

LORD BYRON AND MRS. SPENCER SMITH.

At Malta, Lord Byron became acquainted with Mrs. Spencer Smith, the "Fair Florence" of his "Child Harold." Struck with her romantic history, and charmed and interested by her manners, and even her eccentricity, she became one of those beings who were mixed up with the poetry of his life and thoughts: and his remembrance of her produced many beautiful stanzas expressive of his admiration and regard; the following, which were addressed to her, were written at Malta:—

TO FLORENCE.

"Oh, Lady! when I left the shore,
The distant shore, which gave me birth,
I hardly thought to grieve once more,
To quit another spot on earth:

Yet here, amidst this barren isle,
Where panting Nature droops the head,
Where only thou art seen to smile,
I view my parting hour with dread.

Though far from Albin's craggy shore,
Divided by the dark-blue main;
A few, brief, rolling seasons o'er,
Perchance I view her cliffs again.

But wheresoe'er I now may roam,
Through scorching clime and varied sea,
Though Time restore me to my home,
I ne'er shall bend mine eyes on thee:

On thee, in whom at once conspire
All charms which heedless hearts can move,
Whom but to see is to admire,
And, oh! forgive the word—to love.

Forgive the word in one who ne'er
With such a world can more offend;
And since thy heart I cannot share,
Believe me, what I am—thy friend.

And who so cold as look on thee,
Thou lovely wanderer, and be less?
Nor be, what man should ever be—
The friend of Beauty in distress.

Ah! who would think that form had past
Through Danger's most destructive path,
Had braved the death-winged tempest's blast,
And 'scaped a tyrant's fiercest wrath?

Lady! when I shall view the walls
Where free Byzantium once arose;
And Stamboul's oriental halls
The Turkish tyrants now enclose;

Though mightiest in the lists of fame,
That glorious city still shall be—
On me 'twill hold a dearer claim,
As spot of thy nativity:

And though I bid thee now farewell,
When I behold that wondrous scene,
Since where thou art I may not dwell,
'Twill soothe to be where thou hast been."

He also apostrophises the same lady in the stanzas beginning "Chill and mirk is the nightly blast," published in vol. vii. p. 311, of his "Life and works;" they were written during the thunder-storm which he encountered at Zitz, in the mountains of Pindus; and in a letter to his mother, he says:—"This letter is committed to the charge of a very extraordinary lady, whom you have doubtless heard of, Mrs. S—S—, of whose escape the Marquis de Salvo published a narrative a few years ago. She has since been shipwrecked; and her life has been, from its commencement, so fertile in remarkable incidents, that in a romance they would appear improbable." She was born at Constantinople, where her father, Baron Herbert, was Austrian ambassador; married unhappily, yet has never been impeached in point of character; excited the vengeance of Bonaparte, by taking a part in some conspiracy; several times risked her life; and is not yet five-and-twenty. She is here, on her way to join her husband, being obliged to leave Trieste where she was paying a visit to her mother, by the approach of the French, and embarks soon in a ship of war. Since my arrival here I had scarcely any other companion. I have found her very

pretty, very accomplished, and extremely eccentric. Bonaparte is even now so incensed against her, that her life would be in danger if she were taken prisoner a second time."

THE BEGGAR AT THE BARRIER DE PASSEY.

From the French.

Many years since, when I was a young man about twenty years of age, I used very frequently to spend the Sunday with my mother, who resided at Versailles, this being the only day of the week on which I could leave Paris. I generally walked as far as the Barrier, and thence I took a seat in one of the public carriages to my mother's house. When I happened to be too early for the diligence, I used to stop and converse with a beggar, whose name was Anthony, and who regularly took his station at the Barrier de Passey, where, in a loud voice, he solicited alms from every one who passed, with a degree of perseverance that was really astonishing. I generally gave him a trifle, without inquiring whether he deserved it or not, partly to get rid of his importunities. One day in summer, as I waited for the diligence, I found Anthony at this usual post, exerting his lungs, and bawling incessantly his accustomed form of petition—"For the love of heaven, bestow your alms on a poor man—Messieurs, Mesdames, the smallest trifle will be gratefully received."

While Anthony was in this manner pouring his exclamations into the ears of every one who came within the reach of his voice, a middle-aged man of respectable appearance joined me. He had a pleasant expression of countenance, was very well dressed, and it might be seen at a glance that he was a man in good circumstances. Here was a fit subject for the beggar, who quickly made his advances, proclaiming in a loud voice his poverty, and soliciting relief. "You need not be a beggar unless you please," replied the gentleman, "when you can have an income of ten thousand crowns."

"You are pleased to jest, sir," answered Anthony.

"By no means," said the gentleman, "I never was more serious in my life. Listen to me, my friend. You perceive that I am well dressed, and I tell you that I have every thing that a reasonable man need desire."

"Ah! sir, you are a fortunate man."

"Well, but, my friend, I would not have been so if I had sat and begged as you are doing."

"I have no other means of gaining my living."

"Are you lame?"

"No, sir."

"You are not blind, or deaf, and you certainly are not dumb, as every passer-by can testify. Listen: I shall tell you my history in a few words. Some fifteen or twenty years ago, I was a beggar like yourself; at length I began to see that it was very disgraceful to live on the bounty of others, and I resolved to abandon this shameful way of life as soon as I possibly could. I quitted Paris—I went into the provinces—I begged for old rags. The people were very kind to me, and in a short time I returned to Paris with a tolerably large bundle of rags of every description. I carried them to a paper-maker, who bought them at a fair price. I went on collecting, until, to my great joy, my finances enabled me to purchase rags, so that I was no longer forced to beg for them. At length, by diligence and industry, I became rich enough to buy an ass with two panniers, and this saved me both time and labour. My business increased, the paper-makers found that I dealt honestly by them; I never palmed off bad rags for good ones; I prospered; and see the result—in place of being a poor, despised beggar, I have ten thousand crowns a year, and two houses in one of the best streets in Paris. If, then, my friend, you can do no better, begin as a rag merchant, and here," he continued, "is a crown to set you up in your new trade; it is more than I had; and, in addition, please to take notice, that if I find you here another Sunday, I shall report you to the police." On saying this, the old gentleman walked off, leaving Anthony and myself in a state of great surprise. Indeed, the beggar had been so much interested in the history he heard, that he stood with open mouth and eyes

in mute astonishment, nor had he even power to solicit alms from two well-dressed ladies who passed at that moment. I could not help being struck with the story, but I had no time to comment upon it, as the diligence had arrived, in which I seated myself, and pursued my way. From that period I lost sight of the beggar; whether the fear of the police, or the hopes of gaining ten thousand crowns a year, had wrought the change, I was not aware; it is sufficient to say, that from that day forward he was never seen at the Barrier.

Many years after, it happened that business called me to Tours. In strolling through the city, I stepped into a bookseller's shop to purchase a new work that had made some noise. I found there four young men, all busily employed, while a stout, good-looking man was giving them orders, as he walked up and down with an air of importance. I thought I had seen the face of the bookseller before, but where I could not for the moment tell, until he spoke, and then I discovered him to be my old friend Anthony. The recognition was mutual; he grasped my hand, and led me through the shop, into a well-finished parlour; he lavished every kindness on me; and, finally, gave me his history from the time we parted at the Barrier. With the crown of the stranger he began, as he had advised him, to collect rags; he made money; became the partner of a paper manufacturer; married his daughter; in short, his hopes were fulfilled; his ambition gratified, and he could now count his income at ten thousand crowns. He prayed every day for blessings on his benefactor, who had been the means of raising him from the degraded condition of a common beggar. Anthony is so convinced of the evil and sin of idleness, and of subsisting on the alms of others, that, while liberal and kind to those who are willing to work, no entreaties, no supplications, ever prevailed on him to bestow a single sou on those who would not help themselves.

ADVICE TO STUDENTS.

"Let it then be your study in early life to cultivate that sound condition of the mind, by which its powers are not kept in bondage to the mere objects of sense, but are trained to the habit of bringing down upon it the habitual influence of the truths which are the objects of faith. Devote yourselves with eager enthusiasm to the high acquirements of science; but cultivate also that habit of the mind by which science shall continually lead you to the Eternal Cause. And, while you are taught to follow the planet through the wondrous regularities of its movements,—when you find the comet, after being lost for a century, returning at the appointed period from the solitudes of its eccentric orbit,—when you extend your view beyond the system in which we move, and penetrate into that field in which ten thousand other systems revolve around ten thousand other suns in ceaseless harmony,—oh, rest not in a cold recognition of the facts; but take one single step, and say, 'These are thy wondrous works,—thyself how wondrous!' And rest not here, but take yet another step, and recognise this Being as the witness of all your conduct, as the witness even of the moral condition of the heart. Seek after purity of character, for you cannot go where you are not followed by that eye; aspire after purity of heart, for that eye extended even there. And feeling your inability for this mighty undertaking, seek continually a power from God, a power which he alone can give,—a power adapted to your utmost want, and which is promised to every one that asks it. In your progress through life, indeed, you will not fail to meet with those by whom this momentous truth is treated with derision, as the vision of fanaticism, unworthy of a philosophical mind. But never allow yourselves to be imposed upon by names; and never suppose there can be any thing philosophical in the belief, that an influence should be exerted on the mind by him who framed the wondrous fabric. And be assured you follow the dictates of the most exalted philosophy when you commit yourselves to Him as the guide of your youth; when you resign yourselves to that guidance, and ask that powerful aid, both for your conduct through this life, and your preparation for the life which is to come."—Dr. Abercrombie.