

Review.

MEMOIRS OF SIR ROBERT STRANGE AND A. LUMISDEN.

BY J. DENISTOUN.

ENGRAVING is one among the branches of the Fine Arts which has not, generally, been esteemed so highly as other departments of Art. The engraver has, almost always, been compelled to assert his claims vigorously in order to obtain a position by the side of the painter and sculptor, to force, in fact, that respect for his profession which is only voluntarily rendered to those who wield the brush and the chisel. The reason for this denial of rank is, perhaps, owing to the non-creative feature of the Art, the engraving being simply a reproduction of an idea previously uttered in some other shape. Whether or not this position be tenable, we are not disposed to argue it. With the memory of such artists as Toschi, Morghen, Strange, Müller, and others to reflect upon, and, above all, their admirable works to refer to, in which oftentimes mediocre pictures are vastly improved, we are willing to concede a high artistic position to engraving.

Among the engravers who have been an honor to the profession in England, Sir Robert Strange stands in the foremost rank. He was one of the pioneers in this world of Art. "He illustrated High Art as none of his countrymen had before done," and by his "talent, industry, and taste, elevated his profession of engraving beyond its previous rank." His life, embodied in the book the title of which we have given above, is entertaining and also instructive in its connection with Art, but it would have been more so, if it had not been associated with the life of a Jacobite brother-in-law whom the compiler of the book, we think, regarded as the most interesting personage. Strange is more of a shadow or a character talked about, than actually before one on the stage. Without further criticism of the book, we proceed to give the leading incidents of the life of Strange.

As usual with an English work, it commences by raking up the bones of his ancestors, and then proceeds to tell us that there is but little known of his younger years, except what is contained in an autobiographical sketch. From this we are told that he was born in the Orkneys in 1721, and that he received a tolerable education, comprising "some general knowledge of the classics." He had an inclination for the sea, which inclination a wise elder brother indulged by allowing him to try the experiment; it resulted in a return to dry land a wiser and a better boy. This elder brother was a lawyer in Edinburgh, and he gave Robert a place in his office—but his duties being uncongenial, he did not long remain there. While in the discharge of his duties as clerk, he secretly developed a taste for drawing, and made many sketches, which he stowed away in a drawer; these were accidentally discovered by his brother, and the discovery led to an apprenticeship with a Mr. Richard Cooper, a prominent engraver of the place at that time. His apprenticeship terminated in 1741. In 1745 the Rebellion broke out. Strange, having become enamored of a Miss Isabella Lumisden, who was of a family devoted to the cause of the Preten-

der, was led to attach himself also to the same cause, and accordingly became a soldier—suffered the hardships endured by his associates after the battle of Culloden: previously, however, using his graver for the Stuart cause, engraving bank-notes, which the defeat at Culloden prevented from being put in circulation. His connection with the Stuart cause was a source of trouble to him in after life; it prevented him from enjoying, till a late period, the patronage of the court, which then, to a rising artist, was of great assistance; it also contributed, among other causes (one of which was the denial of artist-rank to engravers) to keep him out of the Royal Academy, which as an institution planned and controlled by the king, could not be expected to extend favor to Jacobites, no matter what their genius might be. Strange was not a very strong Jacobite, still his marriage with one, probably, brought him under suspicion; at all events, to improve himself in his Art, if nothing more, he left the country, and went over to France, where he applied himself to study. He remained two years in France, and then returned to London, where he settled and began to engrave for a reputation. Here he lived a few years, when he resolved to visit Italy, and from this time dates the best of his works. Strange made careful drawings, while in Italy, from many of the choice works of the old masters, which he engraved, from time to time, and published at his own expense. Among these engravings are the works of Raffaele, Correggio, Guido, Guercino, Titian, Van Dyck, Pietro da Cortona, Domenichino, Salvator Rosa, Poussin, and others. As a summary of his aims and labors, we quote from the preface:—

Living in an age when Art, equally degenerate in aims and execution, seldom rose beyond flimsy efforts at decoration, and when a tasteless public were well content with such trifling gratifications as it offered them, immediate success in his profession would have been most readily secured by following the prevailing fashion. But his mind was set on higher efforts. Despising a course recommended to the wants of an increasing family, he sought inspiration from the old masters; and, after feeling his way in one or two Flemish and French works, devoted himself almost exclusively to Italian masterpieces. As his country contained no freely acceptable collection of these, his ever improving perception of the beautiful stimulated him to seek for them in other lands, at an outlay of time and money, and by an abnegation of domestic ties, which few would have incurred. Rather than turn aside from the path he had thus chosen, he sacrificed the favor of George III. and of his favorite minister, the only two men in Britain disposed to patronise Art. There remained but the public to look to for support in a course towards which their intelligence had never been awakened, nor their sympathies evoked. The risk was consequently great; and, although years elapsed ere his unflagging diligence and indomitable perseverance attained the success due equally to his courage and talent, one object was much sooner effected. From his native Orkney to the Land's End, his engravings brought within the reach of all men the best works of great painters, whose very names were almost unknown to his countrymen, or had been ignorantly prostituted to canvases altogether unworthy of them. These engravings, offered at the same price as the trash which preceded them in the market, gradually obtained a large circulation, and be-

came the first important step towards a general amelioration of English taste in the Fine Arts. Other appliances were devoted by Strange towards the same ends. He boldly ventured the moderate capital at his disposal, in importing a superior class of pictures for the home market, and by descriptive catalogues of these and of his own works, he did much to instruct the public regarding the merits of such masters as he recommended to their preference.

We care but little about the specific effect upon public taste which the pictures Strange engraved may have exercised upon it. It is sufficient praise for him that he sought to reproduce some of the best works of Art known at the time, and by this diffusion of his engravings pique the curiosity of the public, and thereby stimulate the disposition to encourage the growth of Art.

After remaining from home periods of time sufficiently long to be called a residence, Strange returned to England, bringing with him many elaborate drawings as material for the employment of his graver to the end of his life. He also had matters in train for the sale of old pictures, which sales, being successful, he frequently repeated. Soon after his return home he recovered the favor of the king, and was knighted by him. He continued to publish his engravings up to the time of his death, which took place in 1792, at the age of 71 years.

The number of engravings executed by Strange amounted to ninety-seven. They were published at prices ranging from five to fifteen shillings sterling each, small enough compared with the cost of engravings at the present day. Proof impressions of some of his engravings have lately been sold as high as fifty and sixty pounds.

We should not be doing justice to the book under notice, if we were to omit mention of Lady Strange, the excellent wife and admirable woman, who assisted her husband so efficiently in their common journey of life, and contributed so much to his success by her care for his interests. We extract from her letters distributed through the book some passages.

"They show much originality of character, engrafted on more ordinary qualities of the Scottish gentlewoman of the last century—a class now to be estimated only from such memorials, accidentally preserved. Among them native capacity had little cultivation, while natural sagacity and reason of thought or language were left untrammelled by artificial refinement or conventional restraints."

They also convey a picture of the manners of her time, and are sufficiently amusing to warrant the space they occupy.

The maiden name of Mrs. Strange was Isabella Lumisden, and she was a Jacobite of the true Flora MacIvor stamp; her brother, Andrew Lumisden, was one of the household of the Pretender; he accompanied him into exile, and resided with him at Rome. Most of Mrs. Strange's correspondence* is with that brother. The first extract we make refers to the intended departure of her husband for Rome.

"EDINBURGH, Sept. 29, 1748.

DEAR ANDREW:—By the time you read this, I think I hear you bless me for sending you the best of brothers. I am sure I have great reason

* The orthography of the originals is preserved throughout.

to bless God that has made the best of mankind mine. I believe I need not preach up the doctrine of friendship, love, and peace to subsist between you, as you are both more than ordinary brothers, so I hope there shall ever be more than common affection betwixt you. * * There's a thousand things that you are capable to instruct him in, and I flatter myself that you'll take a particular pleasure in doing it; and I'll venture to say that none of your favors will be lost on either of us. And, to tell a truth which may either be overlooked or quite forgotten by some, I think my dearest is entitled to the esteem of every true Britain; for he has done more to serve his country than any servant his master has that I know of. Two years ago he was stript naked every way in his country's cause, since which he has got a wife and two children for the good of the public. He has also, by his own industry, provided for his growing young family to their full satisfaction.

I must beg pardon to your patience, while, with your leave, I jot a few lines more in behalf of my dearest; and so further inform you that, with his close study and constant labor, he has of late been exceeding tender (feeble). Now, my dear Andrew, I beg you'll be so good as make him take a reasonable recreation from his common fatigue; cheerfulness and moderate exercise is the only restorative he stands in need of. Be sure and cause him spend an hour or two every day at dancing or fencing, running or riding, as you please. The doctor says a flesh diet is not proper for him; but now and then a glass of good wine will do him no harm; but, as he'll be happy in being near two able physicians, I submit to what they think proper for him. Now, tell them they shall have the prayers of an affectionate wife as a temporal reward; and at last they'll be rewarded in heaven for their care of my honest, faithful lover, who I depute to tell you how happy I am, after an incredible labor of troubles.

In a subsequent letter she thus expresses her opinion of her husband:

Nothing could be more agreeable to me than hearing of the love and friendship that has subsisted betwixt my dear Robie and you; your love and good opinion of him first laid the foundation on which I have built my unalterable esteem. I'm more happy in thinking he has kept your regard, and acquired the friendship of others, than I would have been with most of the young men of the present age, with their large sums and little sense; such, instead of being fortunes, I always looked upon them as misfortunes. I thank God I have escap'd such, and am happy with my lot.

The Jacobite enthusiasm breaks out in the next extract. "The Prince" is Charles Edward, and the occasion of the letter is the death of "the Friend," his father the Chevalier.

I will not renew your grief nor my own by regretting the loss of that Friend we equally honored and esteemed; and yet I cannot be silent, my heart is so full of that feeling of pain which cannot be described, only known to one that suffers like myself. If my twenty-years-old acquaintance [the Prince] is now at your house, on your knees present my most respectful duty, nor blush to think a lady bid you do so. O had I been of a more useful sex! Had my pen been a sword I had not been here sitting tamely by my fireside, desiring you to do me a simple office like this. In those years, so many and so long, I have not been altogether idle, for I have made three fine boys, who I hope will do me credit: they'll be recruits when I'm gone; I hope they'll all have Roman spirits in them.

I'll instruct them that their lives are not their own when Rome demands them. Although I wish to see you, yet I do not wish it at the expense of any breach of duty. Till you have a free, honorable, and cheerful discharge, do not dare to quit your post. Remember you are Cato's son; he preferred the public to every private consideration whatever. I hope you will not construe this as if I had a doubt of your worth; no! I only want to show you that no time can alter my opinions of right or wrong, having a mind entirely free and above self-interest of all sort.

We now come to a series of letters about domestic matters, and further revelations of the character of Lady Strange. The author says:

Mrs. Strange was a strong-minded woman, quick in disposition as well as in intellect; her temperament, like the April of her own inconstant climate, varying from sunshine to gloom, from smiles to sadness. Being much thrown upon her own resources in the extrication of her father's entangled affairs, the promotion of her husband's professional interests, and the education of her family,—devolved as these entirely were upon her by Mr. Strange's repeated and prolonged absences, a querulous tone is sometimes observable in her correspondence, especially during his residence in Italy, protracted from months to years. * * * Of herself she speaks in 1757 as 'all mercury; I'm sensible I'm too much so;' and in another letter, 'misfortunes and pain of mind have worn me greatly, and I have too much spirit, which I am often afraid will overset my small share of judgment. My passions are too strong for my reason, which I am sure I employ as much as possible toward the correction of what my cooler judgment disapproves when I am able to philosophise!'

The first letter refers to a woman whom her father had intended to marry (but which marriage his death prevented); and the second, to fears expressed by her husband and brother as to the "folly" of permitting one of their boys to dance in public. The children were taught dancing by a Frenchman, and on the occasion of his benefit, Mrs. Strange permitted her son James to appear in public. The father heard of it abroad, and thus writes to his brother-in-law:

"When you write to Bella, pray remonstrate against Jamie's dancing on the stage, for I can perceive there is such an intention. It can only proceed from a blind fondness of the boy that encourages this folly, which can do him no service, and affords a sufficient handle for our enemies to ridicule us on this occasion. I have said what I think is proper on the subject, but what comes from you I know will have greater influence than all I can say." Accordingly Lumisden replied, "I shall not forget to mention to her Jamie's dancings, for you cannot be more averse to it than I am;" and on the 9th of March he thus performed his promise: "I am glad to hear of the progress the boys make under Mr. Cartwright. Although the cultivation of their minds must always be the great object in view, I am far from having their bodies neglected. I therefore heartily approve of dancing, and exercises that produce a genteel carriage, but these exercises ought to be carried no farther than to answer this purpose. To carry them farther is not only consuming that time which ought to be employed to more valuable purposes, but renders the persons possessed of them ridiculous. It is for this reason that I cannot approve of Jamie's dancing on the stage. Such a degree of dancing is only proper for a dancing-master, and not for a gentleman.

Thus the Earl of Massareen, who is now in Italy, has been laughed at by the Italians, as well as by his own countrymen, on account of his theatrical dancing. I therefore flatter myself that, when you seriously consider the matter, you will not encourage the dear sweet boy to dance any more on the stage."

With this preface, the tone and allusions of the three following letters will be readily understood:

"I shall not doubt of Robie's great study, diligence, and progress, but what will that signify if it hurry him and me the faster to the grave? I am not able to bear the fatigue I have; both body and mind is oppressed. You cannot imagine the writing I have, and cannot avoid: the multitude of people I have to speak to, of which many are very idle, and yet those very idle must be minded. Our affairs in Scotland stand as they did. That unhappy woman, who thought once to have had the honor of being our step-mother, being disappointed that way, and not finding beauty sold so well as it had done, soon became a burthen to her relations in Edinburgh, who gave her to know that she must travel. They collected ten guineas; so here she came about a fortnight [ago] or so. I have forgot how she fended; God knows work she never would. After all, I was lately shocked to hear she had been in an hospitable, and was now turned out as an incurable. I will make no animadversion on this, but the proverb, 'It's no shame to see wasters want.' I never knew a person I had no reason to wish well to but this woman and her relations.

March 29, 1763.

MY DEAR ANDREW,

"As to the dear babies, I thank God they are all perfectly well. Was I to be vain of anything, I might pique myself on my care of them: but I take nothing to myself; everything is from the goodness of God, who has given them most valuable endowments both of body and mind: I have only been attentive to their improvement in both. At so great a distance, you can but form a notion of them from others of their age, by which you will never know them. Their modesty is equal to your wish. Jamie knows no more of a theatrical carriage than you do; he moves and dances like a gentleman. His master is as unlike a dancing-master as your Holy Father. Fear me not, I have given neither you, nor any of the world, any reason to suspect my want of what's call'd common sense. I think I have seen throw things you yourself have been blind to, as to the foibles of men or women. I will but do myself the justice when I say I have as few of them as any she that ever wore petticoats. I know I have passion; and plenty of revenge, which is, to be sure, the child of the Devil, and not the brat of a weak brain. My wayward love is the only blot you can stamp [on] my scutcheon: with that, when I see you, I shall vindicate myself, in the deafest side of your head! Thank God! things seems to turn out well, but that I did not foresee this, I can assure you. I was always willing and ready to contribute to the making my Robie happy, and with cheerfulness to submit to everything that could befall me. I was ever resolved never to complain to my friends, who are ever deaf to distress, but mighty willing to rejoice in one's prosperity. But I find I must not give way to this, for I know not where it will end, and I am resolved to keep something for a meeting. But, to begin again, Robie and you must submit the care of the children to me for this year. I foresee, tho' I might get the blame was things to turn out ill, yet when they flourish I may never be thought of: but I hope to live to tell my own merit in their education myself. Jamie never learned ought but the Minuat and Lewer,

which is a sort of Minuat; he never saw a country-dance; he, nor his sister, has not been within the playhouse door since April last. I say again trust me: I have not given you any reason to doubt of my quick-sightedness. I hope I shall always be able to give good reason for what I do. I will not quit my knowledge of mankind to the best of you. My children, from the oldest to the youngest, loves me, and fears me as sinners dread death: my look is a law."

"June 26, 1768.

"MY DEAR ANDREW,

"I am far from being well, which I do not choose to signify to Robie. Was he to be with me to-morrow it would do me no service. The immoderate fatigue I have had these many years in bringing in a family into the world, and the anxiety I have had in rearing them, join'd to many sore hearts, has wore out the best constitution in Europe. 'Tis true I have had a severe additional fatigue since Robie went abroad, but I have had one substantial comfort; I have been my own mistress. I have had no chiding stuff, which I believe I sometimes brought on myself, but when I did, it was in defence of some saving truth. My frugality has often been dear to me, but yet I'm of opinion had my disposition been otherwise he would have more justly found fault.

Robie is of a sweet disposition, but has not so much fore-thought, nor so discerning a judgment as I have. When I'm gone, he will soon be flatter'd out of himself, and out of that justice which is dew to my children, and we have nobody to interpose. I'm at present too much affected to say any more of this. To-morrow I'm to take asses' milk: Dr. Hunter says that will do me good; he was with me this morning. Everybody say the country will by all means be proper, but that will never cure a person who carries their disease in their mind. Peace and quiet is my wish, but I despair of ever attaining it. Since ever my lord left me, my application to business, my constant desire of doing good and being obliging, has fatigued me beyond measure. The thing that has of late most hurt me is speaking. I exert with such spirit and vivacity that, when I'm left alone, after having entertain'd my visitors, I feel such a violent pain in my breast that I am useless for some time. I have had a dreadful cough this spring, which still sticks to me. To sum up all, when I sit down alone, and enters into a train of thoughts, I grow low spirited."

"I have sent you Fingal and the Index; when will you give over asking books? Here I must end; only tell you the children are all fine creatures, but their being continually disturbing me is hard, but for their welfare and frugality, I will yet endure it. Their voice sometimes is like thunder, for all of them are very healthy, for which I thank God: sound in body and sound in mind. The domestick affairs of such a family as mine is sufficient business for any woman.

Here I have had a halt to take some rubarb and a glass of wine; this is my own receipt. After a person passes forty, they are either a fool or a physician. Bleeding is ordered for me, but I hate that operation much. Oh Andrew! it would be well worth your while to come and see my infancy. A mother's description is not minded: if it was, I could tell

* Mr. Strange being his own publisher, his works, and some of his foreign purchases, were sold at his house, and, no doubt, under his wife's superintendance while he was from home. In this letter she incidentally remarks, "I can sell nothing but what is really fine; bad and middling things in the way of virtue I am for burning;" an opinion still acted upon by dealers in London more than elsewhere. And she adds, "I believe I have friends in all the points of the compass. This is only to be had by obligingness, which is one of my studies, and by which I have had ever some of this world's gain."

you that Bruce is everything that I could wish her, and what her father wishes. She has been a heart-break many a time to me, but I flatter myself with the best now. Jamie delights both man and woman: lovely and modest, he cannot move a finger but he shows beauty. The old and the wise, the sharp-sighted and the soft-hearted, admires and loves Andrew. Bells' her papa's picture, softened with smiles; she's all dimples: a gentle zephyr you would call her, with a most comic disposition as would charm you. Bob is my favourite, only because I am now going to describe him: he loves me more than they do all. He is in every respect like Jamie, who some people say is my favourite, but I think Bob is my dauty. Jamie I wished for, and hitherto he is all I could wish for, was I to wish again. There's a youthful giddiness in him that is not in Andrew, yet one cannot help admiring it. Although I love him as I do my own soul, yet I pass no fault without correction: I correct him oftener than Andrew. He has a sedateness that never was in any boy but himself. Within these three weeks I have put him, meaning Andrew, to learn to dance to brisk him up. He is jealous of his brother, as he is of him: neither of them can bear the other to advance faster than he. When Jamie was applauded for dancing, Andrew wished he could do so too. Now he is more awake, and pleas'd to think he will be able to dance when his brother dances to his papa. Bruce dances very gently. Bob and Bell imitates the rest, and dances too. What will your prudence and philosophy think of this letter? it needs no apology if you consider from whom it comes and to whom it goes.

She had sent her son James to Paris to be educated, and the following letter will be read with interest as a revelation of manners and customs, and for the spirit and good sense of Mrs. Strange:

"LONDON, Feb. 5, 1770.

"MY DEAR ANDREW,—I only waited for your approbation to send Jamie to Paris. However, do not depend on his staying two years; begin with the most advisable branches, such as history, mathematics, &c. He has been reading French for some time. He can write and figur very well. He dances and fences a little. He has beguine the fiddle which I wish [him] just to acquair as much as will become an amusement; these little ornaments are very often of more use to a young man in foreign countries than we at home generally imagin. In his early days I remember his papa and you fear'd I had encourag'd dancing too much: pray tell me if you think I did. This I am sure, it strengthen'd his constitution, which from the beginnin was rather feeble. His outward appearance is what you now see, passable. His temper is easy and naturally amiable, which is very dangerous, for he's as easily perswaded to do wrong than right. He's soon senseable of doing wrong, but till lately afraid to confess the wrong: I have now so far made him senseable of the beauty of truth that he can confess anything to me. In dressing him out I insist on plainness in every article, particularly I will allow of no ruffels of any kind for some time, silk or lace: I have a reason for that which none but he and I knows, so do not tell me a word about the fation; that on some occasions we ought to despise. In this point for some time oblige me: if we have the pleasure of meeting next summer, I'll give you a reason for what at present may appear unreasonable. I likewise insist on his present application to business; no visiting, no plays, till you see how he can apply. Let not your love blind you. He is indolent and wants a spur, not to gaiety but to study. I make no doubt but you will always look on my children as your own, but remember he that spairs the rod hates the child. I assure

you I never was a blind mother. My dearest Andrew, will you order Jamie to attend you every Sunday morning for an hour or two, which let me entreat you to spend as our dear papa and you did, reading a sacrat lesson, Latin, or English, or French, as you judge proper. I'm very sensible I'm writing a great deal more than what there is occasion for betwixt you and me, but my good intention towards my children is the best gift I can give them. My lord says a sword is a common part of dress in Paris for all ranks; in this I intreat as in the ruffels, &c., for some time I will not allow any. If he appears aquard, say he does so by the positive command of his worthy old mother, who never did or said anything but what she had a good reason for, therefore you comply without asking a single question. I shall write you when to launch out in gaiety of any kind. I will keep a correspondence with Jamie, in which I will endeavor to show the parent and Christian too; in time I hope he will make us all happy.

The following series of letters by Lady Strange to her husband traces the progress of the malady which resulted in the death of Sir Robert. Nothing can exceed the devoted and unvarying affection which pervades them, even in their most querulous humors, frequent separation from him being her only complaint:

"LONDON, Nov. 12, 1790.

"MY DEAREST LOVE,—The dismal account you give me in your last of the 3d cur. distresses me not a little, as I can be of no use to you at this distance, and was I with you in Paris I could do nothing for you but lament my inability. I offer'd to go with you to any part of the South, and nurse you in my bosom. 'Tis long since I begg'd you to give over working, and indeed the result of your labours are no ways flattering. To sell your prints for paper will not make you rich. I once more beg you only to look forward; a time will come in this place when such prints as yours will be justly respected. Of this I had lately a long conversation with Captain Baillie, who tells me the trash is now despised: so does Mr. Sharp tell me; he feels it so. Now my last advice is just what I have said over and over: 'Come, my dear, play the gentleman: take your staff in your hand, go about, visit, see your friends, and they will remember you and your works.' You may labour in a corner for ever, and nobody will enquire after you. Your sons are known to be in a way that does you credit, and it will redound to your own reputation. Nobody cares for obscure folks: a little frugal dash is even a duty. When your printing is ended, try what you call your luck in the selling way, but be not disappointed, nor undervalue your works. A guinea for your large Guido is enough in Paris, and I would by no means leave there a cargo, as you have formerly done; when they are asked for they will be worth carriage, which is now become safe and easy. As to the two hounder of the Apotheosis you have in Paris, my advice is to bring them with you; I would sooner burn them here than undersell them. The duty and carriage will not cost you £10, and to sell them at a low price will disgrace your whole works. In short, bring all with you that you can; leave the rest to Providence; time will come when the sun will shine on you. We are in no want. Reputation and dignity is my chief wish. As soon as you are able be packing from day to day, that your last hour may be the less fatigue to you. Leave not a wreck behind; neither money, paper, nor debt. Cheer up your heart, the best of your days are coming. We shall lead an easie, quiet, comfortable life, while it pleases God to prolong our days. Come and tast of ease once in your life! 'Tis long since this was my doctrine; experience now convinces me I was right; for once take my advice before it is too late. I preach what I practice. I keep

the house and am well. I'm not idle or lazie, but withal I enjoy my darling ease, which is the first blessing, and brings us the nearest to our first state of innocence in Paradise: there, was no labor. * * * *

"My first, last, and great request is to take care of yourself. All here offer their love and duty to you. I ever am what I have been, your affecte. wife,
"ISABELLA STRANGE."

"LONDON, Dec. 4, 1790.

"MY DEAREST LOVE,
* * * *

"I have not for a long time flatter'd myself with the pleasure of seeing you this year. I only wish to see you chearful; weakness may be help'd with care, if attended by chearfulness, the best of medicin. * * * *
Cheer up your heart; eat and drink in spite of inclination. If I had given way to low spirits and wayward fancys of any kind, I had not been scrawling this day. Your situation in life has brought with it many reasons for thankfulness to God. Many of your fatigues the world say were your pleasures; even pleasures are fatiguing. In futter throw everything aside that can harass your body or mind. The reading of our sons' letters will cheer you; these are comforts. Many in our station may be richer, but none can be more happy or content than I am; we know not what biting want has ever been. It fears me to hear you say you loath everything: I hope you will ever except me; was that ever to be the case, I should not long for a meeting. When you had a sore nose, you know I wrote to you not to come to me without a nose. I love my man to be perfect, as I ever trust in God we will be perfectly happy. I can think of nothing else to say but to recommend you to the care of Heaven, and repeat that I am your affte. wife,

"ISABELLA STRANGE."

"LONDON, May 26, 1791.

MY DEAR LOVE,—I do not know whither I will have time to write you this sheet to a reasonable length, as love letters are generally pretty long, but however little love I can at my age express, well can I tell a truth, which is, in the first place, the happiness I have in knowing by your favor from Margate of May 25, your having got safe there, and that you had only to complain of your own folly in shaving your head, which has given you a fresh cold. A hoarseness is most disagreeable, but not so ill as a cough or other consequences of cold. Take care of yourself, and I hope you will be singing and dancing again. I am glad you are in a privet house; I hope you'll be took care of. I am always happy to see you, but a transient meeting is always a sore parting to me. I have been tantaliz'd all my life with happiness, and interup'd with visitors all this morning—not an hour to myself; however, I have spirit for everything but neglect or a frown.

* * * *
I'm sure we now have glorious weather; take pennyworths of it; strength will come in time. Remember to be always patient. Nothing worth telling shall be long keep'd from you; eat, drink, and be merry. I hope you sleep well; if so all will be well. I have no complaints. Mind the blessing you enjoy—no pain, which is feelingly expressed in the inclosed from Mr. McGowan. If any suffers, I'm an innocent sufferer, always left alone, so that our meetings are often sour'd and jarring. 'Tis your part to consider my wants. *Murrie* for love and live constantly asunder! that thought comes too often across, but I discharge all love-letters on the subject; 'tis a tender point, and will not be healed on paper; it must be personal when we meet. God send us a happy meeting, which will be the case if you are stout and strong. We are again in want of an upper maid; the one

we had said the place did not suite her, so in three weeks she trotted off; in four days after she came she gave warning. Curse them all!

The next letter is the last she ever wrote to the husband she loved so well, and served so faithfully. It is somewhat low-spirited in tone, but it is only one string slightly out of tune in an instrument which had made cheerful music for a long and serviceable life:

"LONDON, July 17, 1791.

"MY DEAR LOVE,—
* * * *

"As it is likely our meeting is not far off, I need say the less on any subject. I can write on nothing I'm cleverer in than my own praise. I have attended to your interest and honour these forty-four years, and I appail to Heaven if I have not done my duty without murmuring. Your love, respect, and esteem, was all I ever wished in return. In many things we have differed widely in our opinions: I might be wrong, but, like a loving friend, with more wisdom and better temper, you should have put me right. Yet I for most part put up with what pears me to the heart, for unluckily I have an excelent memory, and it presents all past things like a reflecting glass that loses not a tint. I have been exercizing all my wisdom to bear whatever in futter happens, being resolv'd to imitate the seven wise women of Reading, and be dumb. 'A soft word turns away wrath, and grievous words stir up strife.' I hope to go as quietly out of the world as I came into it; the first sound of my voice was crying, and the last will be the same, but no words shall be uttered. I believe 'I'll be by strangers honour'd and by strangers mourn'd', so the last day will be as happy as the first.' I have retir'd pretty much from the world for these last three years, and I find I can keep a resolution. The first seven years I liv'd here my life was uncommonly retir'd for my age; even that sometimes you did not respect as I might have expected, but then I laid a foundation for the respect of the world, which has done me justice. I have only to think what is right, and well do I know I have resolution to go through any plan I lay down.

"You say, my dear, we are never more to part, so that I look on this as the last letter I will ever write you, and as such you may think it a serious one. My spirits are not very good at present, but that nobody will find out who sees me for an hour or two, which is a proof how good my natural spirits have been. I never had a gossop to run to on trifling occasions, nor have I ever fallen out with a friend. Thank God! my children are all good, and I hope my presep and example will not be forgot by them. Your and their happiness has been the sole study of my life. They are now all able to think for themselves. Long may your life and and health be preserv'd! it is the most sincere prayer I have, and I'm sure all your children join in my prayers, who ever am, my dearest love, your affectionate wife,

"ISABELLA STRANGE."

We give two additional extracts as a finale to our notice of these memoirs. A friend of Sir Robert Strange's family thus writes:

"I was very happy with Sir Robert Strange. I never saw so pleasant an equal-temperd agreeable man in my life, and so modest. His wife and he are the very opposite; for she is all fancy, fire, and flash, yet very steady to the main chance; but he admires her, and is so well amused with her fancys that, when silent, he starts a subject to make her shine."

And the compiler adds:

"In 1803, Lady Strange, after surviving 'the

most beloved husband that ever a virtuous wife could boast of, with whom I lived most happy forty-five years,' thus describes herself: 'My health is excellent; I have no cough; my cheeks are blooming; I have still two teeth, and several brown hairs in my head. I could dance at any of my children's weddings.' This is a tolerably satisfactory bulletin of health at eighty-four; but ere long the energetic old lady found her limbs failing, and at last crossed the room with difficulty. She is said to have died from refusing to be bled, exclaiming in the rich vernacular of her contemporaries, who spoke Scotch, although they endeavored to write in English, 'Na; if it please God to tak me, it maun be sae!' The event was thus recorded in one of the periodicals: 'Died, on the 28th February last (1806), at her house at East Acton, in the 87th year of her age, Lady Strange, relict of the late Sir Robert Strange, whose name has been justly celebrated by the admirers of the Fine Arts in every country in Europe. The lively and entertaining conversation of the lady whose death we announce, will be long remembered, and the loss of it regretted by her numerous and respectable acquaintance. At so late a period in life she retained all the energy of an active and vigorous mind, and united to the dignity of age the vivacity of youth. Her whole life was usefully and actively employed for the benefit as well of her own family as for that of those in whom she took an interest. She was equally distinguished by purity of morals, integrity of principles, and excellence of understanding.'

THE OLD FOREST.

One fine day, while idly straying,
Came I to an ancient wood,
Where the trees were fast decaying,
In their realms of solitude.
Mystic cypresses were stooping,
Dimly in the weird-like gloom;
Shadowy boughs were lowly drooping,
Like the willows o'er a tomb.

Lofty pines and oaks primeval,
Upward high their branches bore;
Rugged yews that seemed coeval
With the "saintly days of yore,"
Stood in solemn silence, saving
Rustling leaves that fluttered low
On the dark boughs dimly waving
O'er their sepulchres below.

Long I wandered 'till the slanting
Sunbeams bathed in misty gold,
The forest and a scene enchanting
To my vision did unfold.
Streaming richly through the pendant
Spray that waved in motley-green;
Lighting up each nook resplendent,
'Till it looked a magic scene.

Long I gazed with admiration
On the woodland thus arrayed,
Changing in its transformation
Glorious tints of light and shade.
Twilight shadows gathered round me,
Still I lingered in the wood,
Chained by beauty's spell that bound me
To its peaceful solitude.

Shadows deepened into sable
Hues that haunt the rayless night;
Scarcely longer was I able
To discern a ray of light:
Till at last the wild charm spurning,
As the night still darker grew,
Homeward then my footsteps turning,
To the forest bade adieu.