

# LA DERNIÈRE FÉE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF M. DE BALZAC.

BY T. D. P.

[The press has so teemed within the last few years, with translations from the French writers, that perhaps the Editor of the Literary Garland may not wish to fill his pages with a species of writing, which has become so common as to be almost unattractive;—But the translator has been induced to send him the “*Dernière Fée*,” from the conviction that it would fully repay a perusal. It is unlike the usual style of French Novels, it contains a deep and holy moral, which is decorated with all the effluence of a rich and vivid imagination, and which ever peeps out, with a calm and lovely expression, from the richness of a tale which almost rivals the far famed wonders of Scheherazade, with her Thousand and One Nights;—and, certes, could this renowned Princess have summoned to her aid the genius of Do Balzac, and availed herself of his spirituelle creations, she might perchance have been still living to enchain the world with her magic tongue.—T. D. P.]

THERE was once upon a time, a chemist and his wife, who resided far from the world, and yet lived most happily. The chemist, his spectacles on nose, was always engaged in keeping up the fire in his furnaces; and sometimes during the whole day, he would blow at them with his old worn-out and blackened bellows, too absorbed to speak; while his wife, seated in the laboratory, heeded not the smoke, the fumes of the charcoal, or the various odors. She spoke rarely, her usual language being the amiable smile, which came playing over her beautiful lips. When wearied with his labour, the chemist bethought himself to turn a fond and admiring look upon his beloved wife. She was handsome, and altogether agreeable in her person; but as she passed the whole day in the laboratory, she cared not for her toilette, and her beauty would not have been perceived at the first glance.

The cottage which they inhabited resembled a cave; the walls were covered with thick black smoke, which had been gathering upon them for years; the glass in the window, cut into ovals and small squares, seemed intended to place a veto upon the light of day; for the rays of the sun could scarcely penetrate through the thick dust which covered them within, while without, a joyous vine, which clothed the walls with its living tapestry, cast over the windows a network of interlaced branches. The floor of the cabin presented a singular appearance; it was damp and always dirty, while the furrows traced upon it by the broom, told how often a generous hand had attempted to produce order from this chaos. From the chinks in the wall were often heard the hum of the crickets, that murmured rejoicingly, untroubled in their asylums; and many a mouse trotted tranquilly through this abode of peace,

innocence, and the chemist, without any fear of deceitful snares.

In the midst of a mass of tables, bottles, and instruments, was always seen the chemist, his hair covered with the white ashes from his charcoal, his face bent over a retort, the ruddy light of his fire tinging all around, and resting with a bright glow upon the face of his fair wife, who ever regarded the interior of her little domain with a satisfied look. The black roof—the absence of the sun—the implements of chemistry: these things would not have pleased the world; but the chemist and his wife were happy, and let no one censure them that they found not their happiness in the stroke of a broom, the death of a cricket, the destruction of a spider's web, or the capture of a poor little mouse: happiness for them was in other things.

One spring morning they opened a window: the pure air circulated through the laboratory, and the sun sent in its brightest rays, tracing a brilliant line, in which floated a multitude of atoms of dust, that seemed to chase each other like swarms of flies, which gather above a stream on a beautiful summer's evening. The thoughts of the chemist were as numerous and almost as restless as the flies; the gentle influence of the air, and of nature, just peeping in through the seldom opened window, gave them a direction very different from those which usually crowded his brain. He looked at his lovely wife, who, seated on a worm-eaten chair, was amusing herself with looking into the “*Cabinet des Fées*.” Her golden hair, just parted on her forehead, seemed like the halo of light around the head of the saints.

Conscious of his gaze, she raised her blue eyes, full of ingenious sweetness, to her husband's