

From the True Tablet.

REVIEW.

*The Bible in Spain; or the Journeys, Adventures, and Imprisonments of an Englishman in an Attempt to circulate the Scriptures in the Peninsula.* By George Borrow. 3 vols. London: Murray, 1843.

The writer of this work is already known to our readers by his former little treatise on the Spanish gipsies. The present work is not unlike the former in many respects; but it differs from it by giving us a somewhat clearer insight into the author's whereabouts and personality, and by leading us with a wider sweep through that peculiar range of character with which Mr. Borrow has the most especial sympathy. Here, as heretofore, we have the gipsies—thieves, murderers, and cheats, as our author describes them—and himself their familiar companion, so far adapting himself to their style of conversation and behaviour, as to be by them confidently believed to be one of their own order, and a warm friend of the "law of the Gale's." But, in addition to the gipsies, Mr. Borrow is the confidential intimate of all the other classes of scoundrels which the soil of Spain—fertile in evil and in good—so lavishly produces. The lowest orders of smugglers are his chosen allies in waging war against the papal or monkish system, and in promoting the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, and the practice of vital Christianity throughout the Peninsula. Into his ears, as into those of a sympathizing brother, are poured the indignant complaints of a Jew thief, zealous for the security of the perpetrators of "the gold dust robbery." And his admiration for the religious character of the bloody cut-throats of Tangier and Algiers warms him into a vehement rebuke of those who presume to exalt the idolatry of Catholicism above the pure theism of the polygamical murderers of North Africa. In short, wherever our author finds a person upon whom the moral restraints of the Catholic faith sit too heavily, a hater of all creeds whatever, an outlaw from all society, or an enemy of Rome on the score of nation or of race, there he secures a friend, sympathy, and admiration; and he gives back what he receives in return.

It is true, Mr. Borrow has a peculiar theory in this head. He admits that he knows nothing about the "respectable" classes in Spain; and he takes a pride in the fact that he associates only with the lowest orders of society; but then he congratulates himself with the reflection that, in this, at least (if in nothing else), he resembles our Saviour. Our Saviour lived in the company of publicans and sinners, and denounced the self-sufficient pride and hypocrisy by which the ruling classes in Judæa were then distinguished. Mr. Borrow lived among the corresponding orders in Spain, and faithfully imitates our Saviour in the strong language which he pours forth against the spiritual guides and rulers of this latter country. Our Saviour, we believe, no where denounces all spiritual rulers as resembling the Pharisees of the first century; but he was omniscient, and knew the men against whom His re-

proaches were directed. Our author's imitation would be perfect if only he possessed the same omniscience. This was, of course, impossible; but still, like a zealous (though unprofitable) servant, he does what he can; and, as he cannot come up to his omnipotent model in one respect, he strives, not unsuccessfully, to surpass it in another—we mean in the use of contumelious language. Our author is a famous hand at calling names.

And yet, though Mr. Borrow professes his entire ignorance of the upper and better educated classes—among whom are to be reckoned those whom he thus censures—we may be very sure he never passes the limits of charity in the rebukes he administers to them. If we wanted any direct evidence of this, we should find it in the 26th page of the second volume, in which, alluding to the readiness with which certain unfavourable reports were received in Spain, he adds this comment:—"Unhappy land, but not until the pure light of the Gospel has illumined thee, wilt thou learn that the greatest of gifts is charity." In accordance with this excellent sentiment, our author exhibits throughout a firm and beautiful conviction that rash judgments, to the injury of one's neighbour, are truly Popish and diabolical in their origin; and that wherever the Gospel light has found its way, there the *illuminati* are, as a necessary result, mild, just, and tolerant. We give the following specimens:—

"After having performed my morning devotion, and breakfasted, I went down to the kitchen; the girl Geroina was seated by the fire. I inquired if she had heard mass? She replied in the negative, and that she did not intend to hear it. Upon my inquiring her motive for absenting herself, she replied, that since the friars had been expelled from their churches and convents she had ceased to attend Mass, or to confess herself; for that the government priests had no spiritual power, and consequently she never troubled them. She said the friars were holy men and charitable; for that every morning those of the convent over the way fed forty poor persons with the relics of the meal of the preceding day, but that now these people were allowed to starve. I replied, that the friars, who lived on the fat of the land, could well afford to bestow a few bones upon their poor, and that their doing so was merely a part of their policy, by which they hoped to secure to themselves friends in time of need."

Our readers, we are sure, will be struck with the connexion between the peculiar morality of this last sentiment, and its source or origin as given in the first half sentence. It was necessary to have the gift of pure gospel light, to be able to pass so readily from "my morning devotion" to this peculiar style of describing the character and motives of those whom the writer had never seen or known.

On another occasion, it seems, that in Madrid, some unknown ruffian came up to Mr. Borrow at night, "in a dark street," "and told me that unless I discontinued selling my Jewish books, I should have a knife nailed in my heart." Mr. Borrow answered as became a Bible missionary,

by requesting the man to go home and say his prayers, and tell his employers that Mr. B. pitied them. The man "turned away with an oath," and was no more seen. But even in that dark street the light of gospel charity shone so brightly, as to reveal to Mr. Borrow that the ruffian's "employers" were "the clergy."

On another occasion we find our gospel author irritated at the opposition given to his proceedings by the clergy, informing his interlocutor that their motives for opposing his endeavours to root out Catholicism were purely avaricious. "I replied, that, like the Pharisees of old, they cared more for the gold of the temple than the temple itself." Of course, our author had first ascertained the fact. But let us leave those worn-out matters.

Mr. Borrow professes to have penetrated into the *penetralia* of Spanish life; to have seen what few people besides himself have had an opportunity of seeing; and to have possessed himself of the hitherto unspoken secrets of the Peninsula. How far this is true, and how far, if it be true, he has truly reported what he has thus spied out, it is obviously impossible for us to form a direct judgment. But by passing from the known to the unknown we may be able to form some kind of indirect opinion on the subject. His first approach to Spain was through Portugal. At Lisbon he was very hospitably received at the English College; and he gives with much frankness an account of the private conversations that passed between him and his reverend hosts. In doing so we have to notice an admirable piece of management truly worthy of a Gospel professor. He is perfectly aware that some parts of the conversation were not meant for the public ear, and therefore he prints this part at full length, supplying by asterisks one or two words that any reader of ten years old would supply. He thus gratifies his readers by giving the conversation entire, and exhibits a tenderness of conscience which seems to be borrowed from some of the best known Sabbath papers of this metropolis.

We thus have the author's character for honour under his own hand. The close of the conversation is truly edifying. He makes the "amiable" and "courteous" clergyman indulge in some remarks of extraordinary anti-Irish bitterness—therein typifying the Catholics by five asterisks, and darkly shadowing forth O'Connell by the title "a certain person," who we are told "is a disgrace to the Church." At the end of these remarks our author adds this quite interrogatory:—

"Myself.—I believe there is an Irish College in this city?"

"Rector.—I believe there is; but it does not flourish, "there are few or no pupils. Oh!"

This last question and answer we understand to be a cheerful chuckle on the part of the inventor thereof at the notion of the kindly feeling that is likely to prevail between the rulers of the two Colleges, after his book has made its appearance, and this record of confidential intercourse has seen the light. To damp

and allay this cheerfulness a little, we beg to inform all those whom it may concern, and our Irish friends more particularly, that it is, as nearly as may be, utterly impossible that such a conversation can have occurred. The notion that the rector of the English College should pretend only to "believe" in the existence of an Irish College, is a touch of extravagance that marks the greatness of the inventor's gas to. As to the pretended dislike of O'Connell and the Irish, we are not, of course, authorized to speak on such a matter; but our own private information leaves no doubt on our minds that this whole dialogue is a pure and pleasant fabrication. We confess, we were much edified to meet within the first hundred pages of the first volume this test of our Bible-worshipper's honesty and honour.

It is now time for us to inform our readers that this three-volume book contains the record of three or four years' labours of an agent of the Bible Society to circulate the Bible in the Peninsula. It deserves as we have already shown, little credit for the exactness of its statements, or for the fairness of its deductions: but it is, nevertheless, a most remarkable picture of the manner in which these people have been wont to move earth and hell to aid the infidel, the revolutionist, and the outlaw, in rooting out, in a land already suffering from anarchy, the last ties of social order & security; and a most remarkable picture likewise, of the manner in which, in the person of the Earl of Clarendon, Whig diplomacy dabbled in Spanish intrigue—making and unmaking ministries—and did its utmost to strengthen the infidel party by helping Mr. Borrow against the clergy continually to violate the law. Those who may desire to understand these things for themselves, and moreover, to pursue a very curious and entertaining narrative of strange adventures in this wild land, in which the actor, though a man of much gasconade, conceit, impudence, cant, and, as we have already seen, *untruth*, is yet distinguished by intrepidity, perseverance, and intelligence of no common order—will do well to read this work. Let us give a few specimens of its traveller's tales.

SPANISH BLASPHEMY.

Of late when I was sharing at nightfall the frugal fare of the villager of Old or New Castile, on hearing the distant shot of the Christiano soldier or Carlist bandit, he would invoke curses on the heads of the two pretenders, *not forgetting the Holy Father and the goddess of Rome, Maria Santissima.*

This notion of cursing *Maria Santissima* strikes us as peculiarly happy.

ANTI-PAPAL SMUGGLERS.

Most of these men spoke of priestcraft and the monkish system with the utmost abhorrence, and said that they should prefer death to submitting again to the yoke which had formerly galled their necks. I questioned them very particularly respecting the opinion of their neighbours and acquaintances on this point, and they assured me that in their part of the Spanish frontier all were of the same mind, and that they cared as little for the Pope and his