

FALCONRY.

Red banners stream out from castle wall,
The cavaliers gather in lordly hall.
They are gay with plumes and apparel bright,
With gilded baldric and doublet white,
Ever ready for tourney or border fray,
For falcon-flight or stag at bay.
Twas a grand old hall where pennoncelles wave
From osken ceiling and crypt and nave;
Where ancient statues with lance and brand
In armor complete in niches stand.

Tripping lightly down from each spacious stair
Come matrons graceful and maidens fair,
Fair damsels—a rosy and sparkling band,
With gauntlet and jewell'd whip in hand,
In flowing riding-tobes array'd
To fly the falcon in forest glade.

Sirloin and venison-haunch on the board
Are doftly carved and the red wine pour'd.
Beakers of claret, flagons of beer,
Are quaff'd in response to toast and cheer.
Then forth down the granite steps they pass
To the court-yard esplanade of grass.
Ostler and groom from manger and stall
Lead forth the thoroughbred chargers tall.
The cavaliers quick to their saddles spring,
Withingle of spur and bridle-ring:
Fair maidens are raised with knightly care
To their palfreys, equip in housings rare:
Then the rough gamekeeper and dainty page
Bring forth the falcons from perch and cage.
The strong-wing'd merlins to sweep the wood,
Equip with jesses and bells and hood.
Then forth down the bowery vale they ride
To marshy mere or to river side.
For there, amid sedges and tufted reed,
The long-limb'd herons secluded feed.

The buzzard, the gos-hawk and the kite
Are but mean assassins in their flight,
But the shapely falcon of noble fame
Is the royal hunter of forest game.
On, on they ride; resound horn and hound,
While beaters explore the covert round.
The falcons from wood and jesses are freed,
When partridge and quail spring up at speed.
But loud resound cheering when herons rise
From oozy marsh to ascend the skies.

With frightened cry he expands his wings,
With outstretched neck from his ambush springs.
Springs upward in soaring and steady flight
Until lost in the skies to human sight.
But frantic and cruel the falcon still
Pursues the fugitive, eager to kill.
He follows the prey, he sears on high,
Like an arrow he cleaves the upper sky.
Then swoops with a downward swoon on his prey,
And the heron falls dead in the forest way.

Greenport, I. I.

ISAAC McLELLAN.

WILLIS' SKETCHES OF LITERARY LONDON.

A friend in Italy had kindly given me a letter to Lady Blessington, and with a strong curiosity to see this celebrated lady, I called on the second day after my arrival in London. It was "deep in" the afternoon, but I had not yet learned the full meaning of "town hours." "Her ladyship had not come down to breakfast," I gave the letter and my address to the powdered footman, and had scarcely reached home when a note arrived inviting me to call the same evening at ten.

In a long library lined alternately with splendidly bound books and mirrors, and with a deep window of the breadth of the room, opening upon Hyde Park, I found Lady Blessington alone. The picture to my eye as the door opened was a very lovely one. A woman of remarkable beauty, half buried in a fauteuil of yellow satin, reading by a magnificent lamp suspended from the centre of the arched ceiling; sofas, couches, ottomans, and busts, arranged in rather a crowded sumptuousness through the room; enamel tables, covered with expensive and elegant trifles in every corner, and a delicate white hand relieved on the back of a book, to which the eye was attracted by the blaze of its diamond rings. As the servant mentioned my name, she rose and gave me her hand very cordially, and a gentleman entering immediately after she presented me to her son-in-law, Count D'Orsay, the well-known Pelham of London, and certainly the most splendid specimen of a man, and a well-dressed one, that I had ever seen. Tea was brought in immediately, and conversation went swimmingly on.

Her ladyship's inquiries were principally about America, of which, from long absence, I knew very little. She was extremely curious to know the degrees of reputation the present popular authors of England enjoy among us, particularly Bulwer, Galt, and D'Israeli (the author of "Vivian Grey"). "If you will come to-morrow night," she said, "you will see Bulwer. I am delighted that he is popular in America. He is envied and abused by all the literary men in London, for nothing, I believe, except that he gets five hundred pounds for his books and they fifty, and knowing this, he chooses to assume a pride (some people call it puppyism) which is only the armor of a sensitive mind afraid of a wound. He is to his friends the most frank and gay creature in the world, and open to boyishness with those who he thinks understand and value him. He has a brother, Henry, who is as clever as himself in a different vein, and is now publishing a book on the present state of France. Bulwer's wife, you know, is one of the most beautiful women in London, and his house is the resort of both fashion and talent. He is just now hard at work on a new book, the subject of which is the last days of Pompeii. The hero is a Roman dandy, who wastes himself in luxury, till this great catastrophe rouses him and develops a character of the noblest capabilities. Is Galt much liked?"

I answered to the best of my knowledge that he was not. His life of Byron was a stab at the

dead body of the noble poet, which, for one, I never could forgive, and his books were clever, but vulgar. He was evidently not a gentleman in his mind. This was the opinion I had formed in America, and I had never heard another.

"I am sorry for it," said Lady B., "for he is the dearest and best old man in the world. I know him well. He is just on the verge of the grave, but comes to see me now and then, and if you had known how shockingly Byron treated him you would only wonder at his sparing his memory so much."

"Nil mortuis nisi bonum," I thought would have been a better course. If he had reason to dislike him, he had better not have written since he was dead.

"Perhaps—perhaps. But Galt has been all his life miserably poor, and lived by his books. That must be his apology. Do you know the D'Israelis in America?"

I assured her ladyship that the "Curiosities of Literature," by the father, and "Vivian Grey" and "Contarini Fleming," by the son, were universally known.

"I am pleased at that, too, for I like them both. D'Israeli the elder came here with his son the other night. It would have delighted you to see the old man's pride in him. He is very fond of him, and as he was going away, he patted him on the head, and said to me: 'Take care of him, Lady Blessington, for my sake. He is a clever lad, but he wants ballast.' I am glad he has the honor to know you, for you will check him sometimes when I am away." D'Israeli the elder lives in the country, about twenty miles from town, and seldom comes up to London. He is a very plain old man in his manners, as plain as his son is the reverse. D'Israeli the younger is quite his own character of "Vivian Grey," crowded with talent, but very soigné of his curls, and a bit of a coxcomb. There is no reserve about him, however, and he is the only joyous dandy I ever saw.

I asked if the account I had seen in some American paper of a literary celebration at Canandaigua and the engraving of her ladyship's name with some others upon a rock, was not a quiz.

"Oh, by no means. I was equally flattered and amused by the whole affair. I have a great idea of taking a trip to America to see it. Then the letter, commencing 'Most charming Countess—for charming you must be since you have written the conversations of Lord Byron'—oh, it was quite delightful. I have shown it everybody. By the way, I receive a great many letters from America, from people I never heard of, written in the most extraordinary style of compliment, apparently in very good faith. I hardly know what to make of them."

I accounted for it by the perfect seclusion in which great numbers of cultivated people live in our country, who, having neither intrigue, nor fashion, nor twenty other things to occupy their minds as in England, depend entirely upon books, and consider an author who has given them pleasure as a friend. America, I said, has probably more literary enthusiasts than any country in the world; and there are thousands of romantic minds in the interior of New England, who know perfectly every writer this side the water, and hold them all in an affectionate veneration, scarcely conceivable by a sophisticated European. If it were not for such readers, literature would be the most thankless of vocations. I, for one, would never write another line.

"And do you think these are the people who write to me? If I could think so, I should be exceedingly happy. People in England are refined to such heartlessness—criticism, private and public, is so interested and so cold, that it is really delightful to know there is a more generous tribunal. Indeed, I think all our authors now are beginning to write for America. We think already a great deal of your praise or censure."

I asked if her ladyship had known many Americans.

"Not in London, but a great many abroad. I was with Lord Blessington in his yacht at Naples, when the American fleet was lying there, eight or ten years ago, and we were constantly on board your ships. I knew Commodore Creighton and Captain Deacon extremely well, and liked them particularly. They were with us, either on board the yacht or the frigate, every evening, and I remember very well the band playing always 'God save the King!' as we went up the side. Count D'Orsay here, who spoke very little English at that time, had a great passion for 'Yankee Doodle,' and it was always played at his request."

The count, who still speaks the language with a very slight accent, but with a choice of words which shows him to be a man of uncommon tact and elegance of mind, inquired after several of the officers, whom I have not the pleasure of knowing. He seemed to remember his visits to the frigate with great pleasure. The conversation, after running upon a variety of topics, which I could not with propriety put into a letter for the public eye, turned very naturally upon Byron. I had frequently seen the Countess Guiccioli on the Continent, and I asked Lady Blessington if she knew her.

"No. We were at Pisa when they were living together, but, though Lord Blessington had the greatest curiosity to see her, Byron would never permit it. 'She has a red head of her own,' said he, 'and don't like to show it.' Byron feared the poor creature dreadfully ill. She feared more than she loved him."

She had told me the same thing herself in Italy.

It would be impossible, of course, to make a full and fair record of a conversation of some hours. I have only noted one or two topics which I thought most likely to interest an American reader. During all this long visit, however, my eyes were very busy in finishing for memory a portrait of the celebrated and beautiful woman before me.

The portrait of Lady Blessington in the "Book of Beauty" is not unlike her, but it is still an unfavorable likeness. A picture by Sir Thomas Lawrence hung opposite me, taken perhaps at the age of eighteen, which is more like her, and as captivating a representation of a just matured woman, full of loveliness and love, the kind of creature with whose divine sweetness the gazer's heart aches, as ever was drawn in the painter's most inspired hour. The original is now (she confesses it very frankly) forty. She looks something on the sunny side of thirty. Her person is full, but preserves all the fineness of an admirable shape; her foot is not crowded in a satin slipper for which a Cinderella might long be looked for in vain; and her complexion (an unusually fair skin with very dark hair and eyebrows) is of even a girlish delicacy and freshness. Her dress of blue satin (if I am describing her like a milliner, it is because I have here and there a reader of the *Mirror* in my eye who will be amused by it) was cut low and folded across her bosom in a way to show to advantage the round and sculpture-like curve and whiteness of a pair of exquisite shoulders, while her hair, dressed close to her head, and parted simply on her forehead with rich tertières of turquoise, enveloped in a neat outline a head with which it would be difficult to find a fault. Her features are regular, and her mouth, the most expressive of them, and a ripe fullness and freedom of play, peculiar to the Irish physiognomy, and expressive of the most unassuming good-humor. Add to all this a voice merry and sad by turns, but always musical, and manners of the most unpretending elegance, yet even more remarkable for their winning kindness, and you have the most prominent traits of one of the most lovely and fascinating women I have ever seen. Remembering her talents and her rank, and the unenvying admiration she receives from the world of fashion and genius, it would be difficult to reconcile her lot to the "doctrine of compensation."

WILLIS AT THE OPERA.

Went to the opera to hear Giulia Grisi. I stood out the first act in the pit, and saw instances of rudeness in "Pop's-alley" which I had never seen approached in three years on the Continent. The high price of tickets, one would think, and the necessity of appearing in full dress, would keep the opera clear of low-bred people; but the conduct to which I refer seemed to excite no surprise and passed off without notice, though, in America, there would have been ample matter for at least four duels. Grisi is young, very, pretty and an admirable actress—three great advantages to a singer. Her voice is under absolute command, and she manages it beautifully, but it wants the intonation of Malibran. You merely feel that Grisi is an accomplished artist, while Malibran melts all your criticism into love and admiration. I am easily moved by music, but I came away without much enthusiasm for the present passion of London.

The opera house is very different from those on the Continent. The stage only is lighted abroad, the single lustre from the ceiling just throwing that clair-obscur over the boxes, so favorable to Italian complacencies and morals. Here, the dress circles are lighted with bright chandeliers, and the whole house sits in a blaze of light as leaves no approach, even to a lady, unseen. The consequence is that people here dress much more, and the opera, if less interesting to the habitués, is a gayer thing to the many.

I went up to Lady Blessington's box for a moment, and found Strangways, the traveller, and several other distinguished men with her. Her ladyship pointed out to me Lord Brougham, flirting desperately with a pretty woman on the opposite side of the house, his mouth going with the convulsive twitch which so disfigures him, and his most unsightly pug-noses in the strongest relief against the red lining behind. There never was a plainer man. The Hon. Mrs. Norton, Sheridan's daughter, and a poetess, sat nearer to us, looking like a queen, certainly one of the most beautiful women I ever looked upon; and the gastronomic and hump-backed Lord Sefton, said to be the first judge of cookery in the world, sat in the "Gandy's omnibus," a large box on a level with the stage, leaning forward with his chin on his knuckles, and waiting with evident impatience for the appearance of Fanny Elssler in the ballet. Beauty and all, the English opera house surpasses anything I have seen in the way of a spectacle.

WILLIS' CRITICISM ON ENGLISH SOCIETY.

An evening party at Bulwer's. Not yet perfectly initiated in London hours, I arrived, not far from eleven, and found Mrs. Bulwer alone in her illuminated room, whiling away an expectant hour in playing with a King Charles spaniel, that seemed by his fondness and delight to appreciate the excessive loveliness of his mistress. As far as America, I may express, even in print, an admiration which is no heresy in London.

The author of "Pelham" is a younger son and depends on his writings for a livelihood, and truly, measuring works of fancy by what they will bring (not an unfair standard perhaps),

a glance around his luxurious and elegant rooms is worth reams of puff in the quarterlies. He lives in the heart of the fashionable quarter of London, where rents are ruinously extravagant, entertains a great deal, and is expensive in all his habits, and for this pay Messrs. "Clifford," "Pelham," and "Aram"—(it would seem, most excellent good bankers. As I looked at the beautiful woman seated on the costly ottoman before me, waiting to receive the rank and fashion of London, I thought that old closeted Literature never had better reason for his partial largess. I shall forgive the miser for starving a wilderness of poets.

One of the first persons who came was Lord Byron's sister, a thin, plain, middle-aged woman, of a very serious countenance, and with very cordial and pleasing manners. The rooms soon filled, and two professed singers went industriously to work in their vocation at the piano; but, except one pale man, with staring hair, whom I took to be a poet, nobody pretended to listen.

Every second woman has some strong claim to beauty in England, and the proportion of those who just miss it, by a hair's breadth as it were—who seem really to have been meant for beauties by nature, but by a slip in the moulding or pencilling are imperfect copies of the design—is really extraordinary. One after another entered, as I stood near the door with my old friend Dr. Bowring for a name-caller, and the word "lovely" or "charming" had not passed my lips before some change in the attitude or unguarded animation had exposed the flaw, and the hasty homage (for homage it is, and an idolatrous one, this we pay to the beauty of woman) who coldly and unsparingly retracted. From a goddess upon earth to a slighted and unattractive trap for matrimony is a long step, but taken on so slight a defect sometimes, as, were they marble, a sculptor would etch away with his nail.

I was surprised (and I have been struck with the same thing at several parties I have attended in London) at the neglect with which the female part of the assemblage is treated. No young man ever seems to dream of speaking to a lady, except to ask her to dance. There they sit with their mamma's, their hands hung over each other before them in the received attitude; and if there happens to be no dancing (as at Bulwer's), looking at a print, or eating an ice, is for them the most enlivening circumstance of the evening. As well as I recollect, it is better managed in America, and certainly society is quite another thing in France and Italy. Late in the evening a charming girl, who is the reigning belle of Naples, came in with her mother from the opera, and I made the remark to her. "I detest England for that very reason," she said frankly. "It is the fashion in London for the young men to prefer everything to the society of women. They have their clubs, their horses, their rowing matches, their hunting and betting, and every thing else is a bore! How different are the same men at Naples! They can never get enough of one there! We are surrounded and run after."

"Our poodle dog is quite adored.
Our sayings are extremely quoted."

and really one feels that one is a belle." She mentioned several of the beaux of last winter who had returned to England. "Here I have been in London a month, and these very men that were dying for me, at my side every day on the Strada Nuova, and all but fighting to dance three times with me of an evening, have only left their cards! Not because they care less about me, but because it is 'not the fashion'—it would be talked of at the club, it is 'knowing' to let us alone."

There were only three men in the party, which was a very crowded one, who could come under the head of beaux. Of the remaining part, there was much that was distinguished, both for rank and talent. Shell, the Irish orator, a small, dark, deceitful, but talented-looking man, with a very disagreeable squeaking voice, stood in a corner, very earnestly engaged in conversation with the aristocratic old Earl of Clarendon. The contrast between the styles of the two men, the courtly and mild elegance of the one, and the uneasy and half-bred but shrewd earnestness of the other, was quite a study. Fonblanque, of the Examiner, with his pale and discolored-looking face, stood in the doorway between the two rooms, making the amiable with a ghastly smile to Lady Stepmey. The "bilious Lord Durham," as the papers call him, with his Brutus head, and grave, severe countenance, high-bred in his appearance, despite the worst possible coat and trousers, stood at the pedestal of a beautiful statue, talking politics with Bowring, and near them, leaned over a chair, the Prince of Moscow, the son of Marshal Ney, a plain, but determined looking young man, with his coat buttoned up to his throat, unconscious of everything but the presence of the Hon. Mrs. Leicester Stanhope, a very lovely woman, who was enlightening him, in the prettiest English French, upon some point of national differences. Her husband, famous as Lord Byron's companion in Greece, and a great liberal in England, was introduced to me soon after by Bulwer; and we discussed the bank and the President, with a little assistance from Bowring, who joined us with a pen for the old general and his measures, till it was far into the morning.

ROBERT BOWLES, the popular American Exchanger of London, is about to bid farewell to that city and resume his residence in Boston.