

while musing upon many things, with my eyes staring up the streets of New York, said I, What folly for the like of me to come out to a country like this, in hopes of making a fortune! they have plenty of boys here, as well as in Scotland; it is reasonable to suppose that the people will provide for their own children, in preference to those of strangers. This thought confirmed me that it was my wisdom to return home with all convenient speed; for I had once determined to desert the ship on our arrival at New York.

Having finished our lading, we bade farewell to America, about the beginning of October, and happy was I to see the vessel's bow bearing homewards. I began to pluck up spirit, and talk more briskly to the crew. When near the end of our voyage, I began to consider what kind of reception I was likely to meet with at home. I determined to prepare my way by writing a penitential letter to my father, soliciting his forgiveness, and that he would again permit me to enjoy his paternal care, promising to be an obedient son so long as breath was in my body, assuring him that I had never seen the value of home till I left it, that now his house appeared a palace, and the field behind, in which I used to play, a perfect paradise. On arriving at Greenwich, I put my letter into the post-office, and longed for an answer. In about eight days it came, in which he expressed the greatest readiness to receive me home, provided I was sincere in my professions. Having obtained the captain's permission, I set off for home a happy man. When I arrived within a few miles of my native town, my heart was so full of joy, that I supposed every blade of grass was pleased at my return; but when I saw my mother, I burst out into tears, begged her forgiveness a thousand times over, fell down at my father's feet, doing the same to him, kissed all my brothers and sisters, then ran to the garden to see if the trees I had planted still remained; I was so transported to see my trees once more, that I actually kissed them too.

In the evening the family assembled to prayers. My father read Luke xv. from the 11th verse. After reading to the end of the chapter, he addressed us to the following purport:

"My dear friends and children, You have seen in the history of the prodigal, and also in that of my poor son Richard, a picture of us all by nature. Like lost sheep we ran away from God, and sought happiness from some other sources: but happiness cannot be found but in God. In him is life, light, peace, pardon, and every good. O therefore seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked among you forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon. What a pity, yes, how dangerous to live without God a single day, for then you live without hope; to die in such circumstances would be dreadful. At death, the wicked are instantly turned into hell, and all who forget God, the sober as well as the profligate. O think of the love of Jesus to our perishing world. He left his Father's house to seek poor wandering sheep; he lived and died, the just for the unjust, to bring them back to God. It is not man, but God, who commands you to believe in the Saviour."

On this we all kneeled to prayer; my father

returned a thousand thanks to the God of heaven for preserving me during the months of my folly, and prayed earnestly to God that I might be born again: that I might see the sinfulness of my ways, and the glory of Jesus; and be a monument of the exceeding riches of saving sovereignty. I believe that while my father was yet speaking, God heard his prayers for me, because I then began for the first time to perceive my heart a fountain of wickedness. I saw my past conduct to be rebellion against God, as well as against my father. The prayer was no sooner ended than I cried out, Father, what shall I do to be saved? he instantly replied, My dear son, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

Richard turned out to be an excellent young man, beloved by all who feared Jesus. He lived to a good old age, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Spirit. Indeed he held fast the beginning of his confidence in Christ, and rejoiced in hope of glory with him, so long as breath was in his body—and most cheerfully laid down his mortal life when the Lord's appointed time arrived.

May we who read this history, live by the same faith, and die depending on the same Saviour?

MISCELLANEOUS.

Of the prodigious Chestnut Trees on Mount Etna, with some other curious Particulars; from Mr. Brydone's Tour, &c.

Concluded

When we came near the sea, I was desirous to see what form it had assumed in meeting with the water. I went to examine it, and found it had drove back the waves far upwards of a mile, and had formed a large black high promontory, where before it was deep water. This lava, I imagined, from its barrenness, for it is as yet covered with a very scanty soil, had run from the mountain but a few ages ago; but was surprised to be informed by Signor Recupero, the historiographer of Etna, that this very lava is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus to have burst from Etna that this very lava is mentioned by Diodorus Siculus to have burst from Etna in the time of the second Punic war, when Syracuse was besieged by the Romans. A detachment was sent from Taurominum to the relief of the besieged. They were stopped on their march by this stream of lava, which had reached the sea before their arrival at the foot of the mountain, and entirely cut off their passage; and obliged them to return by the back of Etna, upwards of 100 miles about. His authority for this, he tells me, was taken from inscriptions on Roman monuments found on this lava, and that it was likewise well ascertained by many of the old Sicilian authors. Now as this is about 2000 years ago, one would have imagined, if lavas have a regular progress in becoming fertile fields, that this must long ago have become at least arable: this however is not the case, and it is as yet only covered with a very scanty vegetation, being incapable either of producing corn or vines. There are indeed pretty large trees growing in the crevices, which are full of a very rich earth; but in all probability it will be some hundred years yet, before there is enough of this to render it of any use to the proprietors.

In the lowest part of the first region of Etna, the harvest is almost over; but in the upper parts

of the same region, near the confines of the Regions Syvolta, it will not begin yet for several weeks.

As Recupero, who is a facetious and an agreeable companion, was kind enough to sit a good deal with me during my confinement, I have gathered many remarks from his conversation, that may perhaps be worthy of your attention.

The variety of waters about Etna, he tells me, is altogether astonishing. I have already mentioned the Fiume Fredda, or the river of Acid: Recupero confirms what I had been told of it. There is a lake on the north of the mountain, of about three miles in circumference, which receives several considerable rivers; yet, although there is no apparent outlet, it never overflows its banks. I suggested that there might probably be a subterraneous communication betwixt this and the Fiume Fredda. He said there was no resemblance in the quality of their waters; however, I think it is probable, that in the course of so many miles, through the caverns of Etna, full of salts and of minerals, it may both acquire its cold and its vitriolic qualities.

There is another lake on the top of a mountain to the west of Etna, the bottom of which could never be found. It is observed never either to rise or fall, but always preserves the same level. It is undoubtedly the crater of that mountain (which is all of burnt matter) converted into a lake. The river which supplies the baths of Catania is of a very different nature: it never continues the same, but is perpetually changing. Its current is for the most part confined under ground by the lavas; but sometimes it bursts out with such violence that the city has suffered greatly from it; and what is still more unfortunate, these eruptions are generally followed by some epidemical distemper. It has now been constantly diminishing for these two years past, and is at present almost reduced to nothing. They are in perpetual dread of its breaking out, and laying waste their fields, as it has so often done before. What is exceedingly singular, it generally bursts out after a long tract of the driest and warmest weather. The Etnean academy have never been able to account for this singular phenomenon. I think it is most probable that it arises from the melting of the snows on Etna, but I shall not pretend to say how. These perhaps, overflowing the caverns that usually receive their water, the surplus is carried off into this river.

The river of Alcantara certainly takes its rise from the melting of these snows. Its waters, I observed, are exactly of the same whitish colour as all the rivers are, that run from the Glaciers amongst the Alps. There are several periodical springs on Etna, that flow only during the day, and stop during the night. These too, are naturally and easily accounted for from the melting of the snow; for they melt only during the day, being hard froze every night, even in the hottest season. There are likewise a variety of poisonous springs, some of so deadly a quality, that birds and beasts have often been found lying dead on their banks, from having drank of their water. But (what is perhaps still more singular) Recupero told me, that about twenty years ago, there opened a rent in the mountain, that for a considerable time sent forth so strong a vapour, that like the lake Avernus, birds were absolutely suffocated in flying over it.

There are many caverns where the air is so