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THE
EDINBURGH LITERARY JOURNAL;

OR,
WEEKLY REGISTER

OF

CRITICISM AND BELLES LETTRES.

"Talent, gout, esprit, bons sens, choses différentes, non—incompatibles."

LA BRUYERE.

"Here's freedom to him that wad read,—
Here's freedom to him that wad write!
There's name ever fear'd that the truth should be heard,
But they wham the truth wad indite!"

Burns.

NOVEMBER, 1828—MAY, 1829.

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M.D.CCC.XXIX.

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BURGER AND HIS WRITINGS.

*By William Tennant, Esq., Author of
"Auster Fair," &c.*

BURGER, son of the curate of Wolmerswende, near Halberstadt, in Lower Saxony, was born on the first hour of the first day of January 1743. For a long time he was, both in mind and body, a weakly child; and a school was, like our Thomson, more frequently chidder for the dulness, than commended for the sharpness, of his apprehension. His studies were commenced at the gymnasium of Aschersleben, and were afterwards prosecuted at the Pädagogium and University of Halle. His grandfather, whose affection for him he has celebrated in song, had at first destined him for the church; afterwards for the bar; but both purposes were frustrated by the gaiety and restlessness of his disposition. Amid the debts and difficulties induced by his improvident behaviour at college, he was deserted by his grandfather, who had hitherto affectionately supported him. A few noble young friends received him into their protection. He now entered vigorously upon his Greek and Latin studies, and at times displayed the dawning of his poetical talent in some humorous productions, which were read with applause to his club of congenial young spirits. Among his friends were Boile, Martin Müller, Voss, Cramer, and Count Stollberg.

In the year 1772, he obtained a situation of inferior rank in the justice-court of Altengleichen, in the principality of Calenberg. As this office neither well accorded with his disposition, nor had emoluments quite sufficient to maintain him, he soon threw it up; and, after having engaged in an expensive farming speculation at Appenrode, retired, in 1784, to Göttingen, where he gave lectures on composition and rhetoric. His appointment as professor was sanctioned by the government; but he was not fortunate enough to receive any salary.

During his residence at the farm of Appenrode, he had lost his first wife; and soon afterwards married her sister, whom he celebrates in some of his most beautiful poems under the name of Molly. Death soon separated him from this adored person,—a terrible blow,—the heaviest that could befall him,—that brought him to the grave's brink. From this time he never recovered fully his former vigour of health and vivacity of fancy; and though he struggled on in the performance of his various academical and other duties, neither his mind nor his poetry seems to have regained its former sprightly gaiety. Time, however, which consumes brass and marble, gradually diminished the bitterness of his grief for his adored Molly. He wished to give a mother to his three children, and once more, in connubial happiness, to relieve himself from the fatigues of his profession. Just at this time he happened to receive from Stuttgart, in Suabia, a poem from a muse-smitten maiden, proffering him, in pretty-enough verse, heart, hand, and estate. Burger at first laughed at this whimsical proposal; but the satisfactory information given in answer to his queries regarding the lady, the advice of his friends, and the very romance of this unexampled proffer, to

prevailed upon him, that he returned a response in general rhymes, which led, notwithstanding a warning voice from Italy against it, to his union with this romantic Sappho of Suabia. The marriage took place in October 1790. A fabric of connubial bliss, built on such an unsure and fanciful foundation, soon gave way, and was supplanted, in its ideal *zauberwerk*, by the sad, killing realities of domestic discomfort and disagreement. The rest of Burger's life was embittered by this poetical spouse; and after a fretful cohabitation of two years and a half, he was compelled to divorce her by due form of law. Burger's health and good humour were now completely shattered by the unsuccessful issue of this connexion; he shut himself up henceforth in his chamber; fell dangerously sick in October 1793; and died in 1794 of pulmonary consumption. He seems to have been a man of good heart, full of kindness, affection, and philanthropy. Although seldom even in moderate circumstances, he was generous, so far as his means went, not only to his friends, but even to those that had injured or offended him. Though deceived often by others, he ever retained his ennobling opinion, generally, of the human heart; and his demeanour, albeit in particular instances extravagant or erring, was, on the whole, discreet and prudent. He was not covetous of external rank or wealth; he was ambitious only of fame, and the confession of his poetical supremacy. In company he obtruded no claims of notice; he was still and reserved, rather than noisy or usurping. He aped not the artificial manners of the courtier or man of fashion; yet, notwithstanding his deficiency in courtly polish, he insinuated himself easily into the favours of the fair sex, by the genuine captivation of candid, open, and amiable manners.

The poems of Burger deserve to be better known in Scotland. In some points of his moral and mental character he has been likened to our Robert Burns; but he is entitled, as a poet, to a higher rank than the Ayrshire peasant. For Burger, to the strength of original genius, superadded the cultivation of accomplished scholarship. His mind, equally alive as Burns's to the charms of Nature, and equally susceptible of the keenest and tenderest impressions, was subdued and refined by good taste and discipline, and had at command every classical grace and attraction. His tenderer productions remind one more of Waller than of Burns. His language, so far as a foreign ear may dare to be a judge of it, appears to be, of all the German poets, the most sweet and mellifluous. The cadence of his High Dutch periods has, indeed, in our ears, a charm of euphony as pleasing in its effect as the well-vowell'd trillings of Petrarch; whose sentiments and poetical workings have assuredly less nerve and originality than the Bard of Germany. In the Ballads, which are among his best productions, he has shown a wildness, a sepulchral pomp, and ghostly horror entirely his own; and he has, in these as well as his other poems, invigorated his verse by the copious use of the figure *Onomatopœia*, an ornament which Quintilian regrets that the Latin language, in comparison of Greek, so little allowed, and which, of all modern languages, the German, from its bold sounds and clashing combinations of consonants, so readily and eloquently admits. He has also, like the other poets of his country, though perhaps more sparingly than Schiller, made abundant use of compound substantives and compound adjectives, an adaptation which the German language possesses in common with Greek, Persian, and English, thereby giving to its poets the capability of greater force, richness, and compression. His best productions are, besides his addresses to his *Molly*, which are all beautiful, *Leonora*, *Der Wilde Jäger*, *Lenardo und Blondine*, *Die Elemente*, *Die Entführung*, *Bruder Grauroch*, *Frau Schnips*, &c. Of these, *Leonora* is known in several translations. But of all his effusions, we were most captivated by the short poem entitled,

Die hold die ich meine—a beautiful ditty—the most elegant compliment that ever was paid, in the north or in the south, to female beauty. A translation of it has been attempted by the writer of these remarks, and is here subjoined:—

THE FAIR ONE WHOM I MEAN.

Die hold die ich meine.

O, in what pomp of love serene,
Smiles she, the fair one whom I mean !
Tell it, my pious mouth, to earth ;
Whose wonder-working hand shines forth ?
Whereby in pomp of love serene,
She smiles, the fair one whom I mean !

Who has illum'd and kindled bright,
Like Paradise, her eyes' blue light ?
Ev'n he whose power o'er sea and land
Heaven's blue bright bending arch hath spann'd ;
He hath illum'd and kindled bright,
Like Paradise, her eyes' blue light !

Who with such master-skill hath spread
Sweet o'er her cheek Life's white and red ?
He, who to th' almond's blossom lent
Its beauteous tincture dew-besprnt ;
He with such master-skill hath spread
Sweet o'er her cheek Life's white and red !

Who form'd her purple mouth so fair,
So rich with sweetness living there ?
He, who with lusciousness so mild,
Fills the red cherry, July's child ;
He made her purple mouth so fair,
So rich with sweetness living there !

Who made her silken tresses flow,
All waving, round her neck of snow ?
He, whose sweet west-wind o'er the plain
 Rocks the glad stalks of golden grain ;
He bade her silken tresses flow,
All waving round her neck of snow !

Who touch'd, for heavenly speech or song,
Her voice with rapture all day long ?
He, who did lend the lark his note,
And Philomel her tuneful throat ;
He touch'd, for heavenly speech or song,
Her voice with rapture all day long !

Who hath so arch'd her beauteous breast,
Where Pleasure has his golden rest ?
He, that the swan's white bosom fair
Curv'd out with plumage rich and rare ;
He hath so arch'd that beauteous breast,
Where Pleasure has his golden rest !

What artist framed, in high design,
Her waist so delicate, so fine ?
He, from whose perfect mind beam'd forth,
Beauty's each form in heaven and earth ;
That mighty artist did design
Her waist so delicate and fine !

Who breath'd into her form, a mind
So pure, angelical, and kind ?
He, that the angels made on high,
These holy children of the sky ;
He breath'd into her form, a mind
So pure, angelical, and kind !

O ! praise, Great Maker, to thine art !
And thanks, warm bursting from my heart !
That Beauty's type enchant's me so,
Crown'd with each grace thy world can show ;
O ! praise, Great Maker, to thine art !
And thanks, warm bursting from my heart !

But ah ! for whom on earth below
Smiles she, attir'd in beauty, so ?
O God ! might I have ne'er been born,
Ne'er seen thy blissful light of morn,
If not for me, in beauty, so,
Smiles she, that fair one whom I know !

TO OUR CORRESPONDENTS.

"Adeline," from the German of Burger, and "A Scots Sang," by the Ettrick Shepherd, in our next.

A press of matter forces us reluctantly to postpone "Stanzas written at Midnight," till next week.

The Remarks "On Language" are clever, but do not seem exactly calculated for our pages.—"Confessions of an Inconstant" are well written; but we cannot consent to continue any article through three or four Numbers. The paper concerning "Mary Queen of Scots" will not suit us.—"Monsters not mentioned by Linnaeus" was not written by the gentleman named; his article was in a previous column.

The "Stanzas" from Glasgow we like, and propose publishing them soon.—Laura's Lines "On discovering a dead mother's smile on the countenance of her child," give promise of future excellence.—The "Lines to Professor Wilson, on reading his 'Vale of Peace,'" are not worthy of the subject.—There is considerable genius and feeling in the verses entitled, "I love thee—only thee," but they are not perfect enough.—"Jack's Ode to the New Year" will not suit us.—We fear the "Parody" will never see the light.—We have received the following

EPIGRAM ON THOMAS HOOD.

When the prophet abandon'd this world of folly,
His mantle he gave to his pupil bereft;
So the laughing god, Mornus, to rout melancholy,
Behind him his Hood to his votaries left.

All communications for the EDITOR must be post-paid.

ADELINE.

From the German of Bürger.

To the Editor of the Edinburgh Literary Journal.

SIR,—I have found, among some old scraps of translation, the following little Poem from Bürger, which may, perhaps, be interesting to your readers, particularly as that Poet has so lately been introduced to their notice by the accomplished author of "Anster Fair."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ROBT. MORRHEAD.

WALKS she along the aisle, high organs pealing,
To where around the altar crowds are kneeling,
Holy and heavenly wishes in her eye ?
Ah ! then, methinks, I see the bride of Heaven !
Expires each low desire of earthly leaven,
And Love steps back, as she is passing by.

But see I her, as every day I see her,
Frolic and free,—yet not than Virtue freer,—
In what a girlish glee her spirit shines !
While charming mirth her serious mood dispaces,
And all are emulous of her good graces,
Love ventures forth again,—nor hopeless pines.

Awe-struck respect bends to her angel glances ;
But when, her glory veiling, she advances
In maiden wreath of myrtle,—Love is hers !
O ! still to others may she seem descending
From the bright spheres,—my love, less high pre-
tending,
Her look of kindness, all my own, prefers !