

years in succession. At each return of this Pythian festival the interest grew more intense, and the participants multiplied. Much good was derived from the musical competitions which then took place. Artists strove to emulate and outrival one another. They saw their musical repertory enlarged and embellished, and felt confident that they had secured the patronage of the public at large. To the exhibitions of which I am speaking should be ascribed something which calls for a special, though passing, notice. I allude to a collection of original Irish melodies. For the first time they now appeared under this form. Efforts have been made at different times to collect them and proved unavailing. Burke Thumoth, Neil of Dublin, and O'Carolan's son undertook the task, but without any success. Ireland is indebted for the principal collections of her ancient melodies to a contest of harpers held at Belfast in 1792, and to the enthusiasm of Edward Bunting. This worthy personage compiled three volumes of music. In the first volume there are sixty-six airs, in the second seventy-five, and in the third one hundred and fifty. Thomas Moore was endowed by nature with superior attainments, and delighted in dedicating them to the dear old land. Erin owes him no small debt of gratitude. He chronicled her deeds of the past by writing her history, and vindicated the religion which she glories in professing in "The Travels of an Irish Gentleman." He enshrined in a casket of poetical gems her tears and smiles, her sweetest recollections and fondest hopes. Her ancient music arrested his attention and received lustre at his hands. Perhaps you might not dislike to learn in what manner Ireland's favorite bard improved her melodies. I shall briefly tell you. These melodies were first sung in the Irish language, but this language had ceased to prevail as it did of yore, and had rapidly fallen into disuse. In these songs two things should be carefully distinguished: the airs and the words. Now these airs were really magnificent, but many were modified to their disadvantage. Tradition had vitiated them. The words to which they were wedded were put into worthless English and constrained to express sentiments of an inferior order. Hardiman gave to the public a copy of many of the original songs. Moore was reserved the signal honor of immortalizing their music. In earning it he could not dispense with the talents of Sir John Stevenson. The latter disengaged many of the original melodies from the blemishes which they had contracted in the course of time and restored them to their primitive purity. It is, however, to be regretted that he committed an error in harmonizing them as he did. His style is not in keeping with their simplicity. It is too florid and elaborate. Moore was an adept in music. He availed himself of his proficiency in this department to correct several of the old airs of his country. While