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"No man, who hath tasted learning, but will confess the many ways of profiting by those, who not contented with stale receipts, are able to manage and set forth new positions to the world: and were they but as the dust and cinders of our feet, so long, as in that notion, they may yet serve to polish and brighten the armoury of truth: even for that respect they were not utterly to be cast away."—MILTON.

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*Mrs. Cameron's Leonora—Translated from the German of
Burger.*

SOME of the present generation may be old enough to remember the time when the public mind had been thoroughly satiated with the unchanging heroics of Pope's school, but had not yet admitted the "fatal facility" of the Octo-syllabic verse; when the Giaour was yet undreamt of and the Lay unwritten. It was then, that is about the

close of the last century, that any change from the uniform regularity of the so-called Augustan age, any ballad however trifling, was eagerly welcomed as a relief. Lays such as Mickle's Cumnor Hall, imitations from the German by M. Lewis, and other fugitive pieces published in the *Tales of Wonder*, were greedily caught up and devoured, and amongst the rest, but pre-eminent amongst them all, the "Lenore" of Burger first attracted the notice of Mr. Spencer and of William Taylor of Norwich, and was soon after given to the world in the well-known "William and Helen" of Scott.

It is a ballad of such old standing and of almost universal acceptance that we are now called on to notice: one familiar to all readers, if not in the original, yet in some one of its numerous imitations, and one which as a tale of love and terror has perhaps never been surpassed. It is but little to say that the translation before us fulfils the expectations created by the perusal of its unassuming preface, or that it is a spirited and yet accurate transcript of Burger. We have read that by William Taylor, we have read Scott's (Spencer's we were never fortunate enough to obtain a glance at) we have read some dozen of Leonoras by private hands, and circulated "only for private inspection," but it is no flattery to say that of *all* we prefer Mrs. Cameron's. Those whom a translation interests in the same way as any other piece of poetry, and those who take delight in tracing its fidelity to the original—will here find their criticisms disarmed. Those who know German will please themselves in comparing stanza with stanza, and those who are unacquainted with that language which the Emperor Charles the Fifth would have reserved for conversation with his horse, may surrender themselves unreservedly to the guidance of a faithful interpreter.—The artist, too, has been called in to give to the airy creations of Burger a local habitation and a resting place. Under the hand of MacIise, shapes of feminine beauty and winged forms of terror, attend on the reader as he speeds over the same course with the coal-black steed, each illustration increasing in effect until the last.

We would venture to linger a little on this story and point out several minute and well-conceived touches which entirely absolve it from the imputation of being an exaggerated mass of fiction, fit only to be classed with the hobgoblin tales of our nurseries. We say this because the ballad in Scott's hands has become an unearthly and supernatural tale from the beginning to the end, and it is Scott's version by which most readers will call it to mind. Scott could write nothing tame or uninspired. Whatever he handled, became instinct with his own living fire, but (we say it without the slightest disrespect to the mighty minstrel) he erred in the present instance from an ignorance of German, and as his verses professed to be imitations, he mistakes the purport of his author from the first and endeavours to make the reader forget that he is still treading earth, and dealing with realities. The famous verses

Tramp, tramp, across the land they rode!
Splash, splash, across the sea!

are not in the original, as Mrs. Cameron truly remarks, and should have no business in Scott's version, unless we may suppose that he drew his

ideas of Geography from Shakespeare and made Bohemia a maritime country. Now the main beauty of Burger's Tale consists in the exquisite mingling of the terrestrial and the unearthly. During all *the ride* the reader seems to be past the limits of the latter, when he is anon reminded that the heroine still belongs to the former. In the whole of the midnight race he yet feels the ties which connect him with this world spite of the dimly seen forms which haunt the riders, and it is only when the "freshening breeze of morn" is distinctly felt, that the catastrophe comes on, with rapid and giant strides, but yet not wholly unexpected, and the Demon Lover stands confessed in all the frightful reality of the grave. But we will now accompany the riders, and it will then be clearly seen that Burger's is no tale of grim and ghastly horrors but a highly wrought and exquisitely blent story, beyond the boundaries of the natural or the possible, but still far removed from the gross and mis-shapen exaggerations, by which fiction is wont to trespass on the indulgence of her readers.

There is peace between the emperor and the king of Prussia, Frederick the great, after the battle of Prague, and each returning soldier greets and is greeted by the fond familiar faces he had left behind him at home. Here we may remark that Burger has been severely censured for dating his dark tale of superstition at the then comparatively recent period of the seven years' war, and Scott wishing to avoid the seeming error makes his warriors return from Paynim battles and slaughtered Saracens, thus going back to the period of the Crusades. But without stopping to discuss the validity of the objection raised, we may remark that if we are correct in supposing Burger to aim at uniting the natural and super-natural, the every day life and the horrors of the tomb, he could not have done better than fix his story at a modern epoch. It was surely his object to lead the Reader on by degrees, to lull him into security by the mention of historical events of which living men might have been eye-witnesses, and then by a gradual and not infelicitous transition, unclothe to his astonished eyes the portals of the grave. However this may be, Leonora the heroine of the tale gazes in vain on the merry crowd, asks from all to no purpose, and unable to gain any tidings of the death or safety of her lover, sinks on the earth in all the wildness of despair. We then see the struggles of the female heart, which refuses to be comforted even by the affection of a parent, admirably depicted both in the original and in the translation. But when the stars are lit up in the heaven, a noise of horse's hoof is heard at the door, and the deceitful words of the Demon Lover reach the expectant ears of Leonora. We may remark that the visitant seems precluded from announcing himself as her betrothed husband: he merely asks if he will meet with remembrance or forgetfulness. But her all-confiding love will not brook delay or doubt, and in spite of the whistling wind and the prospect of a hundred miles ride, she springs on the raven steed, and impelled by an irresistible influence, they commence the famous moonlight ride. As yet all has been in perfect keeping with a plain tale of earth: the supernatural part now gradually begins. A hearse and bier are seen moving along in slow and solemn progression, while the priest is chanting the requiem for the dead. At a command

from the horseman, the chant is hushed, the corpse vanishes, and the funeral train are heard straining and panting in the rear. But a ghastlier sight now appears. Round a gibbeted felon an "airy crew" of witches are holding their revels and the horseman must compel them also to join in the race. Here we may point out a curious mistake of Scott's. Taking the German word *Gesindel* to mean "a criminal," and not "a rabble," he brings down the felon himself, who was or ought to have been effectually "chained up," and makes him "prance a fetter dance," as they move on to their bridal chamber. We need hardly say that in the present instance this mistake is rectified, and that the ghosts and not the murderer descend like "gust in hazelbush" (a simile quite unapplicable to rattling fetters while

"The horse
Snorting pursues his fiery course
With showers of sparks the shattered flint
Returns the horse shoe's iron dint."

Faster than steam engine, they fly onwards, and as the plot thickens, the constant mention of the dead awakens Leonora's apprehension, but fails to chill her love, while the spectre prepares to vanish at cock crow, in obedience to the immutable law of all well-conducted apparitions. With slackened rein, the courser charges an iron gate: its bolts and bars are rent with a thunder crash, and the transformation from the knight clothed in armour to the fleshless skeleton, is complete in an instant. His spurs and mail give way to the scythe and hour-glass, his comely appearance is succeeded by the bare skull and eyeless sockets, the horse breathing his charnel fires vanishes in the ground, and Leonora is left hanging "betwixt death and life." The last scene is grand and does not want its nicely concealed moral. Leonora pays the penalty of her deep, confiding, idolatrous love—of that love which separation and neglect had failed to extinguish,—which had framed in its vehemence the fearful wish expressed in Stanza 22. The body and soul are parted, but the ghosts move round her lifeless form in circle, and while in the poetry of Burger and in the pencil of Maclise their appearance adds to the horror of the sentence, they give utterance to the comforting tones of mercy in the last dark passage.

Endure, endure, though break the heart,
Yet judge not God's decree,
Thy body from thy soul doth part,
O! may God pardon thee!

RA
SS

The authoress will excuse us for having given our attention more to the tale itself, than to the translation. We have striven to let Burger "tell his own tale" and to speak in his own phrase, and it would perhaps be hard to select from a poem where every thing is deserving of praise, or impertinent to point out beauties which all can appreciate for themselves. But it would be unpardonable neglect if we had not noticed a production which has deservedly attracted the favourable criticism of all the English papers, and which we are only too glad to claim as the offspring of the hot and glaring City of Palaces.