M adeira: Its Scenery, and How to See It.


Miss Ellen M. Taylor is evidently unused to the making of books. Had she consulted some experienced literary friend, she would probably have changed the mécanique and the order of her volumes. “Letters from Madeira,” now relegated to chap. ix. (pp. 187–204), belong properly to Preface and the Introduction. The reader’s appetite would have been whetted and tickled by the light fare, and in some way prepared for so solid a pièce de résistance as chap. i., “Routes to Madeira—the Union Steamship Company,” and so forth, all facts and figures. Moreover, the author would not have assigned “Trees, Fruits, Flowers, Ferns, Seaweeds” to chap. vii. (pp. 164–82), and withal have buried “The Blossoms of Madeira” in Appendix B. (pp. 245–50).

Despite these and other small blemishes, the pretty volume, whose “auriculé” covers bear the Leoc Rock and the arms of the fair Island, is sure to do well. As the Preface says, and says truly, “no place is in such want of a handbook as Madeira.” The excellent volume, Madeira, its Climate and Scenery, by (the late) Robert White and (the living) James Y. Johnson, has been long out of print. Written in 1851 (second edition) in 1860, much of the matter is necessarily obsolete. It has been proposed more than once, I am told, to reprint it, with information brought up to date. This has virtually been done by Miss Taylor, who, belonging to a family well known in Madeira and not unknown in England, has had a lifelong acquaintance with the beautiful island she describes. We have to thank her also for the map, which is an improvement upon that of White and Johnson, and for a fair plan of the city of Funchal, which her predecessors wholly ignore. The housekeeping vocabulary (pp. 32–38) will also be found useful; but it is a mistake to omit the “explanation of local appellatives” given by the older guides (Appendix J, pp. 329, 330). We might much like to see a list of words in which the Madeiran daughter differs from her Portuguese mother.

In such a volume the number of quotations must necessarily be considerable. The late Mr. William Longman’s article on Madeira (Prazer’s Magazine, August 1875) supplies the introduction with a long extract, and is again referred to in p. 114. The late Rev.

J. M. Neale, an authority on ecclesiastical architecture, depines in eight pages the Punctual Cathedral, which has been so splendidly neglected by former writers. “The fossil bed of Madeira can best be described by giving Darwin’s account in the New Zealand (1;) and some Particulars about the Islands are condensed (pp. 156–58) from Dr. Hawksworth’s account of Cook’s first voyage. The Insecta Maderensis of Mr. T. Vernon Volckanson is also pressed into the service (p. 134–45), though it ends with such a monster platistephe (itilicized withal) as “happy and wise is the man to whose mind a tripex existeth not.” This borrowing is inexcusable. Even in the first century Humboldt assured us that the subject of Madeira had been worn threadbare, and proceeded at once to indite a rather lengthy account of Sylvania, the Isle of Wood.

The reader will take pleasure in chap. vi., “Inhabitants— Occupations—Sugar-Canes—Vines—Vineyards—Manufactures—Public Works.” “Festa;” and the expert will regret only that Miss Taylor has not made more extensive use of her local knowledge.

In the matter of derivation, the origin of Malvasia originally Monemvasia (μονή ἔμπαισι = simple entrance) or Minas island, will be new to many. Some account of the old Anglo-Madeiran society and the Consuls who succeeded John Carter, the first appointment in 1686, would also have been interesting. This, too, was the place for notes on the peculiar cookery and the folklore of the Madeirenses. Chap. vii., on rides, excursions, and pedestrian tours, would also bear further detail. On the other hand, the history of the discovery of Madeira and its neighbours, taken from an anonymous account written at the beginning of the century, and from the Sauvages du Terra (Longies for the Land) of the learned Jesuit Dr. Gaspar Frutuoso, repeats all the old and exploded fabrications about the exploration, utterly neglecting the French and Spanish claims in deference to the apocryphal Robert à Machim and the impossible pilot Juan Morales, chez Juas des Amores.

It has often been remarked that English who live much out of England write and speak a peculiar English. Madeira has been carefully corrected; yet there is a redundancy of “very,” and the unfortunate adverb “only” is usually made to qualify the wrong word. When, too, will ladies learn that “each other” and “one another” are not synonyms; that “love each other” and “love one another” mean very different things.

But there are trifles, and for the most part the writing is fairly good. The following extract from the “Letters” (p. 210) will show it at its best—

“We were then close to the Homen em pe (the man standing), a most singular rugged mass of basaltic rock, forty feet high, and standing alone, rising out of the turf. We got into our hammocks again for the steep ascent. Dawn was fairly breaking when we reached the top. The opening day came quickly on; the images of public spectacles were transformed as by magic into every shade of glorious gold and crimson. Soon every mountain top brightened as if gladdened by the fact-

coming day, and their rosettes, jagged pinacals contrasted well with the deep azure sky above. We felt spell-bound, and for some moment too much beauty for the mind to endure. The deep emerald beauty of the come before us, the thick black trees, and the hammock-bearers seemed to feel the same, and all felt that, for a while, silent contemplation was most harmonious with the sublimity and marvellous beauty of those moments. As the sun emerged from its gorgeous bed of crimson, green and golden clouds, it shone forth in all its majesty, lifting up with golden edges the layers of mist, heavy cloud which lay in a mass the horizon all around us. Thus soon turned down to the sober grays and whites of stay, till at sunset, perecience in bidding the ended day farewell, they will be closed again in all their glory, and then each colour gradually will merge again into the other as if unwilling to give place to the shades of night. One sum of. I saw from the N. Road, near Funchal, never shall forget, when the hands of rosy cloud melted into pale gold, and those again into the most exquisite soft green. Such, I fancy, must often be the effect seen from Pico Ruivo.”

We can hardly expect a resident on the island to enter into its serious grievances of taxation and repressed emigration. Suffice it here to say the unfortunate peasant can hardly afford his poor meal of milka, or Indian corn. And the poor man last out had out his “manif stock” destiny—that of being an elfin orchard for Northern Europe and a kitchen-garden for the Gold Coast and for the 800 ships, steamers, and sailors which annually anchor in her dangerous roadsteads miscalculated a harbour. A casual visitor may speak with some unkindness upon such delicate subjects as the maladministration of taxes; and this shall be done at the earliest opportunity.

—RICHARD F. BURTON.

Records of Later Life. In 2 vols. By Frances Anne Kemble. (Bentley.)

The appearance of three more volumes of Mrs. Kemble’s history of her past life is the best proof of the popularity of her predecessors; and the fact that the latest issue only covers a period of fourteen years, from 1831 to 1845, is probably an indication of the publication at some future date of another series of volumes.

In this country Mrs. Kemble was admitted into the most cultivated society of fifty years since, and she settled in America at a time when life in New England was less familiar to the English world than it is now. Still, if every accomplished lady who has enjoyed the good fortune of meeting some of the leaders of English thought and of visiting new countries were to narrate her recollections in a dozen volumes, the shelves of the circulating libraries would cry aloud for enlargement. The letters of Mrs. Kemble are sprightly and unaffected, showing a candid and thoughtful mind, and they deserve a considerable measure of success. This year, however, has been a year of Reminiscences and Recollections, and these volumes will have to battle for dear life with some vigorous rivals.

When the records open, her author had been “a wife nearly five moral months” and was on her way to her new home in America. A sentence or two in the first twenty pages shows herchanger of disposition. She had not met Miss Martineau, and somewhat distrusted both her reception by “that enlightened and clever