, in obedience to the will of her adopted father, has gone to the Court of Persia, as a candidate for the favour of the King, with the design of using whatever influence she might possess, if chosen as the wife of *Ahasuerus*, to protect the unfortunate and persecuted children of Israel:—

SCENE IX.—*In the house of Mordecai. Mordecai and Azor.*

Mordecai. It is a glorious eve!
How pure the air, laden with balmy sweets
From bud and flower that love the silent dews,
But hide their perfume from the garish day!
How stainless yon bright arch! and mark those
clouds,
That paint the western sky; what gorgeous hues!
What gay fantastic shapes! how swift they change,

And in their airy change, each radiant form
Seems lovelier than the last! The whispering breeze
Is redolent of sweets, and fans my cheek
With such bland motion, as an angel's wing
Would give methinks. Come, Azor, let us forth
To breathe the air of this most blessed eve,
Beside yon fountain's brink, *her* favorite seat,—
O'ersarched with graceful vines, that ask her hand,
But vainly ask, to train their rank luxuriance.
[*They go out and seat themselves beside the fountain.*]