

THE LITERARY TRANSCRIPT,

AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCER.

VOL. 1. No. 66.]

QUEBEC, SATURDAY 28TH JULY, 1838.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.

POETRY.

THE BRITISH MAN OF WAR.

She reclines upon the billow, in her grace and pride alone,
Like a maiden on her pillow—like a monarch on his throne:
A hundred words of wonder in her lofty rigging ride;
Her keel is deeply laying in the sea-god's darksome bed,
Whilst amidst the cloud is waving her banner brightly spread:
Oh! armed with death and terror, clad in beauty and in awe,
What noble sight or fairer than a British Man of War!

There is silence deep on board her, as her freight woe of the dead,
At a whistle's magic, order, all her vast white wings are spread
Like a bird through daylight swimming—like a meon through the night—
Like a steed the desert skimming, she pursues her pathless flight;
And the thousand souls within her, who with English ardour burn,
What glories they will win her, ere we shout on her return!

For though in no dread quarrel the flaming sword they draw,
For Peace hath many a laurel for the British Man of War.

Go forth I heaven guide thy thoughts, and grant thee well to speed,
Whilst midst undreamt of wonders, bright valour's star shall lead
Go giant child of science—her aid and champion foe,
And bid soulless defiance to the terrors of the sea:
Go! messengers of glory, with Old England's flag unfurled,
And proudly tell her story abroad to all the world;
Show earth's admiring numbers, in their envy and their awe,
All the lion might that slumbers in a British Man of War.

THE COQUETTE.

BY THE HONOURABLE MRS. NORTON.

The hall was truly splendid: so was the supper. Three new beauties "came out" that night; fourteen gentlemen, distinguished in the fashionable world, for various causes, fell in love with these "blossoms of the London Spring," as the newspapers call them; and Bessie Ashton's marriage with Lord Glenallan was formally declared by her aunt, Lady Ashton, as fixed for the ensuing evening. One by one the lingering guests departed; the chandeliers gave a fainter light as the gradual day-dawn overpowered them; and the tired servants, seemed only waiting finally to extinguish the lamps, till the departure of two figures should leave the rooms silent and deserted. They waited however in vain. Mute and motionless as a statue, Bessie Ashton remained gazing, from the open window on the empty park, and ever and anon the cool breeze of the morning lifted her glossy black hair from a cheek whose haggard weariness and unsmiling expression, ill assorted with the situation of Glenallan's evaded bride. Opposite, leaning against a marble table which supported one of the magnificent mirrors in the apartment, and gazing steadfastly on her averted figure, stood a young man of about six and twenty. His mouth was coarse—his eye harsh—yet his countenance was handsome. Miss Ashton turned from the window with a slight shudder, as if the wind had chilled her; "Well, George? said she listlessly. Well, Bessie. "And so you have sold yourself for a coronet?" "Ah! George do not begin in that harsh way; you know I cannot bear it.—It is so long since I spoke familiarly with any one, and I was so glad to see you back again."

As she spoke the last words she clasped his hand in one of hers, and laying the other lightly and tremulously on his shoulder, look- ed up in his face with a nervous and painful smile. Her companion did not shake her off,

but he shrunk from that caressing hand, and ceased to lean against the marble slab. "I do not wish to speak harshly to you, Bessie; on the contrary, I believe you will find me more kindly disposed to you, than many who are smoother spoken: but I cannot, and will not, conceal from you, that your conduct towards my friend, Claude Forester, has forever destroyed my esteem for your character. It is impossible I should not feel this—and particularly at a time when I know him to be ill and heart-broken." "I did not forsake him—I chose to distrust and forget me," said Bessie, while she struggled in vain to choke back the tears that rose to her eyes. "And why? why did he distrust and forsake you? because that spirit of coquetry, which is the curse of your existence, prompted you to encourage every one round you—to traffic for compliments; to barter looks for words for feelings—and to make him miserable for the gratification of your vanity. Yet you might, if you had tried, have won him back again; you might even now." "Win him back again?" exclaimed Miss Ashton passionately, "I have no need to make so vast a struggle to be loved; there are many, who are though Claude Forester's superiors, who like me in spite of those faults you and your friend are so quick in observing; and pray, on what occasions have I played the coquette, my wise cousin?" "Bessie, Bessie, you need not be bitter with me; for the time is gone by when you could provoke or sadden me. Have you forgotten young Milmay, to whom you were forced to apologise for having led him to believe you would accept him? Have you forgotten Lawrence Gordon and his laboured gifts, which you returned when weary of the giver? Have you forgotten Lord Cartew and his flowers? Mr. Moutain and his blood-hound, which you carressed for the sake of making a talisman? Have you forgotten that at one time you even thought it worth your while a peculiar and confused expression passed over his countenance; he stammered and paused. Miss Ashton raised her eyes, and a soft, quick smile of triumph lit every feature of her expressive face, as she gazed on his. "I do think you are jealous," exclaimed she, "it is ill receiving advice from a lover. Mr. Ashton?" "I am not your lover, Bessie; God forbid that my happiness should depend on you—and if I were your admirer, is the admiration which results solely from the power of personal attraction—without esteem, without respect—is it indeed, worth that smile? your beauty no one can be insensible to; but your heart! oh, very cold and selfish must that heart be, which could prize any triumph at a moment like this, when you have made the misery of one man, and are about, in all human probability, to destroy the happiness of another. Beware, Bessie, beware! the day will come when the triumph of coquetry shall have no more comfort your agony. Good night," and left the room. Mechanically, Miss Ashton followed; and mechanically, she sought her own room, and flung herself into a chair. George Ashton's words rang in her ear; her heart beat violently; the choking which precedes weeping rose in her throat, grief, pride, resentment, and mortification, strove for mastery in her mind, and the triumphant beauty gave way to a hysterical burst of tears. Her passionate sobbing awoke the weary attendant, who had been sitting up for her. "Dear Miss," said she, "don't fret so; we must all leave our homes some time or another, and I am sure Lord Glenallan " "Don't talk to me, Benson—I have no home—I have no one to grieve for. Home I is it like home-friends to give a ball on my departure, as if it were a thing to rejoice at? Where is the quiet evening my mother used to describe long ago, which was to precede my wedding-day—where the sweet counsel from her lips which was to make the memory of that evening holy for ever after—where the quiet and the peace which should bless my heart? They have made me what I am—they have made me what I am." "La, Miss," said the astonished maid, "I am sure you ought to be happy;

and as to your mamma, it is in nature that parents should die before their children, and she was a very delicate lady always. So do, Miss," continued she, "dry your beautiful eyes, or they'll be as red as ferret's and your voice is quite hoarse with crying; you will not fit to be seen to-morrow."

Nothing calms one like the consciousness of not being sympathised with: Bessie Ashton ceased to weep, and began to undress, after which she dismissed her maid, and burying her head in her hands, forgot all but the irrevocable past.

"Past four! a fine morning," Bessie started, and raised her heavy eyes to the window—the monotonous words were repeated. She looked wistfully at the bed; but no—she felt she could not sleep. Her head sank again on her hand; vague feelings of wretchedness and self-reproach weighed on her soul; and too weary, even to weep, she remained listlessly dreaming, till a sudden beam of the morning sunshine lit on the ornaments she had worn the night before, and started her into consciousness. Her clasped hands dropped on her knee as she gazed on the sweet sky which heralded her wedding day. The sun rose higher and brighter—the heavens grew blue—the indistinct and rarely heard chirping of the earlier birds changed to a confused twittering, varied by loud cheerful notes, and the clear carol of the blackbird and thrush; the fresh wind blew on her weary, aching brow, as if seeking to soothe her misery, and Bessie Ashton sank on her knees, stretching out her arms to Heaven, and murmured some passionate invocation, of which the only audible words were: "Claude!—Oh! God forgive and help me! that love is sinful now."

Few would have recognised the pale and weeping form which knelt in earnest agony then, in the bride of the evening. Wedded by special licence to an Earl: covered with pearls and blonde: flushed with triumph and excitement: the Countess of Glenallen bent, and imparted a light cold kiss on the forehead of each of her beautiful bridesmaids: bowed and smiled to the congratulating beings who passed her; received the stiff and self-complacent parting speech of her aunt, Lady Ashton; and descended the magnificent staircase with her happy bridegroom. One accident disturbed her. George Ashton stood at the hall door, and as she passed, he took her by the hand and murmured "God bless you, Bessie!" involuntarily she wrung the hand she held: involuntarily she returned the blessing; old memories crowded to her heart!—tears gathered in her eyes—with a burst of weeping she sank back in the carriage, and when Lord Glenallen whispered carelessly, "Surely, my own, you have left nothing there for which my love cannot repay you."—She drew her hand from his with a cold shudder; and a confused wish that she had never been born, or never lived to be married, (especially to the man to whom she had just sworn love and duty) was the uppermost feeling in Bessie's heart, as the horses whirled her away to her new home.

Time past; Bessie Ashton again appeared on the theatre of the gay world, as an admirer's bride. The restless love of conquest which unbattered her girlhood still remained, or rather (inasmuch as our feelings do not become more simple as we mix with society) increased and grew upon her day by day.

The positive necessity of sometimes concealing what we do feel; the policy of affecting what we do not; the defiance produced by the consciousness of being disliked without a cause, and abused as a topic for conversation, the contempt excited by the cringing servility of those who flatter for services to be performed, and follow for notice to be obtained; the betrayal of confidence which appeared natural; the rivalry, disappointment, mortification, and feverish struggling, which beset us in the whirlpool of life, and carry us round whether we will or not—these are causes which the noblest and the purest natures have difficulties to resist, and which had their full effect on a mind like Bessie's, naturally

vain and eager, and warped by circumstances to something worse.

From her mother's home, where poverty and a broken heart had followed an imprudent marriage, Miss Ashton had been transported, to add, by her transcendent beauty, one other feature of attraction to the gayest house in London.

"Not quite a woman, yet but half a child," she was at that age when impressions are easiest made—and, when made, most durable. Among her rich relations the lessons taught by the pale lips of her departed parent were forgotten; the weeds which that parent would have rooted from her mind, grew up and choked her better feelings; and Bessie, the once simple and contented Bessie, who had been taught to thank God for the blessing of a humble home, and the common comforts of life, struggled for wealth and rank that should place her on a par with her new associates, and shrank from the idea of bestowing her hand on any man who could not give her in return—diamonds and an Opera box.

During the seclusion of an English honeymoon, Bessie had believed that (Claude Forester apart) she could love Glenallen better than any one. He was intelligent, kind, graceful, and noble. He was an Earl, he was popular with women and respected by men. He had made two very creditable speeches in the house, and might make more. He rode inimitably well. He had shown more taste in laying out the grounds about Glenallen, than Nash did in the Regents' park. In short, there was no reason why she should not love Glenallen;—except that it would be so exceedingly ridiculous to fall in love with one's husband; it would look as if nobody else thought it worth while to pay her any attention; Glenallen would think it so ridiculous, for Glenallen had none of Forester's romantic, and was quite accustomed to the ways of fashionable couples, and contented to pursue his some path.

Then, Lady Ashton—how Lady Ashton would laugh! and it really would be laughable after all. So that Lady Glenallen's first coup d'essai, after her marriage, was to encourage the violent admiration evinced for her by her Lord's cousin, Fitzroy Glenallen, who was twice as intelligent, twenty times as graceful, won all the plates at Ascot, Epsom, and Doncaster; was the idol of the women—and as to the men—pshaw! the men were jealous of him.

Now it so happened that one of the inimitable Fitzroy's peculiarities was, that he never could be in love with the same woman for more than three months at a time. Upon this failing therefore, the young Countess undertook to lecture him, and succeeded so well that he suddenly told her one morning, when she was gathering a geranium in her beautiful conservatory in Park Lane, that if ever there existed a being he could worship forever, it was herself. Lady Glenallen let fall the flower she had gathered. She blushed a deep crimson. She felt she was a married woman, and ought to be excessively shocked—she thought of forbidding him the house, but then it would be so awkward to make a quarrel between Glenallen and his cousin; so she only forbid him ever to mention the subject again, and to prove she was in earnest in her wish to discourage his attentions, she gave two hours every morning and a typewritten ticket to her opera box to young Lord Linton, who knew nobody in town, poor fellow, was only just two-and-twenty, and most touchingly attached to a pale pretty little sister of his, with whom he rode, walked, and talked uncessantly, and who, he assured Lady Glenallen, was the last of seven; that eating warm, consumption, being the inheritance of the family.

Fitzroy Glenallen was not, however, a man to be slighted with impunity—he ceased to be Lady Glenallen's lover, but oh! how infinitely more troublesome and irksome did he contrive to make the attentions of Lady Glenallen's friend. What unasked for advice did he not pour into her ear!—what gentle hints and laughing allusions did he not bestow on her