

OUR TABLE.

THE CRUSADES, AND OTHER POEMS: BY JOHN BREAKENRIDGE.—*Kingston, John Rowlands, 1846.*

THIS volume, the appearance of which we noticed in our last number, is now before us, and we are happy to state that it fully bears out the anticipations we then expressed. We feel that it deserves at our hand a more extended notice than we can generally give in the pages of "Our Table."

"The Crusades" is not as the reader, might infer, an epic or lengthened poem on the subject, but a series of detached pieces, descriptive of some of the principal events of that brilliant epoch of history. It is from this portion that the "Crusaders' Hymn before Jerusalem," inserted in our June number, was extracted.

The poem which might more appropriately have given title to the volume, is that with which it is closed, "Laiza: a Tale of Slavery." This, the author informs us in his preface, was in an unfinished state, at the first publication of his prospectus, which induced him to give to the work the title under which it was originally advertised, and which it now bears. This poem contains some very glowing descriptions of tropical scenery and adventure, "founded solely," says Mr. Breakenridge, "upon my reading; and should I, in such things, have fallen into error, I hope a lenient judgment will be exercised." So far as we can judge from *our* reading, the descriptions are accurate as well as impressive, and the list of authors whom he cites, proves that his researches have been by no means confined.

The First Canto of "Laiza," opens with a description of the hero, a regal chief of Abyssinia, to which station he had wrought his way by his energetic will, and practised scymitar:

But now, ambition's summit reached,
One lingering sorrow still remained;
Young, brave and beautiful, his soul
Yearned for some dark-eyed maiden's love,
Worthy the dreams that filled his heart.

Of course the wished-for heroine, soon makes her appearance, and she is thus introduced:

Fair was the spot, yet strangely wild:
The lake—a sheet of silver—lay
Bosomed in granite rocks, high piled,
In a rude, rough, fantastic way.
There gorges deep, and clefts appeared,
As if the rocks, by thunder riven,
An hundred yawning vistas cleared,
To open on that fairy heaven—
That lake translucent, where the hues
That filled the air that sunbright day,
Mirrored upon its bosom true,
Like some sweet vision, gleaming lay;
That isle, whose ruined temples stood,
The chronicles of ages past—
Whose mighty pyramids of stone
Spoke of a Titan birth—a brood

Of giants crumbled into dust:
There lay white marble terraces,
Shedding beneath the Nubian sky;
There massive pillars shot aloft,
Yet seemed they, to the wondering eye,
Airy and light, as if the elves
A fairy palace there had reared.
There, too, the lofty palm arose;
And through the ruined walls appeared
The gum acacia's flowering head,
And creeping vines, with purple flowers.
And there, upon a rose-leaf bed,
Reclining in an odoriferous bowyer,
Young Zillah lay, with throbbing heart,
And eyes that did with dew-drops fill;
And, save the maiden's troubled sighs,
The air around was calm and still.

This "Island Queen" has no lack of suitors, wealthy and noble—as wealth and nobility are counted in those climes—but all their advances have been met coldly and proudly by the fair damsel, to the surprise yet gratification of her old father, happy thus to retain his beloved child by his side.

The chief whose suit the father most encourages, is "Hoti, the dark Somauli King," of whom we are told, that

Reigning upon the Eastern coast
Hoti a cruel traffic drove
In human-flesh, his dearest sport
Was, at an army's head, to rove
In quest of slaves; and, year by year,
He brought in thousands to the shore,
Those who the sacred words should hear
Of country, love, and home, no more.

He has long been a covert enemy of his neighbouring chief, Laiza, and seems destined to become his rival in love as well as in politics. Despite his "wide domains, his kingly name," he is rejected by Zillah as haughtily as her former wooers, but is rudely pressing his suit, when a stranger interposes to save the maiden from insult. This, as may be guessed, is Laiza, who in the consequent strife, leaves Hoti stretched almost lifeless on the ground. The Somauli king is recovered by the kind tending of the forgiving Zillah, and her father; but even his weak state fails to soften the heart of the Island Queen, and he at length departs from the island, muttering vows of vengeance. Laiza again saves Zillah, by killing a fierce crocodile which had attacked her while bathing, and the intimacy thus commenced soon ripens into love. Occasion is here taken to introduce, as related by the Abyssinian chief, the following legend, versified from the "Crescent and the Cross"—

There dwell amid those moonlit hills,
Long centuries ago, a youth
Whose only fortune were his flocks,
Health, strength, and simple truth:
One morn, as thoughtful, sad, and lone,
He sat beside a mountain rill,