COLONIAL PEARL.

A VOLUME DEVOTED TO POLITE LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND RELIGION.

Published every Friday evening, at 17s. 6d. per Annum.

VOLUME THREE. FRIDAY EVENING, APRIL 19, 1839. NUMBER SIXTEEN.

ALL MUST LOVE.

BY MR. MONCRIFF.

The high-crown'd Queen on her canopied throne,
Of love must the anguish bear;
She feels it a sadness to reign alone,
And her kingdom fain would share.
The noble fair in her warded tower
Must passion's votary prove;
And the jewelled dame, in her courtly bower,
Resigns her gold for love!
Can then a simple heart go free?
No! 'twas decreed by heaven above,
That high or low, whoe'er they be,
All must love!

The mailed knight, from the armed throng,
Must to love a vassal bow;
The minstrel, most renown'd in song,
Must to beauty pay his vow!
The solemn judge, and the schoolman grave,
Can neither exist alone.
The pedant sage, yields woman's slave;
Love's power they all must own!
Can then a simple heart go free?
No! 'twas decreed by heaven above,
That high or low, whoe'er they be,
All must love!

THE HEROINES OF BURNS.

It is generally known that the fine impassioned songs of Burns were mostly written with regard to real women—in some instances, of no great beauty in the world's estimation, and in most of very humble rank, but almost always genuine flesh-and-blood women of this world, whom the poet was pleased to admire for the time being. In this respect he was very different from the poets of a former age, with their supposititious Daphnes and Phillises—with Burns, to quote a line of old Maclaurin, Lord Dreghorn,

"——Nelly, not Neæra, was her name."

Plain, downright Annies and Nannies, and Tibbies and Jeanies, they were every one of them. He was a great poet—more particularly a great lyrical poet—perhaps we may say the very greatest that has ever lived; and wherever he had been born, there was it certain that the women, whether in silk or drugget, must have been made immortal. He rose in Kyle, amongst simple peasantry, the female part of which wore short gowns and sometimes no stockings, and were accustomed to wield the muck-fork and the sickle, like the men themselves. But then it was Burns who had alighted amongst them, and the haberdashery of the imagination was ready to deck every one of them as finely as if they had been Sacharissas or Vanessas. It may afford some amusement to the reader to be introduced to such particulars of these persons as have been handed down to us.

We have the poet's own authority, that the first flame in his bosom was kindled in his fifteenth autumn by "a bonnie sweet sonsie lass," who was assigned to him as his partner on the harvest-field. She was unwitting at first of the power she had acquired over him, and he himself did not know, as he tells us, "why he liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from their labours; why the tones of her voice made his heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp; and particularly why his pulse beat such a furious rattan when he looked and fingered over her little hand, to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles." Love brought poetry to its aid, and he now composed his first verses, beginning "Once I loved a bonnie lass, and aye I love her still"—a very poor set of rhymes truly, but curious as the first tunings of so sweet an instrument. Her name appears to have been Nelly Blair, and, like many of his subsequent flames, she was a house-servant. The daughter of an individual in whose house she at one time served, communicated, through a newspaper, a few years ago, her recollections of Burns's visits on the occasions when "rockings" were held in the house. These were meetings of the rustic youth of both sexes, at which the lasses plied their spinning-wheels (formerly their rocks—hence the name) and the lads knitted stockings, the entertainment consisting of songs, and a light supper of country fare. Often did this lady meet Burns at the head of a little troop, coming from a distance of three or four miles, to attend these meetings, with the spinning-wheel of some lass over his shoulder, and a hundred jokes in his mouth to keep the party in merriment. Often had the lady of the house to find fault with her damsels next day, for their lack of alacrity, the result of Burns's too late sitting at his courtship with Nelly Blair.

Another of his very early Dulcineas was a certain Isabella Steven or Stein, who lived near his father's farin of Lochlee. He was then about seventeen. But, alas, she was an heiress—her father a laird; that is to say, the proprietor of probably twenty acres of moorland, with a cot-house and garden. She therefore looked high, and the consequence was that the poet had occasion to write his song—

"Oh, Tibbie, I have seen the day,
Ye wadna been sae shy;
For lack o' gear ye lightly me,
But troth I carena by.

Yestreen I met you on the muir,
Ye spakna, but gaed by like stoure;
Ye geck at me because I'm poor,
But fient a hair care I," etc.

Thus we find that in the humblest spheres of life, there are nice distinctions of grade; altogether uncognisable, possibly, to one observing at a little distance, like that between stars of the fifteenth and sixteenth magnitudes, yet with immense gulfs between, for all that. Tibbie, by virtue of her father's two or three fields, passed like stour the tenant's son whose name was ultimately to be great in both hemispheres.

His next serious fit of passion took its rise while he was studying mensuration at Kirkoswald. The fair maid's name was Peggy Thomson, and he celebrates her in his song "Now westlin win's and slaughtering guns;" she became the wife of a person named Neilson, and long lived in Ayr.

About the time when he was two or three and twenty, his attachments came in such thick and rapid succession, that there is no individualising them. Scarce a lass existed in the happy parish of Tarbolton who had not been a transient object of worship to Robert Burns. There was one whom he celebrates under the name of Montgomery's Peggy. To this girl, who had been reared in rather an elegant way, he made love, merely to show his parts in courtship; he got really in love, and was then refused. "It cost me several heartaches," he says, "to get rid of the affair." Another, named Anna Ronald, the daughter of a farmer, is said to have been the "Annie" of his lively song of "the Rigs o' Barley." The heroine of "My Nannie O," that most exquisite of songs, was Agnes Fleming, the daughter of a farmer at Caldcothill, near Lochlee, and at one time a servant.

"Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she's bonnie, O;
The opening gowan, wat wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nannie, O."

Was ever rural maid so canonised? He was not only a lover himself, but an abettor of the loves of others. "A country lad," he says, "seldom carries on a love adventure without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity, that recommended me as a proper second on these occasions; and I dare say I felt as much pleasure in being in the secret of half the loves of Tarbolton parish, as ever did statesman in knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe." We once conversed with an aged man in Tarbolton, who had served Burns partly in the same capacity; they would go together at night to houses in which lived girls admired by the poet; and these girls it was the duty of John Lees to ask out for his friend, who meanwhile waited near the door. When he had succeeded in bringing out any favourite lass of the poet, he became of course *Monsieur de Trop*, and Burns would then say to him, "Now, Jock, you may gang hame." The old man seemed greatly to relish his recollections of these adventures.

At about four-and-twenty, while still assisting his father in the small poor farm of Lochlee, he became acquainted with the young woman whom he addresses in several of his published letters as "My dear E——." From these letters he appears to have at first made sure of obtaining the young woman's hand, but to have been finally rejected. It is probable that this person was the heroine of his song, "From thee, Eliza, I must go," which seems to have been written when he contemplated leaving her for a distant clime. The letters are in surprisingly pure English, and of a more moderate and rational complexion than the most of his compositions of that class, while the song ranks with his best.

"Farewell, farewell, Eliza dear,
The maid that I adore;
A boding voice is in my ear,
We part to meet no more.
The latest throb that leaves my heart,
While death stands victor by,
That throb, Eliza, is thy part,
And thine that latest sigh."

Eliza long survived the poet, and, if we may judge from the following obituary notice of her, she must have been a person somewhat above the common standard. "At Alva, on the 28th ult., in the 74th year of her age, Mrs. Elizabeth Black, relict of the late Mr. James Stewart, vintner there. Though called upon to discharge the uncongenial duties connected with a humble public house, and early deprived of her partner, Mrs. Stewart, in her guarded walk and conversation, during the many years she spent in Alva, threw such a moral halo around her character as secured for her the unceasing esteem and good wishes of her fellow-villagers. * * She was Burns's Eliza. She was born and brought up in Ayrshire, and in the bloom of youth was possessed of no ordinary share of personal charms. * * She early became acquainted with Burns, and made no small impression on his heart. * * She possessed several love-epistles he had addressed to her. It was when Scotia's bard intended emigrating from his own to a foreign shore that he wrote the stanzas beginning, 'From thee, Eliza, I must go'—the subject being of course Elizabeth Black."

This brings us to Highland Mary, the most interesting of all Burns's heroines. He was now the joint tenant with his brother of the little farm of Mossgiel, in the parish of Mauchline. Mary Campbell, for such was her name, was as lowly a lass as any whom he ever admired, being the dairy-woman at Colonel Montgomery's house of Coilsfield. There is a thorn near the house, beneath whose boughs the poet lover often met his simple mistress.

He celebrates her charms, and the happiness he enjoyed from these stolen interviews, in the song of "the Highland Lassie."

"Nae gentle dames, though e'er so fair,
Shall ever be my muse's care,
Their titles a' are empty show,
Gie me my Highland lassie, O.

Oh, were yon hills and vallies mine,
Yon palace and yon gardens fine,
The world then the love should know,
I bear my Highland lassie, O."

The design of going in search of fortune to the West Indies was still upon him, and he is found asking this mistress if she will accompany him:—

"Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore,
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across the Atlantic's roar?"

At length he resolved to marry her, and endeavour to remain contented at home; and they met on the banks of the Ayr, "to live one day of parting love," previous to a visit which she was to pay, in anticipation of her marriage, to her relations in Argyleshire. In the song of "Highland Mary," the history of this precious day is written in immortal light. Mary, as is well known, sickened and died at her father's house in Greenock, leaving to the poet an image which never forsook him in all his after days, whether of joy or sorrow. Six or seven years afterwards, when a married man at Ellishland, he observed the anniversary of her death in a way which showed the depth of his feelings respecting her. In the evening, he retired to his stack-yard, in a state of great apparent dejection, and threw himself on a mass of straw, with his face upturned to the sky. There he lay for hours, notwithstanding the kind remonstrances of his wife. When he came into the house, he wrote down, with the facility of one copying from memory, the grandly melancholy hymn beginning,

"Thou lingering star, with lessening ray."

We have treated Highland Mary shortly, for her story has been often told. We shall afford more space to the lady who next presided over the imagination of the bard—the celebrated Jean Armour. The father of this young woman was a master mason or builder, of some substance, in the village of Mauchline. She was rather above the middle stature, of dark complexion, and irregular features, but of a fine figure, and great gentleness of nature, and a very agreeable singer and dancer. According to her own story, she and Burns first saw each other as she was one day spreading out clothes on the green to be bleached. As he passed by, his dog ran over some of the clothes; she called to the animal in no gracious terms, and requested his master to take him off. The poet made a sportive allusion to the old saying of "Love me, love my dog," and some badinage was interchanged. Probably neither knew on this occasion who the other was; but their acquaintance was not to stop short here. We are enabled to continue its history by John Blane, a decent old man now residing in Kilmarnock, who was at this time Burns's plough-boy, and bed-