

Turns round to look at him ; and Death, meanwhile,
Is putting out the candles on the altar !

ELSIE. Ah, what a pity 'tis that she should listen
Unto such songs, when in her orisons
She might have heard in heaven the angels singing.

The subjects thus gracefully rendered by the poet, appear among the wood cuts ascribed to Holbein ; and Douce remarks, in his elaborate dissertation : “ We find the Dance of Death often represented, not only on the walls, but in the windows of churches, in the cloisters of monasteries, and even on bridges, especially in Germany and Switzerland.” Here is the modern prose comment, in the work under review, on the subject so beautifully rendered in Longfellow’s verse. It illustrates the motto : *Est via quæ videtur homini justa : novissima autem ejus deducunt hominem ad mortem*. Proverb, iv. The woodcut is entitled THE NUN ; and the editor remarks : “ Here is a mixture of gallantry and religion. The young lady has admitted her lover into her apartment. She is kneeling before an altar, and hesitates whether to persist in her devotions, or listen to the amorous music of the young man, who, seated on a bed, touches a theorbos lute. Death extinguishes the candles on the altar, by which the designer of the subject probably intimates the punishment of unlawful love.” We doubt, however, the necessity of the concluding remark. The idea is sufficiently accordant with the general theme of the old pictorial moralist, that Death claims all seasons for his own ; and the hour of devotion is alike his, with that of the lover’s interview, or of the wandering thoughts of the youthful devotee, divided in thought between this world and the next. But, like the older Bible illustrations, that which embodied only grave and solemn lessons for simpler ages, is more apt to excite ludicrous thoughts in the modern student’s mind ; and where the ancient “ Dance of Death ” has not already been defaced or obliterated, it owes its preservation far more to the archæological zeal, than to the pious reverence of modern ages.

D. W.