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SPIRIT OF "THE ANNUALS" FOR 1828

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Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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**SPIRIT OF "THE
ANNUALS" FOR 1828**

Our readers have annually anticipated a high treat from this splendid intellectual banquet, served up by some of the master¹ spirits of the age.

We doubt whether the comparison is refined enough for the fair authoresses; but our fancy has led us to class their contributions to the present feast as follow:—

¹ We hope this epithet will not be considered ungentle—for, to say the truth, the *ladies* have contributed the best poetical portion of the feast. This display of female talent has increased in brilliancy year after year: and the *Lords* should look to it.

Hock—Champagne, (Still and Sparkling.)

L.E.L

Hood

Bucellas

Miss Mitford

Bernard Barton

Lacrymae Christi

Mrs. Hemans

be pleasant enough as after-dinner chat, but we fear our readers will think it like cooks circulating the Bills of Fare on the morning of Lord Mayor's Day; and lest we should incur their displeasure, we shall proceed with our select *course*: but we are mere disposers.

THE LITERARY SOUVENIR

In literary talent, as well as in graphic beauty, this elegant volume stands first; and from it we have selected the subject of the above engraving, accompanied by the following

ANCIENT SONG OF VICTORY

BY MRS. HEMANS

Fill high the bowl, with Samian wine,
Our virgins dance beneath the shade.

BYRON

Lo! they come, they come!
Garlands for every shrine!
Strike lyres to greet them home;
Bring roses, pour ye wine!

Swell, swell the Dorian flute
Thro' the blue, triumphal sky!
Let the Cittern's tone salute
The Sons of Victory!

With the offering of bright blood,
They have ransomed earth and tomb,
Vineyard, and field, and flood;—
Lo! they come, they come!

Sing it where olives wave,
And by the glittering sea,
And o'er each hero's grave,—
Sing, sing, the land is free!

Mark ye the flashing oars,
And the spears that light the deep!
How the festal sunshine pours
Where the lords of battle sweep!

Each hath brought back his shield,—
Maid, greet thy lover home!
Mother, from that proud field,
Lo! thy son is come!

Who murmured of the dead?
Hush, boding voice! we know
That many a shining head
Lies in its glory low.

Breathe not those names to-day!
They shall have their praise ere long,
And a power all hearts to sway
In ever-burning song.

But now shed flowers, pour wine,
To hail the conquerors home!
Bring wreaths for every shrine—
Lo! they come, they come!

The original engraving is by Edward Goodall, from a painting by William Linton, Esq. It is altogether a rich and glorious composition, at this moment too, glowing with more than pictorial interest; and the *carmen triumphale* of the poetess is a worthy accompaniment. Among the other engravings the frontispiece and opposite page of this work are extremely rich and beautiful: *Psyche borne by the Zephyrs to the Island of Pleasure*, is full of languishing beauty; *Medora*, painted by Pickersgill and engraved by Rolls, is a delightfully placid moonlight scene; the *Declaration*, easy and graceful: there are, however, in our opinion, two decided failures in the volume, which, for the credit of the artists, had better been omitted. Our

present notices of the *literary* department must be confined to the following selection:

THE CITY OF THE DEMONS

By William Maginn, Esq.

In days of yore, there lived in the flourishing city of Cairo, a Hebrew Rabbi, by name Jochorian, who was the most learned of his nation. His fame went over the East, and the most distant people sent their young men to imbibe wisdom from his lips. He was deeply skilled in the traditions of the fathers, and his word on a disputed point was decisive. He was pious, just, temperate, and strict; but he had one vice—a love of gold had seized upon his heart, and he opened not his hand to the poor. Yet he was wealthy above most, his wisdom being to him the source of riches. The Hebrews of the city were grieved at this blemish on the wisest of their people; but though the elders of the tribes continued to reverence him for his fame, the women and children of Cairo called him by no other name than that of Rabbi Jochonan the miser.

None knew, so well as he, the ceremonies necessary for initiation into the religion of Moses; and, consequently, the exercise of those solemn offices was to him another source of gain. One day, as he walked in the fields about Cairo, conversing with a youth on the interpretation of the law, it so happened, that the angel of death smote the young man suddenly, and he

fell dead before the feet of the Rabbi, even while he was yet speaking. When the Rabbi found that the youth was dead, he rent his garments, and glorified the Lord. But his heart was touched, and the thoughts of death troubled him in the visions of the night. He felt uneasy when he reflected on his hardness to the poor, and he said, "Blessed be the name of the Lord! The first good thing that I am asked to do in that holy name, will I perform."— But he sighed, for he feared that some one might ask of him a portion of his gold.

While yet he thought upon these things, there came a loud cry at his gate.

"Awake, thou sleeper!" said the voice; "Awake! A child is in danger of death, and the mother hath sent me for thee that thou may'st do thine office."

"The night is dark and gloomy," said the Rabbi, coming to his casement, "and mine age is great; are there not younger men than I in Cairo?"

"For thee only, Rabbi Jochonan, whom some call the wise, but whom others call Rabbi Jochonan the miser, was I sent. Here is gold," said he, taking out a purse of sequins—"I want not thy labour for nothing. I adjure thee to come, in the name of the living God."

So the Rabbi thought upon the vow he had just made, and he groaned in spirit, for the purse sounded heavy.

"As thou hast adjured me by that name, I go with thee," said he to the man, "but I hope the distance is not far. Put up thy gold."

"The place is at hand," said the stranger, who was a gallant youth, in magnificent attire. "Be speedy, for time presses."

Jochonan arose, dressed himself, and accompanied the stranger, after having carefully locked up all the doors of his house, and deposited his keys in a secret place—at which the stranger smiled.

"I never remember," said the Rabbi, "so dark a night. Be thou to me as a guide, for I can hardly see the way."

"I know it well," replied the stranger with a sigh, "it is a way much frequented, and travelled hourly by many; lean upon mine arm and fear not."

They journeyed on; and though the darkness was great, yet the Rabbi could see, when it occasionally brightened, that he was in a place strange to him. "I thought," said he, "I knew all the country for leagues about Cairo, yet I know not where I am. I hope, young man," said he to his companion, "that thou hast not missed the way;" and his heart misgave him.

"Fear not," returned the stranger. "Your journey is even now done," and, as he spoke, the feet of the Rabbi slipped from under him, and he rolled down a great height. When he recovered, he found that his companion had fallen also, and stood by his side.

"Nay, young man," said the Rabbi, "if thus thou sportest with the grey hairs of age, thy days are numbered. Wo unto him who insults the hoary head!"

The stranger made an excuse, and they journeyed on some little further in silence. The darkness grew less, and the

astonished Rabbi, lifting up his eyes, found that they had come to the gates of a city which he had never before seen. Yet he knew all the cities of the land of Egypt, and he had walked but half an hour from his dwelling in Cairo. So he knew not what to think, but followed the man with trembling.

They soon entered the gates of the city, which was lighted up as if there were a festival in every house. The streets were full of revellers, and nothing but a sound of joy could be heard. But when Jochonan looked upon their faces—they were the faces of men pained within; and he saw, by the marks they bore, that they were Mazikin [demons]. He was terrified in his soul; and, by the light of the torches, he looked also upon the face of his companion, and, behold! he saw upon him too, the mark that shewed him to be a Demon. The Rabbi feared excessively—almost to fainting; but he thought it better to be silent; and sadly he followed his guide, who brought him to a splendid house, in the most magnificent quarter of the city.

"Enter here?" said the Demon to Jochonan, "for this house is mine. The lady and the child are in the upper chamber;" and, accordingly, the sorrowful Rabbi ascended the stair to find them.

The lady, whose dazzling beauty was shrouded by melancholy beyond hope, lay in bed; the child, in rich raiment, slumbered on the lap of the nurse, by her side.

"I have brought to thee, light of my eyes!" said the Demon, "Rebecca, beloved of my soul! I have brought thee Rabbi Jochonan the wise, for whom thou didst desire. Let him, then,

speedily begin his office; I shall fetch all things necessary, for he is in haste to depart."

He smiled bitterly as he said these words, looking at the Rabbi; and left the room, followed by the nurse.

When Jochonan and the lady were alone, she turned in the bed towards him, and said:—

"Unhappy man that thou art! knowest thou where thou hast been brought?"

"I do," said he, with a heavy groan; I know that I am in a city of the Mazikin."

"Know, then, further," said she, and the tears gushed from eyes brighter than the diamond, "know then, further, that no one is ever brought here, unless he hath sinned before the Lord. What my sin hath been imports not to thee—and I seek not to know thine. But here thou remainest for ever—lost, even as I am lost." And she wept again.

The Rabbi dashed his turban on the ground, and tearing his hair, exclaimed, "Wo is me! Who art thou, woman! that speakest to me thus?"

"I am a Hebrew woman," said she, "the daughter of a Doctor of the Laws in the city of Bagdad; and being brought hither, it matters not how, I am married to a prince among the Mazikin, even him who was sent for thee. And that child, whom thou sawest, is our first-born, and I could not bear the thought that the soul of our innocent babe should perish. I therefore besought my husband to try to bring hither a priest, that the law of Moses

(blessed be his memory!) should be done; and thy fame, which has spread to Bagdad, and lands further towards the rising of the sun, made me think of thee. Now my husband, though great among the Mazikin, is more just than the other Demons; and he loves me, whom he hath ruined, with a love of despair. So he said, that the name of Jochonan the wise was familiar unto him, and that he knew thou wouldst not be able to refuse. What thou hast done, to give him power over thee, is known to thyself."

"I swear, before Heaven!" said the Rabbi, "that I have ever diligently kept the law, and walked stedfastly according to the traditions of our fathers, from the day of my youth upward. I have wronged no man in word or deed, and I have daily worshipped the Lord; minutely performing all the ceremonies thereto needful."

"Nay," said the lady, "all this thou mightest have done, and more, and yet be in the power of the Demons. But time passes, for I hear the foot of my husband mounting the stair. There is one chance of thine escape."

"What is that? O lady of beauty?" said the agonized Rabbi.

"Eat not, drink not, nor take fee or reward while here; and as long as thou canst do thus, the Mazikin have no power over thee, dead or alive. Have courage, and persevere."

As she ceased from speaking, her husband entered the room, followed by the nurse, who bore all things requisite for the ministration of the Rabbi. With a heavy heart he performed his duty, and the child was numbered among the faithful. But when,

as usual, at the conclusion of the ceremony, the wine was handed round to be tasted by the child, the mother, and the Rabbi, he refused it when it came to him, saying:—

"Spare me, my lord, for I have made a vow that I fast this day; and I will not eat, neither will I drink."

"Be it as thou pleasest," said the Demon, "I will not that thou shouldst break thy vow;" and he laughed aloud.

So the poor Rabbi was taken into a chamber, looking into a garden, where he passed the remainder of the night and the day weeping, and praying to the Lord that he would deliver him from the city of Demons. But when the twelfth hour came, and the sun was set, the Prince of the Mazikin came again unto him, and said:—

"Eat now, I pray thee, for the day of thy vow is past;" and he set meat before him.

"Pardon again thy servant, my lord," said Jochonan, "in this thing. I have another vow for this day also. I pray thee be not angry with thy servant."

"I am not angry," said the Demon, "be it as thou pleasest; I respect thy vow;" and he laughed louder than before.

So the Rabbi sat another day in his chamber by the garden, weeping and praying. And when the sun had gone behind the hills, the Prince of the Mazikin again stood before him, and said:—

"Eat now, for thou must be an hungered. It was a sore vow of thine;" and he offered him daintier meats.

And Jochonan felt a strong desire to eat, but he prayed inwardly to the Lord, and the temptation passed, and he answered:—

"Excuse thy servant yet a third time, my lord, that I eat not. I have renewed my vow."

"Be it so, then," said the other; "arise, and follow me."

The Demon took a torch in his hand, and led the Rabbi through winding passages of his palace, to the door of a lofty chamber, which he opened with a key that he took from a niche in the wall. On entering the room, Jochonan saw that it was of solid silver—floor, ceiling, walls, even to the threshold and the door-posts. And the curiously carved roof, and borders of the ceiling, shone, in the torch-light, as if they were the fanciful work of frost. In the midst were heaps of silver money, piled up in immense urns of the same metal, even over the brim.

"Thou hast done me a serviceable act, Rabbi," said the Demon—"take of these what thou pleasest; ay, were it the whole."

"I cannot, my lord," said Jochonan. "I was adjured by thee to come hither in the name of God; and in that name I came, not for fee or for reward."

"Follow me," said the prince of the Mazikin; and Jochonan did so, into an inner chamber.

It was of gold, as the other was of silver. Its golden roof was supported by pillars and pilasters of gold, resting upon a golden floor. The treasures of the kings of the earth would not purchase one of the four-and-twenty vessels of golden coins, which were

disposed in six rows along the room. No wonder! for they were filled by the constant labours of the Demons of the mine. The heart of Jochonan was moved by avarice, when he saw them shining in yellow light, like the autumnal sun, as they reflected the beams of the torch. But God enabled him to persevere.

"These are thine," said the Demon; "one of the vessels which thou beholdest would make thee richest of the sons of men—and I give thee them all."

But Jochonan refused again; and the Prince of the Mazikin opened the door of a third chamber, which was called the Hall of Diamonds. When the Rabbi entered, he screamed aloud, and put his hands over his eyes; for the lustre of the jewels dazzled him, as if he had looked upon the noon-day sun. In vases of agate were heaped diamonds beyond enumeration, the smallest of which was larger than a pigeon's egg. On alabaster tables lay amethysts, topazes, rubies, beryls, and all other precious stones, wrought by the hands of skilful artists, beyond power of computation. The room was lighted by a carbuncle, which, from the end of the hall, poured its ever-living light, brighter than the rays of noontide, but cooler than the gentle radiance of the dewy moon. This was a sore trial on the Rabbi; but he was strengthened from above, and he refused again.

"Thou knowest me then, I perceive, O Jochonan, son of Ben-David," said the Prince of the Mazikin; "I am a Demon who would tempt thee to destruction. As thou hast withstood so far, I tempt thee no more. Thou hast done a service which, though I

value it not, is acceptable in the sight of her whose love is dearer to me than the light of life. Sad has been that love to thee, my Rebecca! Why should I do that which would make thy cureless grief more grievous? You have yet another chamber to see," said he to Jochonan, who had closed his eyes, and was praying fervently to the Lord, beating his breast.

Far different from the other chambers, the one into which the Rabbi was next introduced, was a mean and paltry apartment, without furniture. On its filthy walls hung innumerable bunches of rusty keys, of all sizes, disposed without order. Among them, to the astonishment of Jochonan, hung the keys of his own house, those which he had put to hide when he came on this miserable journey, and he gazed upon them intently.

"What dost thou see," said the Demon, "that makes thee look so eagerly? Can he who has refused silver, and gold, and diamonds, be moved by a paltry bunch of rusty iron?"

"They are mine own, my lord," said the Rabbi, "them will I take, if they be offered me."

"Take them, then," said the Demon, putting them into his hand;—"thou may'st depart. But, Rabbi, open not thy house only, when thou returnest to Cairo, but thy heart also. That thou didst not open it before, was that which gave me power over thee. It was well that thou didst one act of charity in coming with me without reward, for it has been thy salvation. Be no more Rabbi Jochonan the miser."

The Rabbi bowed to the ground, and blessed the Lord for his

escape. "But how," said he, "am I to return, for I know not the way?"

"Close thine eyes," said the Demon. He did so, and in the space of a moment, heard the voice of the Prince of Mazikin ordering him to open them again. And, behold, when he opened them, he stood in the centre of his own chamber, in his house at Cairo, with the keys in his hand.

When he recovered from his surprise, and had offered thanksgivings to God, he opened his house, and his heart also. He gave alms to the poor, he cheered the heart of the widow, and lightened the destitution of the orphan. His hospitable board was open to the stranger, and his purse was at the service of all who needed to share it. His life was a perpetual act of benevolence; and the blessings showered upon him by all, were returned bountifully upon him by the hand of God.

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