

REVIEW.

RURAL AND DOMESTIC LIFE IN GERMANY—BY WILLIAM HOWITT.

BY T. D. F.

AGAIN does Howitt's name attract us to the book-store; again does he wave his wand, and bring before us fresh pictures for our admiration. How prolific is his genius! he is a true conjurer; the magic mirror of his mind seems ever prepared, and only requires a brief incantation to reflect from its brilliant surface the most varying scenes. He places it before us, raises the curtain, and the "Seasons" pass in review, each one marked by its own peculiar beauty. Soft and hopeful spring, with its tender leaves, its budding flowers, its fragrant breath, meet emblem of man's childhood, ere the hot breezes of self-will and passion have scorched the opening blossoms of his mind; verdant, and glowing summer; fruitful autumn, clad in its russet garb, but with cheek of healthy hue, followed by old winter, who with heavy step and frosty look, drags his slow length along, bearing aloft a programme of the many compensations and alleviations of his chill presence: the cheerful fire-side, the festive evening, the merry Christmas gambols; while occasionally, as if to give more appearance of life to his aged frame, he rings out a jocund peal from a string of bells, and cracks with his tandem whip, a lively accompaniment to the sleigh waltz.

The curtain is hardly dropped before these figures, we have not had time to take in their full beauty, when it is again withdrawn, and lo! the garden of the world—beautiful England with its towns and its forests; its lofty castles and quiet homes; its secluded nooks; its verdant bye-ways; its lordly aristocracy, and its hard-handed peasantry; its fairy rings, round which the little people still tread their midnight measure; its May-day gambols; the cheerful inglo of the farmer, and the lone house on the moor; its beautiful parks with their graceful deer just pausing to gaze with their soft eyes on the passing loiterer, then bounding off to enjoy their own quiet seclusion; all these things pass like the shadowy forms in a camera obscura before us, charming by their beauty, variety, and picturesqueness. Again is the curtain drawn for a few moments, then raised, and what a change! The fells of a German

University are sketched upon the mirror; we are introduced into its very arena; the grave professor's lecture; the Burschenschaft holds its meetings; clouds of smoke wreath themselves from the pipe of the fantastic capped German; the noisy supper; the bloodless duel; the beer and the wine cup, the Mephistopheles of the student, foam and sparkle at their midnight revels—the very echo of the heart-inspiring song which consecrates the Burschen meeting, seems to come to us from the mute figures that pass in rapid succession before us. Scarcely has our eye become familiar with these strange figures; hardly have we learnt to recognize in the long haired and fair faced Burschen, caring only for the present hour, the future Kant, Lessing, or Schiller, ere the scenes on the mirror again change, and we are once more looking at England; wandering over its battle fields, and retracing the whole storied ground of Durham and Northumberland. As we walk through its historic halls, the honoured palaces of its elder time, we gaze upon the splendid portrait galleries of its lords and ladies—the canvas consecrated by Van Dyke, Rubens, and Titian, the glowing beauties of Sir Peter Lilly; the black eyed and rosy cheeked dames who graced the Court of Charles the Second. The more noble and true men and women, whom Reynolds delighted to portray, are before us. Kings and Queens walk slowly past, allowing us to look not only at their outward mien and the stately etiquette which surrounds them, but to take a glance at the internal arrangements of their household; to inspect their bills, and see to the duties of their stewards. Then we are permitted a peep at the nursery of the Sidneys, where we behold the gallant Sir Philip, a weak confiding child, unconscious of his future greatness. But none of these scenes, full fraught as they are with historic lore, possess half the interest for us, as the picture of the humble cot by the side of the Avon, where we love to linger,—the cradle of the world's genius, the truant deer-stealer—Will Shakespeare! England cannot alone claim him, for he is the world's, he has laid