

course was by no means unusual. There were even whole families; there was a father carrying two baskets, balanced across his shoulder on a pole; his cooking-pots and meal in one, while, in the other, 'nested curious there an infant lay.' The little thing sat as comfortably as possible, covered up to its chin in clothes, and turning its black head about in the most independent manner. If I had not seen this sort of travelling-cradle before, I should have taken its inmate for one of a litter of puppies, with its muzzle poked out of its bed. The mother followed, with a bundle upon her head, and a child upon her hip; while two or three other little things trotted away by her side.

"Among other adventurers of the city, was a snake-charmer, who took advantage of a pause in my passage, to sit down on the bank and pipe to his pupils, who reared their crests, and appeared to take real delight in the music. He had two, which he took from a bag, and handled with the most perfect indifference. They seemed to be equally careless about his touch, and occasionally wound round his arms and his neck with great familiarity.

"The approach to a fair or a horse-race, in our own country, cannot afford greater variety or interest than an everyday assemblage in the neighbourhood of Benares, if these be the common objects, as I am assured they are. I saw, also, several of the pilgrims, with whose errand I became so well acquainted at Gungoutri, carrying vessels of that water into the city; they were slung over their shoulders in little baskets; among the crowd was one man with his arm fixed above his head, and his fist clenched, the nails of his fingers grown through, & hanging in strips down the back of his hand.

"So large a town (for Benares contains nearly 600,000 people) must form a grand object from the river; and where all, or the greater part of the inhabitants, are engaged in the cleanly rite of bathing in the sacred stream, the spectacle is, beyond belief, beautiful. Soon after daylight, the daily ceremony begins; and, until the sun grows warm, the crowds at the river, with the parties drawing towards it or returning from it, fill the whole place with animation.

"While I was floating before the Ghauts (steps leading down to the river), in admiration of the scene, it seemed to me like some fairy dream, so unlike was it to any thing I had ever witnessed. The devout, the indifferent, and the profane, are so mingled together, engaged in their different occupations of praying, washing, and playing, that it is hard to say which predominates.

"I could observe Brahmins performing their prayers, and others making offerings; while their neighbours were washing their clothes, and splashing away at a rate quite enough to shake the gravity of any but a Brahmin.

"It was amusing to see a fat old priest waddle from the stream like a turtle, and take up his position on the steps of the Ghaut; while, not far from him, the light forms of the women rose from the water, and stood with their thin drapery floating round them, to comb their long locks,—like mermaids, in all but their want of mirrors. When their hair is nearly dry, they hold their clean robes like a screen round their fingers, and, shaking off the wet ones, draw the others close, and are dressed in a moment.

"The figures approaching the Ghaut, some of them in blue and rose-coloured scarfs, as well as white, with their pitchers on their heads, and their children by their sides, give a still more picturesque effect to the scene. The number of boats that are passing up and down the river, the splashing of the oars, and the song of the rowers, with the screams of the children, who, without their consent to the ceremony, are getting well ducked, complete the picture. The sun was not so high, but that the domes and minarets of the holy city were reflected in the stream below; and it appeared that the town, as well as all its sons and daughters, had fled to the bosom of the sacred river."—*Skinner's Excursions in India.*

## SIR NICHOLAS AT MARSTON MOOR.

"'Tis noon; the ranks are broken along the royal line;  
They fly, the braggards of the court, the bullies of the Rhine:  
Stout Langley's cheer is heard no more, and Astley's helm is  
down;  
And Rupert sheathes his rapier with a curse and with a frown:  
And cold Newcastle mutters, as he follows in the flight,  
'The German's hor had better far have supp'd in York to-  
night.'

"The knight is all alone, his steel-cap cleft in twain,  
His good buff-jerkin crimson'd o'er with many a gory stain;  
But still he waves the standard, and cries amid the rout,  
'For church and king, fair gentlemen, spur on, and fight it  
out.'  
And now he waves a roundhead's pike, and now he hums a  
stave,  
And here he quotes a stage-play, and there he fells a knave.

"Good speed to thee, Sir Nicholas! thou hast no thought of  
fear;  
Good speed to thee, Sir Nicholas! but fearful odds are here.  
The traitors ring thee round, and with every blow and thrust,  
'Down, down,' they cry, 'with Belief, down with him to  
the dust!'  
'I would,' quoth grim old Oliver, 'that Belial's trusty sword,  
'This day were doing battle for the saints and for the Lord!'

## OLD LETTERS.

I know of nothing more calculated to bring back the nearly-faded dreams of our youth, the almost obliterated scenes and passions of our boyhood, and to recal the brightest and best associations of those days

When the young blood ran riot in the veins, and  
Boyhood made us sanguine—

nothing more readily conjures up the alternate joys and sorrows of maturer years, the fluctuating visions that have floated before the restless imagination in times gone by, and the breathing forms and inanimate objects that wound themselves around our hearts, and became almost necessary to our existence, than the perusal of old letters. They are the memorials of attachment, the records of affection, the speaking trumpets through which those whom we esteem hail us from afar; they seem hallowed by the brother's grasp, the sister's kiss, the father's blessing, and the mother's love. When we look on them, the friends, whom dreary seas and distant leagues divide from us, are again in our presence: we see their cordial looks, and hear their gladdening voices once more. The paper has a tongue in every character—it contains a language in its very silentness. They speak to the souls of men like a voice from the grave, and are the links of that chain which connects with the hearts and sympathies of the living an evergreen remembrance of the dead. I have one at this moment before me, which (although time has in a degree softened the regret I felt at the loss of him who penned it) I dare scarcely look upon. It calls back too forcibly to my remembrance its noble-minded author—the treasured friend of my earliest and happiest days—the sharer of my puerile but innocent joys. I think of him as he then was,—the free, the spirited, the gay, the welcome guest in every circle where kind feeling had its weight, or frankness and honesty had influence; and in an instant comes the thought of what he now is, and pale and ghastly images of death are hovering round me. I see him whom I loved, and prized, and honoured, shrunk into poor and wasting ashes. I mark a stranger closing his lids—a stranger following him to the grave—and I cannot trust myself again to open his last letter. It was written but a short time before