

## THE BATTALION.

Jessica.

T. L. S.

A STERN old Jew who loved money more than all else save life; a lovely blue-eyed damsel, caged up from her very infancy—caged up because her father was too greedy to supply the little money requisite for his daughter's pleasure; a handsome young gentleman whose sentimental eye is caught by the maiden's beauty and purity: Paint these on the canvas of thought, and say if there is a single shade indicating wrong in the girl's having made a breach in her filial affection. Critics may say Jessica broke one of the ten commandments, and on the strength of this, try to make out her character false. But can we call this Jew, this dog Shylock, a father? Sire he was, but we cannot apply the tenderness, the love for one's offspring, in short the manliness which goes with the word father, to such an inexorable character as Shylock's.

Jessica, though properly kept subordinate to Portia, is "a most beautiful pagan—a most sweet Jew." In the words of Mrs. Jameson, "she cannot be called a sketch—or if a sketch, she is like one of those dashed off in glowing colours from the rainbow palette of a Reubens, she has a rich tinge of Orientalism shed over her, worthy of her Eastern origin." There is not an utterance of Jessica's which better expresses the state of her home affairs than the one to the departing Launcelot:

"I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so;  
Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil,  
Did'st rob it of some taste of tediousness;  
But fare the well; there is a ducat for thee:  
And Launcelot, soon at supper shalt thou see Lo-  
renzo,  
Who is thy new master's guest;