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With an APPENDIX.

*“ Quis reprehendet nostrum otium, qui in eo, non modo nosmetipsos bebefcere et languere so-
lemus, sed etiam ut plurimis profimus eritimus ?”*

CICERO.

VOLUME XX.



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MDCCXCVI.

ART. XX. *Leonora*, a Tale: translated and altered from the German of Gottfried Augustus Bürger. By J. T. Stanley, Esq. F. R. S. &c. A new Edition, with Plates. 8vo. 2s. 6d. 4to. 6s. 6d. folio 12s. Miller. 1796.

ART. XXI. *Lenore*, a Tale; translated from the German of Gottfried Augustus Bürger. By Henry James Pye. 4to. 1s. 6d. Low. 1796.

IT will appear extraordinary that a poem, written a considerable time since, and known in this country at least some years, should on a sudden have excited so much attention as to employ the pens of various translators, and the pencil of more than one designer. We recollect that Dr. Aikin, in his poem published in 1791, has taken the hint of a tale from this very piece, which he mentions to have come to his knowledge by means of the translation of a friend, since published, as we understand, in a new magazine. Now, although there is in the terrific wildness and strong painting of the original enough to engage the notice of a lover of productions of this character, yet we own that we are rather surpris'd that it should have started at once into such public favour. Unless this has been a matter of mere accident, it must be considered as a proof of the increased relish among us for the modern German school of literature—a school, of which the marvellous, the horrid, and the extravagant; constitute some of the most prominent features.

This piece, from its nature, properly belongs to the class of *ballad poetry*. It is a tale or story in common life, interwoven with incidents of popular superstition, and varied by dialogue under the dramatic form. Consequently, in order to be happily translated, the elevated and ornate style of the higher poetry should be abandoned; and the language and mode of versification should be lowered to a tone of as much simplicity and familiarity, as are consistent with that energy without which

there can be no poetical expression. In our opinion, therefore, congruity strongly points to the old English ballad as the true model for such a composition: but this is an idea which neither of the present translators (who, doubtless, have a full right to choose for themselves) has exactly adopted. Mr. Stanley has made use of the six-line stanza, in which many of our lyric pieces are written. Mr. Pye has employed an eight-line stanza, with alternate rhymes, in the measure chosen by Gray for transfusing the wild strains of the Norse poetry. We shall give a comparative specimen of the two; premising that, while Mr. S. professes to translate freely, and rather in the style of an imitator, Mr. P. has preferred a close and almost verbal adherence to the original. So far therefore, indeed, as Mr. Pye himself observes, the two versions are scarcely objects of comparison. *Leonora*, or *Lenore*, after having been led by the frenzy of disappointment and despair to give vent to impious complaints against heaven, is left on her bed alone, at midnight.

Mr. Stanley's version:

" When, hark! without, what sudden sound!
 She hears a trampling o'er the ground,
 Some horseman must be near!
 He stops, he rings. Hark! as the noise
 Dies soft away, a well-known voice
 Thus greets her list'ning ear.
 " Wake, Leonora;—dost thou sleep,
 " Or thoughtless laugh, or constant weep,
 " Is William welcome home?"
 " Dear William, you!—return'd, and well!
 " I've wak'd and wept—but why, ah! tell,
 " So late—at night you come?"
 " At midnight only dare we roam,
 " For thee from Prague, though late, I come."
 " For me!—stay here and rest;
 " The wild winds whistle o'er the waste,
 " Ah, dearest William! why such haste?
 " First warm thee in my breast."
 " Let the winds whistle o'er the waste,
 " My duty bids me be in haste;
 " Quick, mount upon my steed:
 " Let the winds whistle far and wide,
 " Ere morn, two hundred leagues we'll ride,
 " To reach our marriage bed."
 " What, William! for a bridal room,
 " Travel to night so far from home?"
 " Leonora, 'tis decreed.
 " Look round thee, love, the moon shines clear;
 " The dead ride swiftly; never fear,
 " We'll reach our marriage bed."

- “ Ah, William! whither would'st thou speed,
 “ What! where! this distant marriage bed?”
 “ Leonora, no delay.
 “ 'Tis far from hence; still—cold—and small;
 “ Six planks; no more, compose it all;
 “ Our guests await, away!”

Mr. Pye's version:

- Thro' the stillness of the night
 Hark!—a horse—he this way bends.—
 Now she hears the rider 'light,
 Now his foot the step ascends.
 Hark!—the tinkling gate bell rung
 Now her listening senses hear.—
 Accents from a well-known tongue
 Thro' the portal reach her ear.
 “ Rise my love—the bar remove—
 “ Dost thou wake or dost thou sleep?
 “ Think'st thou of thy absent love?—
 “ Dost thou laugh or dost thou weep?”—
 • WILLIAM! Thou?—From sorrow's power
 ‘ I have learn'd to weep, and wake.
 • Whence in midnight's gloomy hour,
 ‘ Whence his course does WILLIAM take?”
 “ We can only ride by night.—
 “ From Bohemia's plains I come;
 “ Late, ah late I come, but dight
 “ To bear thee to my distant home.”—
 • WILLIAM! WILLIAM! hither haste.—
 ‘ Thro' the hawthorn blows the wind,
 • In my glowing arms embraced
 ‘ Rest, and warmth, my love shall find.”
 “ Thro' the hawthorn let the winds
 “ Keenly blow with breath severe,
 “ The Courser paws, the spur he finds,
 “ Ah! I must not linger here.
 “ Lightly on the sable steed
 “ Come, my love,—behind me spring.
 “ Many a mile o'erpass with speed,
 “ To our bride-bed shall thee bring.”
 • Many a mile o'er distant ground
 ‘ Ere our nuptial couch we reach?—
 • The iron bells of midnight sound,
 ‘ Soon the midnight winds will screech.’—
 “ See how clear the moon's full ray,
 “ Soon the dead's swift course is sped.
 “ Long, O long ere dawn of day
 “ We shall reach the bridal bed.”
 • Who shall tend thy nuptial bower
 ‘ Who thy nuptial couch shall spread?
 • Silent, cold, and small, our bower,
 “ Form'd of planks our nuptial bed.

“ Yet

- “ Yet for me, for thee there’s space—
- “ Lightly on the courser bound,
- “ Deck’d is now our bridal place,
- “ Guests expecting wait around.”

We think it unnecessary to prompt the judgment of our readers with respect to the comparative merit of the two versions. They will probably be sensible that both have had to contend with the difficulty of adapting narration and dialogue to a strain of versification not well fitted to them, and have, in consequence, fallen into occasional stiffness and insipidity of expression. On the whole, however, we deem ourselves justified in saying that Mr. Stanley’s performance contains more of the graces of poetry than the other, at no greater expence of ease and propriety of language. In his second edition, Mr. Stanley has deviated from himself, and from his original, in a total alteration of the catastrophe; which, by the ready artifice of supposing all the horrid scenery to have past in a vision, he makes to end with the repentance of Leonora, rewarded by the return of her lover. For this liberty, he gives certain moral and religious reasons, which, we confess, do not greatly weigh with us; since, in a play of the fancy like the present, we rather look for a gratification of the imagination, than for any solid lesson for the understanding. We commend Mr. Stanley’s motive: but, to those who delight in a tale of wonder and horror, we are convinced that the terrible catastrophe will be the most impressive;—and no others will delight in it at all.

Another translation of this tale, by Mr. Spencer, is published, but we have not yet seen it.

ART. XIII. *Leonora*. Translated from the German of Gottfried Augustus Bürger. By W. R. Spencer, Esq. With Designs by the Right Hon. Lady Diana Beauclerc. Folio. 11. 1s. Boards. Edwards, &c. 1796.

TO the general remarks on this poem which we prefixed to our account of two former translations, (see M. R. for the last month,) we have nothing to add but some brief notices concerning the original author. G. A. Bürger, a writer now living, as we believe, and of middle age, has been well known in Germany ever since 1779, when the first collection of his poems appeared; many of which, indeed, had before been printed in periodical miscellanies. They have occasionally been republished with additions, and consist chiefly of small pieces, serious and comic, and of ballads, several of them translated with alterations from English originals: so that our writers are now only making lawful reprisals on him. His pieces are become very popular in his own country, where they are esteemed for strength of sentiment and uncommon force of style; for which they are much indebted to their simple and natural diction, borrowed rather from the language of passion and common life, than from the usual phraseology of poetry. His peculiar excellence, therefore, seems to consist in such popular narrations of the wild and impassioned kind as that before us; and his distinguishing strain of writing is that of the genuine ballad style,
in

in which (as we formerly observed) he ought to be imitated by all who attempt to give an idea of him in another language.

In order to enable our readers to form a fair comparison between the merit of Mr. Spencer's version and that of the translations already reviewed, we shall transcribe exactly the same passage which we copied from them :

“ Thus did the demons of despair
Her wilder'd sense to madness strain,
Thus did her impious clamours dare
Eternal wisdom to arraign.
She beat her breast, her hands she wrung,
Till westward sunk the car of light,
And countless stars in air were hung
To gem the matron weeds of night.

“ Hark ! with high tread, and prancings proud,
A war horse shakes the rattling gate :
Clattering his clanking armour loud,
Alights a horseman at the grate :
And, hark ! the door-bell gently rings,
What sounds are those we faintly hear ?
The night-breeze in low murmur brings
These words to Leonora's ear.

“ Holla, holla ! my life, my love
Does Leonora watch or sleep ?
Still does her heart my vows approve ?
Does Leonora smile or weep ?”

“ Oh ! Wilhelm, thou, these eyes for thee
Fever'd with tearful vigils burn,
Aye fear, and woe, have dwelt with me,
Oh, why so late thy wish'd return ?”

“ At dead of night alone we ride,
From Prague's far distant field I come ;
'Twas late ere I could 'gin bestride
This coal black barb, to bear thee home.”

“ Oh, rest thee first, my Wilhelm, here !
Bleak roars the blast through vale and grove ;
Oh come, thy war-worn limbs to cheer
On the soft couch of joy and love !”

“ Let the bleak blast, my child, roar on,
Let it roar on ; we dare not stay ;
My fierce steed maddens to be gone,
My spurs are set ; away, away.
Mount by thy true love's guardian side ;
We should ere this full far have sped ;
Five hundred destin'd miles we ride
This night, to reach our nuptial bed.”

“ Our nuptial bed, this might so dark,
So late, five hundred miles to roam?
Yet sounds the bell; which struck, to mark
That in one hour would midnight come.”
“ See there, see here, the moon shines clear,
We and the dead ride fast away;
I gage, though long our way, and drear,
We reach our nuptial bed to-day.”

“ Say where the bed, and bridal hall?
What guests our blissful union greet?”
“ Low lies the bed, still, cold, and small;
Six dark boards, and one milk white sheet.”
“ Hast room for me? “ Room, room, enow;
“ Come mount; strange hands our feast prepare;
To grace the solemn rite, e’en now.
No common bridesmen wait as there.”

♦ Loose was her zone, her breast unveil’d,
All wild her shadowy tresses hung;
O’er fear confiding love prevailed,
As lightly on the barb she sprung.
Like wind the bounding courser flies,
Earth shakes his thundering hoofs beneath;
Dust, stones, and sparks, in whirlwind rise,
And horse and horseman pant for breath.’

This publication is a splendid piece of typography, having the German printed on one side of the page. The designs with which it is decorated possess much elegance, and are not deficient in expression, though painting must ever fall much short of poetry in delineating the wilder conceptions of the fancy.
