

Autumnal Musings.

For the Callopean.

"We are as clouds, that veil the midnight moon;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly! yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost forever."

And the harp-strings of him, who thus sung, long since broken by the fierce storm-spirit, amid the waves of Lerici, have ceased for ever to vibrate! and the hand, that swept them, yes, the hand of Shelly,—and the heart, that beat in bold defiance of all that is sacred, pure, and holy, reduced by cremation to their native dust, lie mingled with the Italian clod.

What thoughts rush upon the mind, strange and mysterious thoughts! as in imagination we wander up the stream of time, and mark the scattered wrecks of ages gone. In contemplating the revolutions of the mighty past,—the rise and spread, the waning glory and the fall of empires and kingdoms,—the kings, heroes, statesmen, orators, poets, and philosophers, who, in different ages have figured largely on life's stage, but who now lie mouldering in the dust, the mind is bewildered, and we involuntarily exclaim with him, who shone in all the conceivable splendor of this world's greatness, and who drank most deeply from all the fountains of this world's happiness,—“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.”

In imagination we wander through Babylon, the mighty Babylon! we stand upon the banks of the gently gliding Euphrates;—we gaze upon her lofty walls, her temples rising to the clouds, her gorgeous palaces, and aerial gardens; and while we are still admiring and wondering, the proud, the majestic Persian comes;—and “Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, is as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.” And now, where all was magnificence, revelry, conscious security and joy, the wild beasts of the desert prowl; there dismal solitude and silence reign unbroken, save by the tiger's growl, the serpent's hiss, or the night-bird's hideous scream. Where now is Athens, with her temples and palaces? Where now is that pyramid of empires, the brightest name on the page of glory,—colossal Rome, in all her splendor, with her eternal hills? Gone!—levelled in the dust of things that were. Oh time! time! thy changes are as rapid as they are appalling. We weep with bitterness o'er the ruins of the past, the mighty past! We see kings hurled from their tottering thrones; nations plunged into disorder and wild commotion; proud empires struggling to retain their falling state, till overcome, they sink; again they rise and flourish, and again they sink to rise no more.

There is something awfully impressive in the rapid and perpetual flow of time, a something that fills us with an indefinite and mysterious dread; that awakens feelings sad and mournful,—a something that excites a superstitious fear and gloomy presentiment of the future, as “viewless music from a harp, with none to wake its strings.” We feel the darkness, before a single cloud denotes its presence. The wild winds sigh through the light foliage, like the low moanings of an infant, and then are heard no more. The lonely heart grows lonelier still, when it recalls happy days that are past, like the memory of soft, rich, and plaintive music. To eternity the stream is ever tending, like a river to the ocean. Individuals, families, and nations float upon its surface, and are borne away and lost in that absorbing gulf, whose dimensions no eye can measure, and upon whose misty surface no wreck is seen. Nothing here is stable, nothing permanent! Every moment is fraught with changes. Society continues only by succession. Myriads every moment are leaving the theatre to make room for others. The relation of parent and child, of brother and sister, of pupil and teacher, are, with reference to individuals, constantly broken. In imagination we hear farewell! farewell! as it comes faltering from a hundred quivering lips. Farewell! farewell! is echoed from vale to vale, and wafted from pole to pole. Now, a thousand hands are firmly grasped—the wave dashes on—they are unclasped—a billow intervenes—and all are gone. Methinks I feel communicated to the elastic air, the strong impulsions of innumerable throbbing hearts. I see individuals and families to-day, revelling in all the joyousness of unclouded prosperity; reckless of the future; without one thought of care;—to-morrow

a sad, a fearful “change comes o'er the spirit of their dreams;” I see them in poverty and wretchedness—their spirits broken and subdued. “Oh earth! thy wings are ever spread, thy flattered votaries to elude and foil!” yes, thy own perpetual changes are but the heraldic bearings of our own dissolution. Thy fading foliage, thy withered flowers, thy barren trees, the crashing sound of thy fallen leaves beneath our feet, thy transitory gleams of sunshine, thy equinoctial blasts levelling the proudest monuments of the forest, all remind us, that we ourselves are but the fleeting beings of an hour, and warn us to prepare for the coming winter of death. How fruitless then, our wild yearnings, our unreasonable wishes. Let us calm ourselves—let us abandon our wild tumultuous passions, our eager longings after unreal and treacherous pleasures; let us prepare for that eternity to which we are hastening. For us a shroud is weaving; for us the bed of death is spread; all things are ready, all impatient for our departure; the yearning grave waits to receive us—opens its friendly bosom as a resting place for the weary, and the measured chime of the solemn church bell will soon have tolled our funeral knell.

MARTHA.

For the Callopean.

Fanny Ellsler, or Modern Idolatry.

This celebrated *danseuse*, who has electrified the minds, and loosed the purse-strings of the *élite* of two worlds, may not improperly be styled the Salome of the present age. Voluptuous in gesture and clothed with fascinating graces, she has infused into her crowded assemblies the same sensual intoxication, which reigned in the halls of the Tetrarch of Galilee, when the daughter of Herodias danced in his presence.

We look with detestation and horror on the king, who could sacrifice the man of God to a promise unbinding, because its fulfilment was unlawful; but who would venture to assert, that our modern votaries of pleasure would not, at the bidding of the enchantress, in the moment of excitement, give the fatal word for the same crime. If it lay in their power! True, Fanny has not robbed her followers of half their possessions; but is it nothing, that she has borne away her millions from the shores of America itself, and that too, from a people who subsist by their industry alone? Is it nothing, that the press is everywhere teeming with a “new Herodias' inspiration,” that society is corrupted by a licentiousness, as concealed as it is deadly?

Methinks a stronger argument against the evils of dancing can scarcely be found, than in the plain, unvarnished history of the banquet of Herod, and the dreadful catastrophe, which followed. It may indeed be said, that it may not be carried so far; that it need only be used as a graceful exercise, or an innocent amusement. Ulysses did not reason thus, when, passing the island of the Syrens, he had himself bound to the mast of his vessel, that he might not have even the power of yielding to the melody of the charmers. Let but one step be taken in the path to the ball-room; let the spirit of Terpsichore and Venus but once seize hold on its victim, and the presumption is strong, that she will ever after be nothing but the conceited and frivolous idol of the drawing-room abroad, and the fretful and discontented housewife at home. And does not the unparalleled popularity of Fanny Ellsler alone afford a convincing evidence of the wide-spread diffusion of this spirit? Yes! dark is the inscription, which must be placed on the foremost page of the history of our times, “that such individuals as Fanny Ellsler and Jenny Lind, formed the central point, around which revolved both the enlightened and the unenlightened world.” The pages of invention and literature may shine with surpassing lustre, but they will serve only by contrast to fix deeper the stain, stuck, by the fact referred to, upon the present age.

The Ancients, and the Pagans of modern times worshipped idols, the work of their own hands, but only as representations of beings invisible. Even when the infuriated rabble, amid the horrors of the French Revolution, did reverence to a being in human form, it was only to personate the Goddess of Reason. But in our times, idolatry is actually committed with the full adoration of the heart, if not with the homage of the knee.

JUNIA.