

What an exquisite picture—and how much of all that ennobles and adorns our common nature may be found treasured up in these "huts where poor men lie!"

Could not the government have interposed, with well-directed bounty, to assist the mountain-bard in his latter years? He was acknowledged as a great original genius, who had sprung from the bosom of the people; he had animated the loyalty of the nation by his spirit-stirring strains during the war. To crown all, he was in want. It will ever be regarded as an indelible disgrace that the nobility of Scotland and its government authorities condemned the last years of Burns to an ungrateful employment, yielding 70*l.* per annum, and that the only permanent provision made for Hogg was the gift, by a lady, of some acres of moor-ground, which brought previously the rent of five pounds sterling a year! His titled and wealthy friends saw him begin the world again, when sixty years old, with little resource but his pen, which had lost the vigour of youth and the freshness of novelty. They saw age and sickness settle down upon his over-wrought and exhausted frame, and wrapping themselves up in the mantle of self-gratification, they blessed themselves that they were not as other men are, or even as this poet!

But I get atrabilious. Let me conclude with noticing one happier mutation of fortune. The faithful friend of Sir Walter Scott, the amiable and kind-hearted William Laidlaw, has, I have just learned, been appointed to the management of an extensive property in Ross-shire, the estate of Sir Charles Ross of Balnagown. The situation is beautiful, in a fine country, well wooded and watered. It may not look so winning in the eyes of Mr. Laidlaw as the vales overlooked by the Eildon Hills and watered by the Tweed over the Yarrow, but it is no less a fair and lovely land. His office is a responsible one; he is well fitted for it, and fits emoluments are considerable. Thither has Mr. Laidlaw "fitted" with his family, destined, I trust, to pass the evening of his days in tranquil peace and heart-felt happiness. Here his love of nature and of rural life will have ample scope for exercise. Here, equally removed from "the great vulgar and the small," in his hours of leisure he can read, note, and botanize, saying with Cowley,

Oh, who would change these soft, yet solid joys,
For empty shows and senseless noise,
And all which rank ambition breeds,
Which seem such beauteous flowers and are such poisonous weeds?

GEMS FROM ETHEL CHURCHILL.

THE YOUNG POET IN LOVE.—The fanciful fables of fairy land are but allegories of the young poet's mind when the sweet spell is upon him. Some slight thing calls up the visionary world, and all the outward and actual is for the time forgotten. It is a fever ethereal and lovely; but, like all other fevers, leaving behind weakness and exhaustion. I believe there is nothing that causes so strong a sensation of physical fatigue as the exercise of the imagination. The pulses beat too rapidly; and how cold, how depressed, is the reaction!

AFFECTION.—There is nothing in this world so sensitive as affection. It feels its own happiness too much not to tremble for its reality; and starts, ever and anon, from its own delicious consciousness, to ask, Is it not, indeed, a dream? A word and a look are enough either to repress or to encourage.

FLOWERS.—It is curious to note how gradually the flowers warm into the rich colours and aromatic breath of summer. First, comes the snow-drop, formed from the snows, which give it name; fair, but cold and scentless: then comes the primrose with its faint soft hues, and its faint soft perfume—an allegory of actual existence, where the tenderest and most fragile natures are often those selected to bear the coldest weather, and the most bleak exposure.

THE ROSE.—There were red and white roses growing around: but the rival flowers were unstirred by even a breath of wind; they were still as the ashes of the once stirring spirits that gathered them as badges for their fatal warfare. Strange that the flower so peculiarly the lover's own, around which hung the daintiest conceits of poetry on which the eye lingers, to dream of the cheek it holds loveliest on earth—strange that the rose should have been a sign for the fiercest struggle ever urged by party strife—a strife that laid desolate the fair fields of England for so many years. And yet, how much chivalric association has Shakspeare flung around their bloom! But for him, the wars of the "rival houses" would be but obscure chronicles of inglorious wars—fighting for fighting sake; no liberty to be defended or obtained, and no foreign enemy driven triumphantly from the frontier: but for him, "the aspiring blood of Lancaster" would long since have sunk in the ground. But Shakspeare has called life out of the past; a thousand passions of humanity hang around those white and red flowers. He has given the lasting archive to the high-born house that boasted,—

"Our airy buildeth in the cedar's top,
And dallies with the wind, and scorns the sun."

It is he who has given the life of memory to "the princely Ed-

ward," the subtle Richard, the brave spirited Margaret, and the sad philosophy of the meek Henry, which comes home to many weary of a bleak and troubled world; and never do we feel how completely Shakspeare was our national poet, till we tread his own *locale*.

A LITERARY LIFE.—Composition, like every thing else, feels the influence of time. At first, all is poetry with the young poet; his heart is full of emotions eagerly struggling for utterance; every thing suggests the exercise of his own sweet art. A leaf, a flower, the star far off in the serene midnight, a look, a word, are enough for a poem. Gradually this profusion exhausts itself, the mind grows less fanciful, and poetry is rather a power than a passion. Feelings have hardened into thoughts, and the sensations of others are no longer almost as if they had been matter of experience. The world has become real, and we have become real along with it. Our own knowledge is now the material wherewith we work; and we have gathered a stock of recollections, bitter and pleasant, which now furnish the subjects that we once created: but these do not come at the moment's notice, like our former fantasies: we must be in the mood; and such mood comes but seldom to our worn and saddened spirits. Still, the vision and the faculty divine are never quite extinguished; the spiritual fire rises when all around is night, and the sad and tender emotion finds its old accustomed resource in music.

BUSINESS.—After all, there is nothing like business for enabling us to get through our weary existence. The intellect cannot sustain its sunshine flight long; the flagging wing drops to the earth. Pleasure palls, and idleness is,

"Many gathered miseries in one name:"

but business gets over the hours without counting them. It may be very tired at the end, still it has brought the day to a close sooner than any thing else.

ALLIGATOR FIGHTS IN HINDUSTAN.

In the time of Akbar, beyond the miar, a large space was inclosed by the surrounding plain, which stretched to a considerable extent towards the river Jumna; and from the pavilion above, the principal omrahs or nobles of his court used to participate with their royal master in a pastime no less exciting to them than to him. During my stay in India I have been several times present at exhibitions of this description; but always found that they created feelings of painful disgust rather than of rational pleasure. There is nothing absolutely appalling in beholding fierce animals mangle each other with all that ferocity to which nature has so signally disposed them for those purposes of destruction, as wise as they are benignant, without which the world would be overspread by a savage and indomitable race, and no longer be a secure dwelling-place for man. The cruelties frequently practised towards such wretched animals as are taken in order to contribute to these barbarous sports, are revolting beyond description; for it never appears to be among the contemplations of persons by whom beasts of prey are snared for the arena, that the infliction of pain upon animals which delight in human blood can be otherwise than a meritorious action; and therefore, in the fiercest spirit of retaliation, it is inflicted without mercy. Tigers and lions which have been snared in the jungles are commonly kept without food for several days, and subjected to all kinds of ingenious torment, in order to render them the more savage when freed from their cages to encounter an equally formidable and savage enemy. It is a common practice to catch alligators in the large rivers, and put them into tanks, with a strong iron wire passed several times round their long muzzles, and so tightened as to keep the jaws close, so that they can receive no solid food. In this state they have been known to live for weeks without perceptibly losing any of their strength. This is often done to render them voracious, preparatory to those exhibitions which take place upon certain occasions at most of the courts of the Mohammedan princes in Hindustan. During my residence in India I once saw, in a small tank, two alligators, the jaws of which had been fastened as just described, for a period it was said, of more than two months. They were caught, dragged upon the bank, where, the iron ligatures being cut, they were immediately released, and feeling their freedom, both plunged with equal eagerness into the water. As they had been for some weeks companions in suffering, neither manifested a disposition to commence hostilities, but occupied different parts of the tank, sinking to the bottom and occasionally thrusting their noses above the surface to take breath. The water did not exceed five feet in depth, so that, unless they kept the middle of the tank, they might be seen as they lay at the bottom, almost immovable. Though the place was crowded with spectators, the huge reptiles did not appear to be disturbed by so unusual a concourse, and even occasionally bore to be poked with a long pole before they would move from the mud in which they had embedded themselves. At length the carcass of a sheep was thrown into the water, just above where the smallest alligator lay. The voracious creature immediately rose and seized it, which it had no sooner done than its companion appeared on the surface, and with the swiftness of a shaft rushed towards its rival to partake of the tempting banquet—the turbid element dividing before it as

if ploughed with the keel of a ship. In a moment both sank, and for some time the water was much disturbed, the black mud rising in considerable quantities, and an occasional splashing sufficiently attested the severity of the struggle that was taking place below. After a while one of the combatants appeared with a portion of the sheep in its jaws, which having devoured, it again sank, and the struggle was evidently renewed. In a short time the water was strongly tinged with blood, the mud continued to rise, and the splashing increased. The anxiety of the spectators was excited to the highest pitch, when both competitors rose at different parts of the tank, as if the contest had been terminated by mutual consent. The smaller alligator had a frightful gash in its throat, and the fore-leg of the larger seemed to be extensively lacerated. They both tinged the water as they swam; nevertheless, their wounds did not appear to cause either of them much suffering or inconvenience. They did not attempt further hostility. The carcass of a second sheep, in a tempting state of decomposition (for these creatures prefer putrid carrion to any other), was thrown into the tank, and the struggle for supremacy renewed. It, however, did not last so long as the former; each having obtained a share of the prey, which divided at the slightest touch, the contest soon subsided, and both rose once more to the surface without any further appearance of injury. Their bodies appeared less lank; it was therefore evident that each had received a portion of the two carcasses thrown between them, like the apple of discord in classic story.

On the following day, the alligators which had already contributed to the sport of a numerous assemblage of un pitying spectators, were caught for the purpose of opposing them to foes of a different species from any they had been accustomed to encounter. They were brought into a large inclosure, within which was a cage containing a fine leopard. The gash in the throat of the smaller alligator had, it was now sufficiently apparent, greatly weakened it. The animal appeared apathetic, and did not promise much diversion to the anxious beholders. The creatures were removed from the tank to the arena, on a platform raised upon wheels, and drawn by three bullocks. When rolled from the carriage, both appeared almost inert, and especially the smaller one, which every now and then opened its huge mouth and gasped, manifestly suffering from the conflict of the preceding day. The leopard, as soon as it saw them, crouched upon its belly, as if conscious that it was about to be called upon to perform; when, however, the door of the cage was opened, which was done by a man in a sort of gallery above, by means of a cord attached to the upper bar, the animal did not seem disposed to try the issue of a combat with antagonists at all times formidable, and in their own element invincible. A pole being at length introduced, the leopard was irritated by being severely poked; and, with a sudden spring, bounded into the inclosure. The alligators appeared to look upon the scene with perfect indifference, remaining all but motionless on the spot where they had been cast from the platform. Their tails were occasionally seen to vibrate slightly, and especially when their brindled enemy appeared before them in a threatening attitude of attack. The leopard paused for some time with its head upon its paws, waving its tail to and fro, the fur being erected and the ears depressed, as if anxious but fearful to begin the encounter. At length, two or three crackers being flung just behind it, these had no sooner exploded than the terrified and enraged animal darted forward, and springing upon the nearest alligator, turned it over in an instant, and burying its fangs in the throat of its victim, almost immediately dispatched it, the helpless reptile appearing not to offer the slightest resistance. Finding that it had so easily vanquished its weakest enemy, the leopard, excited by the taste of blood, having been kept without food for the three previous days, sprang upon its surviving foe, but with a very different result. The alligator, suddenly shifting its head, the brindled champion missed its spring, when the roused foe, meeting as it turned, made a sudden snap at its head, which it took entire within its capacious jaws, and crushed so severely that when released, the leopard rolled over and died after a few struggles. The victor was now attacked by a man armed with a long spear, with which he dispatched it after a feeble resistance. Thus ended this barbarous pastime.—*Oriental Annual*.

SERIO-COMIC INTIMIDATION.—A person residing in a certain parish having fallen under the ban of the kirk-session, was duly cited before the proper tribunal, and, after admission or proof, sentenced to stand a public rebuke. The offender was a soldier, and often as he had done parade-duty in a different arena, the idea of exhibiting himself before the assembled congregation was so appalling, that he secretly determined to get out of the scrape with the best grace possible. With this view he went early to church, dressed in regimentals, and carried his gun along with him, which, from the bye-paths he took, and the hour of the morning, he managed to secrete without observation. In due time the worshippers assembled, and, after the services of the day had been ended, the soldier was called on to stand up. This summons he instantly obeyed, and by way of suiting the action to the word, presented his musket at the head of the clergyman. An exhibition so novel and unexpected astonished and