ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

EUGENE ARAM — COMPLETE

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

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Бульвер-Литтон Э. Д.

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Содержание

Baron Edward Bulwer Lytton
Eugene Aram — Complete

TO SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART., ETC.

SIR,—It has long been my ambition to add some humble tribute to the offerings laid upon the shrine of your genius. At each succeeding book that I have given to the world, I have paused to consider if it were worthy to be inscribed with your great name, and at each I have played the procrastinator, and hoped for that morrow of better desert which never came. But 'defluat amnis', —the time runs on; and I am tired of waiting for the ford which the tides refuse. I seize, then, the present opportunity, not as the best, but as the only one I can be sure of commanding, to express that affectionate admiration with which you have inspired me in common with all your contemporaries, and which a French writer has not ungracefully termed "the happiest prerogative of genius." As a Poet and as a Novelist your fame has attained to that height in which praise has become superfluous; but in the character of the writer there seems to me a yet higher claim to veneration than in that of the writings. The example your genius sets us, who can emulate? The example your moderation bequeaths to us, who shall forget? That nature must indeed be gentle which has conciliated the envy that pursues intellectual greatness, and left without an enemy a man who has no living equal in renown.

You have gone for a while from the scenes you have immortalized, to regain, we trust, the health which has been impaired by your noble labors or by the manly struggles with adverse fortunes which have not found the frame as indomitable as the mind. Take with you the prayers of all whom your genius, with playful art, has soothed in sickness, or has strengthened, with generous precepts, against the calamities of life.

[Written at the time of Sir W. Scott's visit to Italy, after the great blow to his health and fortunes.]

"Navis quae, tibi creditum
Debes Virgilium...
Reddas incolumem!"

"O ship, thou owest to us Virgil! Restore in
safety him whom we intrusted to thee."

You, I feel assured, will not deem it presumptuous in one who, to that bright and undying flame which now streams from the gray hills of Scotland,—the last halo with which you have crowned her literary glories,—has turned from his first childhood with a deep and unrelaxing devotion; you, I feel assured, will not deem it presumptuous in him to inscribe an idle work with your illustrious name,—a work which, however worthless in itself, assumes something of value in his eyes when thus rendered a tribute of respect to you.

THE AUTHOR OF "EUGENE ARAM."

LONDON, December 22, 1831.

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1831

Since, dear Reader, I last addressed thee, in “Paul Clifford,” nearly two years have elapsed, and somewhat more than four years since, in “Pelham,” our familiarity first began. The Tale which I now submit to thee differs equally from the last as from the first of those works; for of the two evils, perhaps it is even better to disappoint thee in a new style than to weary thee with an old. With the facts on which the tale of “Eugene Aram” is founded, I have exercised the common and fair license of writers of fiction it is chiefly the more homely parts of the real story that have been altered; and for what I have added, and what omitted, I have the sanction of all established authorities, who have taken greater liberties with characters yet more recent, and far more protected by historical recollections. The book was, for the most part, written in the early part of the year, when the interest which the task created in the Author was undivided by other subjects of excitement, and he had leisure enough not only to be ‘nescio quid meditans nugarum,’ but also to be ‘totes in illis.’

> [“Not only to be meditating I know not what of trifles, but also to be wholly engaged on them.”]

I originally intended to adapt the story of Eugene Aram to the Stage. That design was abandoned when more than half completed; but I wished to impart to this Romance something of the nature of Tragedy,—something of the more transferable of its qualities. Enough of this: it is not the Author’s wishes, but the Author’s books that the world will judge him by. Perhaps, then (with this I conclude), in the dull monotony of public affairs, and in these long winter evenings, when we gather round the fire, prepared for the gossip’s tale, willing to indulge the fear and to believe the legend, perhaps, dear Reader, thou mayest turn, not reluctantly, even to these pages, for at least a newer excitement than the Cholera, or for momentary relief from the everlasting discussion on “the Bill.” [The year of the Reform Bill.]

LONDON, December 22, 1831.

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1840

The strange history of Eugene Aram had excited my interest and wonder long before the present work was composed or conceived. It so happened that during Aram's residence at Lynn his reputation for learning had attracted the notice of my grandfather,—a country gentleman living in the same county, and of more intelligence and accomplishments than, at that day, usually characterized his class. Aram frequently visited at Heydon (my grandfather's house), and gave lessons—probably in no very elevated branches of erudition—to the younger members of the family. This I chanced to hear when I was on a visit in Norfolk some two years before this novel was published; and it tended to increase the interest with which I had previously speculated on the phenomena of a trial which, take it altogether, is perhaps the most remarkable in the register of English crime. I endeavored to collect such anecdotes of Aram's life and manners as tradition and hearsay still kept afloat. These anecdotes were so far uniform that they all concurred in representing him as a person who, till the detection of the crime for which he was sentenced, had appeared of the mildest character and the most unexceptionable morals. An invariable gentleness and patience in his mode of tuition—qualities then very uncommon at school—had made him so beloved by his pupils at Lynn that, in after life, there was scarcely one of them who did not persist in the belief of his innocence.

His personal and moral peculiarities, as described in these pages, are such as were related to me by persons who had heard him described by his contemporaries, the calm, benign countenance; the delicate health; the thoughtful stoop; the noiseless step; the custom, not uncommon with scholars and absent men, of muttering to himself; a singular eloquence in conversation, when once roused from silence; an active tenderness and charity to the poor, with whom he was always ready to share his own scanty means; an apparent disregard for money, except when employed in the purchase of books; an utter indifference to the ambition usually accompanying self-taught talent, whether to better the condition or to increase the repute: these, and other traits of the character portrayed in the novel, are, as far as I can rely on my information, faithful to the features of the original.

That a man thus described—so benevolent that he would rob his own necessities to administer to those of another, so humane that he would turn aside from the worm in his path—should have been guilty of the foulest of human crimes, namely, murder for the sake of gain; that a crime thus committed should have been so episodical and apart from the rest of his career that, however it might rankle in his conscience, it should never have hardened his nature; that through a life of some duration, none of the errors, none of the vices, which would seem essentially to belong to a character capable of a deed so black, from motives apparently so sordid, should have been discovered or suspected,—all this presents all anomaly in human conduct so rare and surprising that it would be difficult to find any subject more adapted for that metaphysical speculation and analysis, in order to indulge which, Fiction, whether in the drama or the higher class of romance, seeks its materials and grounds its lessons in the chronicles of passion and crime.

> [For I put wholly out of question the excuse of jealousy, as unsupported by any evidence, never hinted at by Aram himself (at least on any sufficient authority), and at variance with the only fact which the trial establishes; namely, that the robbery was the crime planned, and the cause, whether accidental or otherwise, of the murder.]

The guilt of Eugene Aram is not that of a vulgar ruffian; it leads to views and considerations vitally and wholly distinct from those with which profligate knavery and brutal cruelty revolt and displease us in the literature of Newgate and the hulks. His crime does, in fact, belong to those startling paradoxes which the poetry of all countries, and especially of our own, has always delighted to contemplate and examine. Whenever crime appears the aberration and monstrous product of a great intellect or of a nature ordinarily virtuous, it becomes not only the subject for genius, which

deals with passions, to describe, but a problem for philosophy, which deals with actions, to investigate and solve; hence the Macbeths and Richards, the Iagos and Othellos. My regret, therefore, is not that I chose a subject unworthy of elevated fiction, but that such a subject did not occur to some one capable of treating it as it deserves; and I never felt this more strongly than when the late Mr. Godwin (in conversing with me after the publication of this romance) observed that he had always thought the story of Eugene Aram peculiarly adapted for fiction, and that he had more than once entertained the notion of making it the foundation of a novel. I can well conceive what depth and power that gloomy record would have taken from the dark and inquiring genius of the author of "Caleb Williams." In fact, the crime and trial of Eugene Aram arrested the attention and engaged the conjectures of many of the most eminent men of his own time. His guilt or innocence was the matter of strong contest; and so keen and so enduring was the sensation created by an event thus completely distinct from the ordinary annals of human crime that even History turned aside from the sonorous narrative of the struggles of parties and the feuds of kings to commemorate the learning and the guilt of the humble schoolmaster of Lynn. Did I want any other answer to the animadversions of commonplace criticism, it might be sufficient to say that what the historian relates the novelist has little right to disdain.

Before entering on this romance, I examined with some care the probabilities of Aram's guilt; for I need scarcely perhaps observe that the legal evidence against him is extremely deficient,—furnished almost entirely by one (Houseman) confessedly an accomplice of the crime and a partner in the booty, and that in the present day a man tried upon evidence so scanty and suspicious would unquestionably escape conviction. Nevertheless, I must frankly own that the moral evidence appeared to me more convincing than the legal; and though not without some doubt, which, in common with many, I still entertain of the real facts of the murder, I adopted that view which, at all events, was the best suited to the higher purposes of fiction. On the whole, I still think that if the crime were committed by Aram, the motive was not very far removed from one which led recently to a remarkable murder in Spain. A priest in that country, wholly absorbed in learned pursuits, and apparently of spotless life, confessed that, being debarred by extreme poverty from prosecuting a study which had become the sole passion of his existence, he had reasoned himself into the belief that it would be admissible to rob a very dissolute, worthless man if he applied the money so obtained to the acquisition of a knowledge which he could not otherwise acquire, and which he held to be profitable to mankind. Unfortunately, the dissolute rich man was not willing to be robbed for so excellent a purpose; he was armed and he resisted. A struggle ensued, and the crime of homicide was added to that of robbery. The robbery was premeditated; the murder was accidental. But he who would accept some similar interpretation of Aram's crime must, to comprehend fully the lessons which belong to so terrible a picture of frenzy and guilt, consider also the physical circumstances and condition of the criminal at the time,—severe illness, intense labor of the brain, poverty bordering upon famine, the mind preternaturally at work devising schemes and excuses to arrive at the means for ends ardently desired. And all this duly considered, the reader may see the crime bodying itself out from the shades and chimeras of a horrible hallucination,—the awful dream of a brief but delirious and convulsed disease. It is thus only that we can account for the contradiction of one deed at war with a whole life, —blasting, indeed, forever the happiness, but making little revolution in the pursuits and disposition of the character. No one who has examined with care and thoughtfulness the aspects of Life and Nature but must allow that in the contemplation of such a spectacle, great and most moral truths must force themselves on the notice and sink deep into the heart. The entanglements of human reasoning; the influence of circumstance upon deeds; the perversion that may be made, by one self-palter with the Fiend, of elements the most glorious; the secret effect of conscience in frustrating all for which the crime was done, leaving genius without hope, knowledge without fruit, deadening benevolence into mechanism, tainting love itself with terror and suspicion,—such reflections (leading, with subtler minds, to many more vast and complicated theorems in the consideration of our nature, social and

individual) arise out of the tragic moral which the story of Eugene Aram (were it but adequately treated) could not fail to convey.

BRUSSELS, August, 1840.

PREFACE TO THE PRESENT EDITION

If none of my prose works have been so attacked as “Eugene Aram,” none have so completely triumphed over attack. It is true that, whether from real or affected ignorance of the true morality of fiction, a few critics may still reiterate the old commonplace charges of “selecting heroes from Newgate,” or “investing murderers with interest;” but the firm hold which the work has established in the opinion of the general public, and the favor it has received in every country where English literature is known, suffice to prove that, whatever its faults, it belongs to that legitimate class of fiction which illustrates life and truth, and only deals with crime as the recognized agency of pity and terror in the conduct of tragic narrative. All that I would say further on this score has been said in the general defence of my writings which I put forth two years ago; and I ask the indulgence of the reader if I repeat myself:—

> “Here, unlike the milder guilt of Paul Clifford, the author was not to imply reform to society, nor open in this world atonement and pardon to the criminal. As it would have been wholly in vain to disguise, by mean tamperings with art and truth, the ordinary habits of life and attributes of character which all record and remembrance ascribed to Eugene Aram; as it would have defeated every end of the moral inculcated by his guilt, to portray, in the caricature of the murderer of melodrama, a man immersed in study, of whom it was noted that he turned aside from the worm in his path,—so I have allowed to him whatever contrasts with his inexpiable crime have been recorded on sufficient authority. But I have invariably taken care that the crime itself should stand stripped of every sophistry, and hideous to the perpetrator as well as to the world. Allowing all by which attention to his biography may explain the tremendous paradox of fearful guilt in a man aspiring after knowledge, and not generally inhumane; allowing that the crime came upon him in the partial insanity produced by the combining circumstances of a brain overwrought by intense study, disturbed by an excited imagination and the fumes of a momentary disease of the reasoning faculty, consumed by the desire of knowledge, unwholesome and morbid, because coveted as an end, not a means, added to the other physical causes of mental aberration to be found in loneliness, and want verging upon famine,—all these, which a biographer may suppose to have conspired to his crime, have never been used by the novelist as excuses for its enormity, nor indeed, lest they should seem as excuses, have they ever been clearly presented to the view. The moral consisted in showing more than the mere legal punishment at the close. It was to show how the consciousness of the deed was to exclude whatever humanity of character preceded and belied it from all active exercise, all social confidence; how the knowledge of the bar between the minds of others and his own deprived the criminal of all motive to ambition, and blighted knowledge of all fruit.
>
> Miserable in his affections, barren in his intellect; clinging to solitude, yet accursed in it; dreading as a danger the fame he had once coveted; obscure in spite of learning, hopeless in spite of love, fruitless and joyless in his life, calamitous and shameful in his end,—surely such is no palliative of crime, no dalliance and toying with the grimness of evil! And surely to any ordinary comprehension and candid mind such is the moral conveyed by the fiction of ‘Eugene Aram.’”—[A word to the Public, 1847]

In point of composition “Eugene Aram” is, I think, entitled to rank amongst the best of my fictions. It somewhat humiliates me to acknowledge that neither practice nor study has enabled me

to surpass a work written at a very early age, in the skilful construction and patient development of plot; and though I have since sought to call forth higher and more subtle passions, I doubt if I have ever excited the two elementary passions of tragedy,—namely, pity and terror,—to the same degree. In mere style, too, "Eugene Aram," in spite of certain verbal oversights, and defects in youthful taste (some of which I have endeavored to remove from the present edition), appears to me unexcelled by any of my later writings,—at least in what I have always studied as the main essential of style in narrative; namely, its harmony with the subject selected and the passions to be moved,—while it exceeds them all in the minuteness and fidelity of its descriptions of external nature. This indeed it ought to do, since the study of external nature is made a peculiar attribute of the principal character, whose fate colors the narrative. I do not know whether it has been observed that the time occupied by the events of the story is conveyed through the medium of such descriptions. Each description is introduced, not for its own sake, but to serve as a calendar marking the gradual changes of the seasons as they bear on to his doom the guilty worshipper of Nature. And in this conception, and in the care with which it has been followed out, I recognize one of my earliest but most successful attempts at the subtler principles of narrative art.

In this edition I have made one alteration somewhat more important than mere verbal correction. On going, with maturer judgment, over all the evidences on which Aram was condemned, I have convinced myself that though an accomplice in the robbery of Clarke, he was free both from the premeditated design and the actual deed of murder. The crime, indeed, would still rest on his conscience and insure his punishment, as necessarily incidental to the robbery in which he was an accomplice, with Houseman; but finding my convictions, that in the murder itself he had no share, borne out by the opinion of many eminent lawyers by whom I have heard the subject discussed, I have accordingly so shaped his confession to Walter.

Perhaps it will not be without interest to the reader if I append to this preface an authentic specimen of Eugene Aram's composition, for which I am indebted to the courtesy of a gentleman by whose grandfather it was received, with other papers (especially a remarkable "Outline of a New Lexicon"), during Aram's confinement in York prison. The essay I select is, indeed, not without value in itself as a very curious and learned illustration of Popular Antiquities, and it serves also to show not only the comprehensive nature of Aram's studies and the inquisitive eagerness of his mind, but also the fact that he was completely self-taught; for in contrast to much philological erudition, and to passages that evince considerable mastery in the higher resources of language, we may occasionally notice those lesser inaccuracies from which the writings of men solely self-educated are rarely free,—indeed Aram himself, in sending to a gentleman an elegy on Sir John Armitage, which shows much, but undisciplined, power of versification, says, "I send this elegy, which, indeed, if you had not had the curiosity to desire, I could not have had the assurance to offer, scarce believing I, who was hardly taught to read, have any abilities to write."

THE MELSUPPER AND SHOUTING THE CHURN

These rural entertainments and usages were formerly more general all over England than they are at present, being become by time, necessity, or avarice, complex, confined, and altered. They are commonly insisted upon by the reapers as customary things, and a part of their due for the toils of the harvest, and complied with by their masters perhaps more through regards of interest than inclination; for should they refuse them the pleasures of this much-expected time, this festal night, the youth especially, of both sexes would decline serving them for the future, and employ their labors for others, who would promise them the rustic joys of the harvest-supper, mirth and music, dance and song. These feasts appear to be the relics of Pagan ceremonies or of Judaism, it is hard to say which, and carry in them more meaning and are of far higher antiquity than is generally apprehended. It is true the subject is more curious than important, and I believe altogether untouched; and as it seems to

be little understood, has been as little adverted to. I do not remember it to have been so much as the subject of a conversation. Let us make, then, a little excursion into this field, for the same reason men sometimes take a walk. Its traces are discoverable at a very great distance of time from ours,—nay, seem as old as a sense of joy for the benefit of plentiful harvests and human gratitude to the eternal Creator for His munificence to men. We hear it under various names in different counties, and often in the same county; as, "melsupper," "churn-supper," "harvest-supper," "harvest-home," "feast of in-gathering," etc. And perhaps this feast had been long observed, and by different tribes of people, before it became preceptive with the Jews. However, let that be as it will, the custom very lucidly appears from the following passages of S. S., Exod. xxiii. 16, "And the feast of harvest, the first-fruits of thy labors, which thou hast sown in the field." And its institution as a sacred rite is commanded in Levit. xxiii. 39: "When ye have gathered in the fruit of the land ye shall keep a feast to the Lord."

The Jews then, as is evident from hence, celebrated the feast of harvest, and that by precept; and though no vestiges of any such feast either are or can be produced before these, yet the oblation of the Primitae, of which this feast was a consequence, is met with prior to this, for we find that "Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to the Lord" (Gen. iv. 3).

Yet this offering of the first-fruits, it may well be supposed was not peculiar to the Jews either at the time of, or after, its establishment by their legislator; neither the feast in consequence of it. Many other nations, either in imitation of the Jews, or rather by tradition from their several patriarchs, observed the rite of offering their Primitiae, and of solemnizing a festival after it, in religious acknowledgment for the blessing of harvest, though that acknowledgment was ignorantly misapplied in being directed to a secondary, not the primary, fountain of this benefit,—namely to Apollo, or the Sun.

For Callimachus affirms that these Primitiae were sent by the people of every nation to the temple of Apollo in Delos, the most distant that enjoyed the happiness of corn and harvest, even by the Hyperboreans in particular,—Hymn to Apol., "Bring the sacred sheafs and the mystic offerings."

Herodotus also mentions this annual custom of the Hyperboreans, remarking that those of Delos talk of "Holy things tied up in sheaf of wheat conveyed from the Hyperboreans." And the Jews, by the command of their law, offered also a sheaf: "And shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits of the harvest unto the priest."

This is not introduced in proof of any feast observed by the people who had harvests, but to show the universality of the custom of offering the Primitiae, which preceded this feast. But yet it maybe looked upon as equivalent to a proof; for as the offering and the feast appear to have been always and intimately connected in countries affording records, so it is more than probable they were connected too in countries which had none, or none that ever survived to our times. An entertainment and gayety were still the concomitants of these rites, which with the vulgar, one may pretty truly suppose, were esteemed the most acceptable and material part of them, and a great reason of their having subsisted through such a length of ages, when both the populace and many of the learned too have lost sight of the object to which they had been originally directed. This, among many other ceremonies of the heathen worship, became disused in some places and retained in others, but still continued declining after the promulgation of the Gospel. In short, there seems great reason to conclude that this feast, which was once sacred to Apollo, was constantly maintained, when a far less valuable circumstance, —i.e., "shouting the churn,"—is observed to this day by the reapers, and from so old an era; for we read of this exclamation, Isa. xvi. 9: "For the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen;" and again, ver. 10: "And in the vineyards there shall be no singing, their shouting shall be no shouting." Hence then, or from some of the Phoenician colonies, is our traditionary "shouting the churn." But it seems these Orientals shouted both for joy of their harvest of grapes and of corn. We have no quantity of the first to occasion so much joy as does our plenty of the last; and I do not remember to have heard whether their vintages abroad are attended with this custom. Bread or cakes compose part of the Hebrew offering (Levit. xxiii. 13), and a cake thrown upon the head of the

victim was also part of the Greek offering to Apollo (see Hom., Il., a), whose worship was formerly celebrated in Britain, where the May-pole yet continues one remain of it. This they adorned with garlands on May-day, to welcome the approach of Apollo, or the Sun, towards the North, and to signify that those flowers were the product of his presence and influence. But upon the progress of Christianity, as was observed above, Apollo lost his divinity again, and the adoration of his deity subsided by degrees. Yet so permanent is custom that this rite of the harvest-supper, together with that of the May-pole (of which last see Voss. de Orig. and Prag. Idolatr., 1, 2), have been preserved in Britain; and what had been anciently offered to the god, the reapers as prudently ate up themselves.

At last the use of the meal of the new corn was neglected, and the supper, so far as meal was concerned, was made indifferently of old or new corn, as was most agreeable to the founder. And here the usage itself accounts for the name of "Melsupper" (where mel signifies meal, or else the instrument called with us a "Mell," wherewith antiquity reduced their corn to meal in a mortar, which still amounts to the same thing); for provisions of meal, or of corn in furmety, etc., composed by far the greatest part in these elder and country entertainments, perfectly conformable to the simplicity of those times, places, and persons, however meanly they may now be looked upon. And as the harvest was last concluded with several preparations of meal, or brought to be ready for the "mell," this term became, in a translated signification, to mean the last of other things; as, when a horse comes last in the race, they often say in the North, "He has got the mell."

All the other names of this country festivity sufficiently explain themselves, except "Churn-supper;" and this is entirely different from "Melsupper:" but they generally happen so near together that they are frequently confounded. The "Churn-supper" was always provided when all was shorn, but the "Melsupper" after all was got in. And it was called the "Churn-supper" because, from immemorial times, it was customary to produce in a churn a great quantity of cream, and to circulate it by dishfuls to each of the rustic company, to be eaten with bread. And here sometimes very extraordinary execution has been done upon cream. And though this custom has been disused in many places, and agreeably commuted for by ale, yet it survives still, and that about Whitby and Scarborough in the East, and round about Gisburn, etc., in Craven, in the West. But perhaps a century or two more will put an end to it, and both the thing and name shall die. Vicarious ale is now more approved, and the tankard almost everywhere politely preferred to the Churn.

This Churn (in our provincial pronunciation Kern) is the Hebrew Kern, or Keren, from its being circular, like most horns; and it is the Latin 'corona',—named so either from 'radii', resembling horns, as on some very ancient coins, or from its encircling the head: so a ring of people is called corona. Also the Celtic Koren, Keren, or corn, which continues according to its old pronunciation in Cornwall, etc., and our modern word horn is no more than this; the ancient hard sound of k in corn being softened into the aspirate h, as has been done in numberless instances.

The Irish Celtae also called a round stone 'clogh crene', where the variation is merely dialectic. Hence, too, our crane-berries,—i.e., round berries,—from this Celtic adjective 'crene', round.

The quotations from Scripture in Aram's original MS. were both in the Hebrew character, and their value in English sounds.

EUGENE ARAM

BOOK I

CHAPTER I.
THE VILLAGE.—ITS INHABITANTS.— AN OLD MANORHOUSE: AND AN ENGLISH FAMILY; THEIR HISTORY, INVOLVING A MYSTERIOUS EVENT

"Protected by the divinity they adored, supported by the earth which they cultivated, and at peace with themselves, they enjoyed the sweets of life, without dreading or desiring dissolution." Numa Pompilius.

In the country of—there is a sequestered hamlet, which I have often sought occasion to pass, and which I have never left without a certain reluctance and regret. It is not only (though this has a remarkable spell over my imagination) that it is the sanctuary, as it were, of a story which appears to me of a singular and fearful interest; but the scene itself is one which requires no legend to arrest the traveller's attention. I know not in any part of the world, which it has been my lot to visit, a landscape so entirely lovely and picturesque, as that which on every side of the village I speak of, you may survey. The hamlet to which I shall here give the name of Grassdale, is situated in a valley, which for about the length of a mile winds among gardens and orchards, laden with fruit, between two chains of gentle and fertile hills.

Here, singly or in pairs, are scattered cottages, which bespeak a comfort and a rural luxury, less often than our poets have described the characteristics of the English peasantry. It has been observed, and there is a world of homely, ay, and of legislative knowledge in the observation, that wherever you see a flower in a cottage garden, or a bird-cage at the window, you may feel sure that the cottagers are better and wiser than their neighbours; and such humble tokens of attention to something beyond the sterile labour of life, were (we must now revert to the past,) to be remarked in almost every one of the lowly abodes at Grassdale. The jasmine here, there the vine clustered over the threshold, not so wildly as to testify negligence; but rather to sweeten the air than to exclude it from the inmates. Each of the cottages possessed at its rear its plot of ground, apportioned to the more useful and nutritious product of nature; while the greater part of them fenced also from the unfrequented road a little spot for the lupin, the sweet pea, or the many tribes of the English rose. And it is not unworthy of remark, that the bees came in greater clusters to Grassdale than to any other part of that rich and cultivated district. A small piece of waste land, which was intersected by a brook, fringed with ozier and dwarf and fantastic pollards, afforded pasture for a few cows, and the only carrier's solitary horse. The stream itself was of no ignoble repute among the gentle craft of the Angle, the brotherhood whom our associations defend in the spite of our mercy; and this repute drew welcome and periodical itinerants to the village, who furnished it with its scanty news of the great world without, and maintained in a decorous custom the little and single hostelry of the place. Not that Peter Dealtry, the proprietor of the "Spotted Dog," was altogether contented to subsist upon the gains of his hospitable profession; he joined thereto the light cares of a small farm, held under a wealthy and an easy landlord; and being moreover honoured with the dignity of clerk to the parish, he was deemed by his neighbours a person of no small accomplishment, and no insignificant distinction. He was a little, dry, thin man,

of a turn rather sentimental than jocose; a memory well stored with fag-ends of psalms, and hymns which, being less familiar than the psalms to the ears of the villagers, were more than suspected to be his own composition; often gave a poetic and semi-religious colouring to his conversation, which accorded rather with his dignity in the church, than his post at the Spotted Dog. Yet he disliked not his joke, though it was subtle and delicate of nature; nor did he disdain to bear companionship over his own liquor, with guests less gifted and refined.

In the centre of the village you chanced upon a cottage which had been lately white-washed, where a certain preciseness in the owner might be detected in the clipped hedge, and the exact and newly mended style by which you approached the habitation; herein dwelt the beau and bachelor of the village, somewhat antiquated it is true, but still an object of great attention and some hope to the elder damsels in the vicinity, and of a respectful popularity, that did not however prohibit a joke, to the younger part of the sisterhood. Jacob Bunting, so was this gentleman called, had been for many years in the king's service, in which he had risen to the rank of corporal, and had saved and pinched together a certain small independence upon which he now rented his cottage and enjoyed his leisure. He had seen a good deal of the world, and profited in shrewdness by his experience; he had rubbed off, however, all superfluous devotion as he rubbed off his prejudices, and though he drank more often than any one else with the landlord of the Spotted Dog, he also quarrelled with him the oftenest, and testified the least forbearance at the publican's segments of psalmody. Jacob was a tall, comely, and perpendicular personage; his threadbare coat was scrupulously brushed, and his hair punctiliously plastered at the sides into two stiff obstinate-looking curls, and at the top into what he was pleased to call a feather, though it was much more like a tile. His conversation had in it something peculiar; generally it assumed a quick, short, abrupt turn, that, retrenching all superfluities of pronoun and conjunction, and marching at once upon the meaning of the sentence, had in it a military and Spartan significance, which betrayed how difficult it often is for a man to forget that he has been a corporal. Occasionally indeed, for where but in farces is the phraseology of the humorist always the same? he escaped into a more enlarged and christianlike method of dealing with the king's English, but that was chiefly noticeable, when from conversation he launched himself into lecture, a luxury the worthy soldier loved greatly to indulge, for much had he seen and somewhat had he reflected; and valuing himself, which was odd in a corporal, more on his knowledge of the world than his knowledge even of war, he rarely missed any occasion of edifying a patient listener with the result of his observations.

After you had sauntered by the veteran's door, beside which you generally, if the evening were fine, or he was not drinking with neighbour Dealtry—or taking his tea with gossip this or master that—or teaching some emulous urchins the broadsword exercise—or snaring trout in the stream—or, in short, otherwise engaged; beside which, I say, you not unfrequently beheld him sitting on a rude bench, and enjoying with half-shut eyes, crossed legs, but still unindulgently erect posture, the luxury of his pipe; you ventured over a little wooden bridge; beneath which, clear and shallow, ran the rivulet we have before honorably mentioned; and a walk of a few minutes brought you to a moderately sized and old-fashioned mansion—the manor-house of the parish. It stood at the very foot of the hill; behind, a rich, ancient, and hanging wood, brought into relief—the exceeding freshness and verdure of the patch of green meadow immediately in front. On one side, the garden was bounded by the village churchyard, with its simple mounds, and its few scattered and humble tombs. The church was of great antiquity; and it was only in one point of view that you caught more than a glimpse of its grey tower and graceful spire, so thickly and so darkly grouped the yew tree and the larch around the edifice. Opposite the gate by which you gained the house, the view was not extended, but rich with wood and pasture, backed by a hill, which; less verdant than its fellows, was covered with sheep: while you saw hard by the rivulet darkening and stealing away; till your sight, though not your ear, lost it among the woodland.

Trained up the embrowned paling on either side of the gate, were bushes of rustic fruit, and fruit and flowers (through plots of which green and winding alleys had been cut with no untasteful

hand) testified by their thriving and healthful looks, the care bestowed upon them. The main boasts of the garden were, on one side, a huge horse-chesnut tree—the largest in the village; and on the other, an arbour covered without with honeysuckles, and tapestried within by moss. The house, a grey and quaint building of the time of James I. with stone copings and gable roof, could scarcely in these days have been deemed a fitting residence for the lord of the manor. Nearly the whole of the centre was occupied by the hall, in which the meals of the family were commonly held—only two other sitting-rooms of very moderate dimensions had been reserved by the architect for the convenience or ostentation of the proprietor. An ample porch jutted from the main building, and this was covered with ivy, as the windows were with jasmine and honeysuckle; while seats were ranged inside the porch covered with many a rude initial and long-past date.

The owner of this mansion bore the name of Rowland Lester. His forefathers, without pretending to high antiquity of family, had held the dignity of squires of Grassdale for some two centuries; and Rowland Lester was perhaps the first of the race who had stirred above fifty miles from the house in which each successive lord had received his birth, or the green churchyard in which was yet chronicled his death. The present proprietor was a man of cultivated tastes; and abilities, naturally not much above mediocrity, had been improved by travel as well as study. Himself and one younger brother had been early left masters of their fate and their several portions. The younger, Geoffrey, testified a roving and dissipated turn. Bold, licentious, extravagant, unprincipled,—his career soon outstripped the slender fortunes of a cadet in the family of a country squire. He was early thrown into difficulties, but, by some means or other they never seemed to overwhelm him; an unexpected turn —a lucky adventure—presented itself at the very moment when Fortune appeared the most utterly to have deserted him.

Among these more propitious fluctuations in the tide of affairs, was, at about the age of forty, a sudden marriage with a young lady of what might be termed (for Geoffrey Lester's rank of life, and the rational expenses of that day) a very competent and respectable fortune. Unhappily, however, the lady was neither handsome in feature nor gentle in temper; and, after a few years of quarrel and contest, the faithless husband, one bright morning, having collected in his proper person whatever remained of their fortune, absconded from the conjugal hearth without either warning or farewell. He left nothing to his wife but his house, his debts, and his only child, a son. From that time to the present little had been known, though much had been conjectured, concerning the deserter. For the first few years they traced, however, so far of his fate as to learn that he had been seen once in India; and that previously he had been met in England by a relation, under the disguise of assumed names: a proof that whatever his occupations, they could scarcely be very respectable. But, of late, nothing whatsoever relating to the wanderer had transpired. By some he was imagined dead; by most he was forgotten. Those more immediately connected with him—his brother in especial, cherished a secret belief, that wherever Geoffrey Lester should chance to alight, the manner of alighting would (to use the significant and homely metaphor) be always on his legs; and coupling the wonted luck of the scapegrace with the fact of his having been seen in India, Rowland, in his heart, not only hoped, but fully expected, that the lost one would, some day or other, return home laden with the spoils of the East, and eager to shower upon his relatives, in recompense of long desertion,

"With richest hand... barbaric pearl and gold."

But we must return to the forsaken spouse.—Left in this abrupt destitution and distress, Mrs. Lester had only the resource of applying to her brother-in-law, whom indeed the fugitive had before seized many opportunities of not leaving wholly unprepared for such an application. Rowland promptly and generously obeyed the summons: he took the child and the wife to his own home, —he freed the latter from the persecution of all legal claimants,—and, after selling such effects as remained, he devoted the whole proceeds to the forsaken family, without regarding his own expenses on their behalf, ill as he was able to afford the luxury of that self-neglect. The wife did not long need the asylum of his hearth,—she, poor lady, died of a slow fever produced by irritation and

disappointment, a few months after Geoffrey's desertion. She had no need to recommend her children to their kindhearted uncle's care. And now we must glance over the elder brother's domestic fortunes.

In Rowland, the wild dispositions of his brother were so far tamed, that they assumed only the character of a buoyant temper and a gay spirit. He had strong principles as well as warm feelings, and a fine and resolute sense of honour utterly impervious to attack. It was impossible to be in his company an hour and not see that he was a man to be respected. It was equally impossible to live with him a week and not see that he was a man to be beloved. He also had married, and about a year after that era in the life of his brother, but not for the same advantage of fortune. He had formed an attachment to the portionlesss daughter of a man in his own neighbourhood and of his own rank. He wooed and won her, and for a few years he enjoyed that greatest happiness which the world is capable of bestowing—the society and the love of one in whom we could wish for no change, and beyond whom we have no desire. But what Evil cannot corrupt Fate seldom spares. A few months after the birth of a second daughter the young wife of Rowland Lester died. It was to a widowed hearth that the wife and child of his brother came for shelter. Rowland was a man of an affectionate and warm heart: if the blow did not crush, at least it changed him. Naturally of a cheerful and ardent disposition, his mood now became soberized and sedate. He shrunk from the rural gaieties and companionship he had before courted and enlivened, and, for the first time in his life, the mourner felt the holiness of solitude. As his nephew and his motherless daughters grew up, they gave an object to his seclusion and a relief to his reflections. He found a pure and unfailing delight in watching the growth of their young minds, and guiding their differing dispositions; and, as time at length enabled the to return his affection, and appreciate his cares, he became once more sensible that he had a HOME.

The elder of his daughters, Madeline, at the time our story opens, had attained the age of eighteen. She was the beauty and the boast of the whole country. Above the ordinary height, her figure was richly and exquisitely formed. So translucently pure and soft was her complexion, that it might have seemed the token of delicate health, but for the dewy and exceeding redness of her lips, and the freshness of teeth whiter than pearls. Her eyes of a deep blue, wore a thoughtful and serene expression, and her forehead, higher and broader than it usually is in women, gave promise of a certain nobleness of intellect, and added dignity, but a feminine dignity, to the more tender characteristics of her beauty. And indeed, the peculiar tone of Madeline's mind fulfilled the indication of her features, and was eminently thoughtful and high-wrought. She had early testified a remarkable love for study, and not only a desire for knowledge, but a veneration for those who possessed it. The remote corner of the county in which they lived, and the rarely broken seclusion which Lester habitually preserved from the intercourse of their few and scattered neighbours, had naturally cast each member of the little circle upon his or her own resources. An accident, some five years ago, had confined Madeline for several weeks or rather months to the house; and as the old hall possessed a very respectable share of books, she had then matured and confirmed that love to reading and reflection, which she had at a yet earlier period prematurely evinced. The woman's tendency to romance naturally tinctured her meditations, and thus, while they dignified, they also softened her mind. Her sister Ellinor, younger by two years, was of a character equally gentle, but less elevated. She looked up to her sister as a superior being. She felt pride without a shadow of envy, at her superior and surpassing beauty; and was unconsciously guided in her pursuits and predilections, by a mind she cheerfully acknowledged to be loftier than her own. And yet Ellinor had also her pretensions to personal loveliness, and pretensions perhaps that would be less reluctantly acknowledged by her own sex than those of her sister. The sunlight of a happy and innocent heart sparkled on her face, and gave a beam it gladdened you to behold, to her quick hazel eye, and a smile that broke out from a thousand dimples. She did not possess the height of Madeline, and though not so slender as to be curtailed of the roundness and feminine luxuriance of beauty, her shape was slighter, feebler, and less rich in its symmetry than her sister's. And this the tendency of the physical frame to require elsewhere support, nor to feel secure of strength, influenced perhaps her mind, and made love, and the dependence of love, more necessary

to her than to the thoughtful and lofty Madeline. The latter might pass through life, and never see the one to whom her heart could give itself away. But every village might possess a hero whom the imagination of Ellinor could clothe with unreal graces, and to whom the lovingness of her disposition might bias her affections. Both, however, eminently possessed that earnestness and purity of heart, which would have made them, perhaps in an equal degree, constant and devoted to the object of an attachment, once formed, in defiance of change and to the brink of death.

Their cousin Walter, Geoffrey Lester's son, was now in his twenty-first year; tall and strong of person, and with a face, if not regularly handsome, striking enough to be generally deemed so. High-spirited, bold, fiery, impatient; jealous of the affections of those he loved; cheerful to outward seeming, but restless, fond of change, and subject to the melancholy and pining mood common to young and ardent minds: such was the character of Walter Lester. The estates of Lester were settled in the male line, and devolved therefore upon him. Yet there were moments when he keenly felt his orphan and deserted situation; and sighed to think, that while his father perhaps yet lived, he was a dependent for affection, if not for maintenance, on the kindness of others. This reflection sometimes gave an air of sullenness or petulance to his character, that did not really belong to it. For what in the world makes a man of just pride appear so unamiable as the sense of dependence?

CHAPTER II.
A PUBLICAN, A SINNER, AND A STRANGER

"Ah, Don Alphonso, is it you? Agreeable accident! Chance presents you to my eyes where you were least expected." Gil Blas.

It was an evening in the beginning of summer, and Peter Dealtry and the ci-devant Corporal sate beneath the sign of The Spotted Dog (as it hung motionless from the bough of a friendly elm), quaffing a cup of boon companionship. The reader will imagine the two men very different from each other in form and aspect; the one short, dry, fragile, and betraying a love of ease in his unbuttoned vest, and a certain lolling, see-sawing method of balancing his body upon his chair; the other, erect and solemn, and as steady on his seat as if he were nailed to it. It was a fine, tranquil balmy evening; the sun had just set, and the clouds still retained the rosy tints which they had caught from his parting ray. Here and there, at scattered intervals, you might see the cottages peeping from the trees around them; or mark the smoke that rose from their roofs—roofs green with mosses and house-leek,—in graceful and spiral curls against the clear soft air. It was an English scene, and the two men, the dog at their feet, (for Peter Dealtry favoured a wirey stone-coloured cur, which he called a terrier,) and just at the door of the little inn, two old gossips, loitering on the threshold in familiar chat with the landlady, in cap and kerchief,—all together made a groupe equally English, and somewhat picturesque, though homely enough, in effect.

"Well, now," said Peter Dealtry, as he pushed the brown jug towards the Corporal, "this is what I call pleasant; it puts me in mind—"

"Of what?" quoth the Corporal.

"Of those nice lines in the hymn, Master Bunting.

'How fair ye are, ye little hills,
Ye little fields also;
Ye murmuring streams that sweetly run;
Ye willows in a row!'

"There is something very comfortable in sacred verses, Master Bunting; but you're a scoffer."

"Psha, man!" said the Corporal, throwing out his right leg and leaning back, with his eyes half-shut, and his chin protruded, as he took an unusually long inhalation from his pipe; "Psha, man!—send verses to the right-about—fit for girls going to school of a Sunday; full-grown men more up to snuff. I've seen the world, Master Dealtry;—the world, and be damned to you!—augh!"

"Fie, neighbour, fie! What's the good of profaneness, evil speaking and slandering?—

'Oaths are the debts your spendthrift soul must pay;
All scores are chalked against the reckoning day.'
Just wait a bit, neighbour; wait till I light my pipe."

"Tell you what," said the Corporal, after he had communicated from his own pipe the friendly flame to his comrade's; "tell you what—talk nonsense; the commander-in-chief's no Martinet—if we're all right in action, he'll wink at a slip word or two. Come, no humbug—hold jaw. D'ye think God would sooner have snivelling fellow like you in his regiment, than a man like me, clean limbed, straight as a dart, six feet one without his shoes!—baugh!"

This notion of the Corporal's, by which he would have likened the dominion of Heaven to the King of Prussia's body-guard, and only admitted the elect on account of their inches, so tickled mine host's fancy, that he leaned back in his chair, and indulged in a long, dry, obstreperous cachinnation. This irreverence mightily displeased the Corporal. He looked at the little man very sourly, and said in his least smooth accentuation:—

"What—devil—cackling at?—always grin, grin, grin—giggle, giggle, giggle—psha!"

"Why really, neighbour," said Peter, composing himself, "you must let a man laugh now and then."

"Man!" said the Corporal; "man's a noble animal! Man's a musquet, primed, loaded, ready to supply a friend or kill a foe—charge not to be wasted on every tom-tit. But you! not a musquet, but a cracker! noisy, harmless,—can't touch you, but off you go, whizz, pop, bang in one's face!—baugh!"

"Well!" said the good-humoured landlord, "I should think Master Aram, the great scholar who lives down the vale yonder, a man quite after your own heart. He is grave enough to suit you. He does not laugh very easily, I fancy."

"After my heart? Stoops like a bow!"

"Indeed he does look on the ground as he walks; when I think, I do the same. But what a marvellous man it is! I hear, that he reads the Psalms in Hebrew. He's very affable and meek-like for such a scholard."

"Tell you what. Seen the world, Master Dealtry, and know a thing or two. Your shy dog is always a deep one. Give me a man who looks me in the face as he would a cannon!"

"Or a lass," said Peter knowingly.

The grim Corporal smiled.

"Talking of lasses," said the soldier, re-filling his pipe, "what creature Miss Lester is! Such eyes!—such nose! Fit for a colonel, by God! ay, or a major-general!"

"For my part, I think Miss Ellinor almost as handsome; not so grand-like, but more lovesome!"

"Nice little thing!" said the Corporal, condescendingly. "But, zooks! whom have we here?"

This last question was applied to a man who was slowly turning from the road towards the inn. The stranger, for such he was, was stout, thick-set, and of middle height. His dress was not without pretension to a rank higher than the lowest; but it was threadbare and worn, and soiled with dust and travel. His appearance was by no means prepossessing; small sunken eyes of a light hazel and a restless and rather fierce expression, a thick flat nose, high cheekbones, a large bony jaw, from which the flesh receded, and a bull throat indicative of great strength, constituted his claims to personal attraction. The stately Corporal, without moving, kept a vigilant and suspicious eye upon the new comer, muttering to Peter,—"Customer for you; rum customer too—by Gad!"

The stranger now reached the little table, and halting short, took up the brown jug, without ceremony or preface, and emptied it at a draught.

The Corporal stared—the Corporal frowned; but before—for he was somewhat slow of speech—he had time to vent his displeasure, the stranger, wiping his mouth across his sleeve, said, in rather a civil and apologetic tone,

"I beg pardon, gentlemen. I have had a long march of it, and very tired I am."

"Humph! march," said the Corporal a little appeased, "Not in his Majesty's service—eh?"

"Not now," answered the Traveller; then, turning round to Dealtry, he said: "Are you landlord here?"

"At your service," said Peter, with the indifference of a man well to do, and not ambitious of halfpence.

"Come, then, quick—budge," said the Traveller, tapping him on the back: "bring more glasses—another jug of the October; and any thing or every thing your larder is able to produce—d'ye hear?"

Peter, by no means pleased with the briskness of this address, eyed the dusty and way-worn pedestrian from head to foot; then, looking over his shoulder towards the door, he said, as he ensconced himself yet more firmly on his seat—

"There's my wife by the door, friend; go, tell her what you want."

"Do you know," said the Traveller, in a slow and measured accent—"Do you know, master Shrivel-face, that I have more than half a mind to break your head for impertinence. You a landlord!—you keep an inn, indeed! Come, Sir, make off, or—"

"Corporal!—Corporal!" cried Peter, retreating hastily from his seat as the brawny Traveller approached menacingly towards him—"You won't see the peace broken. Have a care, friend—have a care I'm clerk to the parish—clerk to the parish, Sir—and I'll indict you for sacrilege."

The wooden features of Bunting relaxed into a sort of grin at the alarm of his friend. He puffed away, without making any reply; meanwhile the Traveller, taking advantage of Peter's hasty abandonment of his cathedrarian accommodation, seized the vacant chair, and drawing it yet closer to the table, flung himself upon it, and placing his hat on the table, wiped his brows with the air of a man about to make himself thoroughly at home.

Peter Dealtry was assuredly a personage of peaceable disposition; but then he had the proper pride of a host and a clerk. His feeling were exceedingly wounded at this cavalier treatment—before the very eyes of his wife too—what an example! He thrust his hands deep into his breeches pockets, and strutting with a ferocious swagger towards the Traveller, he said:—

"Harkye, sirrah! This is not the way folks are treated in this country: and I'd have you to know, that I'm a man what has a brother a constable."

"Well, Sir!"

"Well, Sir, indeed! Well!—Sir, it's not well, by no manner of means; and if you don't pay for the ale you drank, and go quietly about your business, I'll have you put in the stocks for a vagrant."

This, the most menacing speech Peter Dealtry was ever known to deliver, was uttered with so much spirit, that the Corporal, who had hitherto preserved silence—for he was too strict a disciplinarian to thrust himself unnecessarily into brawls,—turned approvingly round, and nodding as well as his stock would suffer him at the indignant Peter, he said: "Well done! 'fegs—you've a soul, man!—a soul fit for the forty-second! augh!—A soul above the inches of five feet two!"

There was something bitter and sneering in the Traveller's aspect as he now, regarding Dealtry, repeated—

"Vagrant—humph! And pray what is a vagrant?"

"What is a vagrant?" echoed Peter, a little puzzled.

"Yes! answer me that."

"Why, a vagrant is a man what wanders, and what has no money."

"Truly," said the stranger smiling, but the smile by no means improved his physiognomy, "an excellent definition, but one which, I will convince you, does not apply to me." So saying, he drew from his pocket a handful of silver coins, and, throwing them on the table, added: "Come, let's have no more of this. You see I can pay for what I order; and now, do recollect that I am a weary and hungry man."

No sooner did Peter behold the money, than a sudden placidity stole over his ruffled spirit:—nay, a certain benevolent commiseration for the fatigue and wants of the Traveller replaced at once, and as by a spell, the angry feelings that had previously roused him.

"Weary and hungry," said he; "why did not you say that before? That would have been quite enough for Peter Dealtry. Thank God! I am a man what can feel for my neighbours. I have bowels—yes, I have bowels. Weary and hungry!—you shall be served in an instant. I may be a little hasty or so, but I'm a good Christian at bottom—ask the Corporal. And what says the Psalmist, Psalm 147?—

'By Him, the beasts that loosely range
With timely food are fed:
He speaks the word—and what He wills
Is done as soon as said.'"

Animating his kindly emotions by this apt quotation, Peter turned to the house. The Corporal now broke silence: the sight of the money had not been without an effect upon him as well as the landlord.

"Warm day, Sir:—your health. Oh! forgot you emptied jug—baugh! You said you were not now in his Majesty's service: beg pardon—were you ever?"

"Why, once I was; many years ago."

"Ah!—and what regiment? I was in the forty-second. Heard of the forty-second? Colonel's name, Dysart; captain's, Trotter; corporal's, Bunting, at your service."

"I am much obliged by your confidence," said the Traveller drily. "I dare say you have seen much service."

"Service! Ah! may well say that;—twenty-three years' hard work: and not the better for it! A man that loves his country is 'titled to a pension—that's my mind!—but the world don't smile upon corporals—augh!"

Here Peter re-appeared with a fresh supply of the October, and an assurance that the cold meat would speedily follow.

"I hope yourself and this gentleman will bear me company," said the Traveller, passing the jug to the Corporal; and in a few moments, so well pleased grew the trio with each other, that the sound of their laughter came loud and frequent to the ears of the good housewife within.

The traveller now seemed to the Corporal and mine host a right jolly, good-humoured fellow. Not, however, that he bore a fair share in the conversation—he rather promoted the hilarity of his new acquaintances than led it. He laughed heartily at Peter's jests, and the Corporal's repartees; and the latter, by degrees, assuming the usual sway he bore in the circle of the village, contrived, before the viands were on the table, to monopolize the whole conversation.

The Traveller found in the repast a new excuse for silence. He ate with a most prodigious and most contagious appetite; and in a few seconds the knife and fork of the Corporal were as busily engaged as if he had only three minutes to spare between a march and a dinner.

"This is a pretty, retired spot," quoth the Traveller, as at length he finished his repast, and threw himself back on his chair—a very pretty spot. Whose neat old-fashioned house was that I passed on the green, with the gable-ends and the flower-plots in front?

"Oh, the Squire's," answered Peter; "Squire Lester's an excellent gentleman."

"A rich man, I should think, for these parts; the best house I have seen for some miles," said the Stranger carelessly.

"Rich—yes, he's well to do; he does not live so as not to have money to lay by."

"Any family?"

"Two daughters and a nephew."

"And the nephew does not ruin him. Happy uncle! Mine was not so lucky," said the Traveller.

"Sad fellows we soldiers in our young days!" observed the Corporal with a wink. "No, Squire Walter's a good young man, a pride to his uncle!"

"So," said the pedestrian, "they are not forced to keep up a large establishment and ruin themselves by a retinue of servants?—Corporal, the jug."

"Nay!" said Peter, "Squire Lester's gate is always open to the poor; but as for shew, he leaves that to my lord at the castle."

"The castle, where's that?"

"About six miles off, you've heard of my Lord—, I'll swear."

"Ah, to be sure, a courtier. But who else lives about here? I mean, who are the principal persons, barring the Corporal and yourself, Mr. Eelpry—I think our friend here calls you."

"Dealtry, Peter Dealtry, Sir, is my name.—Why the most noticeable man, you must know, is a great scholard, a wonderfully learned man; there yonder, you may just catch a glimpse of the tall what-d'ye-call-it he has built out on the top of his house, that he may get nearer to the stars. He has got glasses by which I've heard that you may see the people in the moon walking on their heads; but I can't say as I believe all I hear."

"You are too sensible for that, I'm sure. But this scholar, I suppose, is not very rich; learning does not clothe men now-a-days—eh, Corporal?"

"And why should it? Zounds! can it teach a man how to defend his country? Old England wants soldiers, and be d—d to them! But the man's well enough, I must own, civil, modest—"

"And not by no means a beggar," added Peter; "he gave as much to the poor last winter as the Squire himself."

"Indeed!" said the Stranger, "this scholar is rich then?"

"So, so; neither one nor t'other. But if he were as rich as my lord, he could not be more respected; the greatest folks in the country come in their carriages and four to see him. Lord bless you, there is not a name more talked on in the whole county than Eugene Aram."

"What!" cried the Traveller, his countenance changing as he sprung from his seat; "what!—Aram!—did you say Aram? Great God! how strange!"

Peter, not a little startled by the abruptness and vehemence of his guest, stared at him with open mouth, and even the Corporal took his pipe involuntarily from his lips.

"What!" said the former, "you know him, do you? you've heard of him, eh?"

The Stranger did not reply, he seemed lost in a reverie; he muttered inaudible words between his teeth; now he strode two steps forward, clenching his hands; now smiled grimly; and then returning to his seat, threw himself on it, still in silence. The soldier and the clerk exchanged looks, and now outspake the Corporal.

"Rum tantrums! What the devil, did the man eat your grandmother?"

Roused perhaps by so pertinent and sensible a question, the Stranger lifted his head from his breast, and said with a forced smile, "You have done me, without knowing it, a great kindness, my friend. Eugene Aram was an early and intimate acquaintance of mine: we have not met for many years. I never guessed that he lived in these parts: indeed I did not know where he resided. I am truly glad to think I have lighted upon him thus unexpectedly."

"What! you did not know where he lived? Well! I thought all the world knew that! Why, men from the univarsities have come all the way, merely to look at the spot."

"Very likely," returned the Stranger; "but I am not a learned man myself, and what is celebrity in one set is obscurity in another. Besides, I have never been in this part of the world before!"

Peter was about to reply, when he heard the shrill voice of his wife behind.

"Why don't you rise, Mr. Lazyboots? Where are your eyes? Don't you see the young ladies."

Dealtry's hat was off in an instant,—the stiff Corporal rose like a musquet; the Stranger would have kept his seat, but Dealtry gave him an admonitory tug by the collar; accordingly he rose, muttering a hasty oath, which certainly died on his lips when he saw the cause which had thus constrained him into courtesy.

Through a little gate close by Peter's house Madeline and her sister had just passed on their evening walk, and with the kind familiarity for which they were both noted, they had stopped to salute the landlady of the Spotted Dog, as she now, her labours done, sat by the threshold, within hearing of the convivial group, and plaiting straw. The whole family of Lester were so beloved, that we question whether my Lord himself, as the great nobleman of the place was always called, (as if there were only one lord in the peerage,) would have obtained the same degree of respect that was always lavished upon them.

"Don't let us disturb you, good people," said Ellinor, as they now moved towards the boon companions, when her eye suddenly falling on the Stranger, she stopped short. There was something in his appearance, and especially in the expression of his countenance at that moment, which no one could have marked for the first time without apprehension and distrust: and it was so seldom that, in that retired spot, the young ladies encountered even one unfamiliar face, that the effect the stranger's appearance might have produced on any one, might well be increased for them to a startling and painful degree. The Traveller saw at once the sensation he had created: his brow lowered; and the same unpleasing smile, or rather sneer, that we have noted before, distorted his lip, as he made with affected humility his obeisance.

"How!—a stranger!" said Madeline, sharing, though in a less degree, the feelings of her sister; and then, after a pause, she said, as she glanced over his garb, "not in distress, I hope."

"No, Madam!" said the stranger, "if by distress is meant beggary. I am in all respects perhaps better than I seem."

There was a general titter from the Corporal, my host, and his wife, at the Traveller's semi-jest at his own unprepossessing appearance: but Madeline, a little disconcerted, bowed hastily, and drew her sister away.

"A proud quean!" said the Stranger, as he re-seated himself, and watched the sisters gliding across the green.

All mouths were opened against him immediately. He found it no easy matter to make his peace; and before he had quite done it, he called for his bill, and rose to depart.

"Well!" said he, as he tendered his hand to the Corporal, "we may meet again, and enjoy together some more of your good stories. Meanwhile, which is my way to this—this—this famous scholar's —Ehem?"

"Why," quoth Peter, "you saw the direction in which the young ladies went; you must take the same. Cross the stile you will find at the right—wind along the foot of the hill for about three parts of a mile, and you will then see in the middle of a broad plain, a lonely grey house with a thingumebob at the top; a servatory they call it. That's Master Aram's."

"Thank you."

"And a very pretty walk it is too," said the Dame, "the prettiest hereabouts to my liking, till you get to the house at least; and so the young ladies think, for it's their usual walk every evening!"

"Humph,—then I may meet them."

"Well, and if you do, make yourself look as Christian-like as you can," retorted the hostess.

There was a second grin at the ill-favoured Traveller's expense, amidst which he went his way.

"An odd chap!" said Peter, looking after the sturdy form of the Traveller. "I wonder what he is; he seems well edicated—makes use of good words."

"What sinnifies?" said the Corporal, who felt a sort of fellow-feeling for his new acquaintance's brusquerie of manner;—"what sinnifies what he is. Served his country,—that's enough;—never told me, by the by, his regiment;—set me a talking, and let out nothing himself;—old soldier every inch of him!"

"He can take care of number one," said Peter. "How he emptied the jug; and my stars! what an appetite!"

"Tush," said the Corporal, "hold jaw. Man of the world—man of the world,—that's clear."

CHAPTER III.
A DIALOGUE AND AN ALARM.—A STUDENT'S HOUSE

"A fellow by the hand of Nature marked,
Quoted, and signed, to do a deed of shame."

—Shakspeare.—King John.

"He is a scholar, if a man may trust
The liberal voice of Fame, in her report.
Myself was once a student, and indeed
Fed with the self-same humour he is now."

—Ben Jonson.—Every Man in his Humour.

The two sisters pursued their walk along a scene which might well be favoured by their selection. No sooner had they crossed the stile, than the village seemed vanished into earth; so quiet, so lonely, so far from the evidence of life was the landscape through which they passed. On their right, sloped a green and silent hill, shutting out all view beyond itself, save the deepening and twilight sky; to the left, and immediately along their road lay fragments of stone, covered with moss, or shadowed by wild shrubs, that here and there, gathered into copses, or breaking abruptly away from the rich sod, left frequent spaces through which you caught long vistas of forestland, or the brooklet gliding in a noisy and rocky course, and breaking into a thousand tiny waterfalls, or mimic eddies. So secluded was the scene, and so unwitnessing of cultivation, that you would not have believed that a human habitation could be at hand, and this air of perfect solitude and quiet gave an additional charm to the spot.

"But I assure you," said Ellinor, earnestly continuing a conversation they had begun, "I assure you I was not mistaken, I saw it as plainly as I see you."

"What, in the breast pocket?"

"Yes, as he drew out his handkerchief, I saw the barrel of the pistol quite distinctly."

"Indeed, I think we had better tell my father as soon as we get home; it may be as well to be on our guard, though robbery, I believe, has not been heard of in Grassdale for these twenty years."

"Yet for what purpose, save that of evil, could he in these peaceable times and this peaceable country, carry fire arms about him. And what a countenance! Did you note the shy, and yet ferocious eye, like that of some animal, that longs, yet fears to spring upon you."

"Upon my word, Ellinor," said Madeline, smiling, "you are not very merciful to strangers. After all, the man might have provided himself with the pistol which you saw as a natural precaution; reflect that, as a stranger, he may well not know how safe this district usually is, and he may have come from London, in the neighbourhood of which they say robberies have been frequent of late. As to

his looks, they are I own unpardonable; for so much ugliness there can be no excuse. Had the man been as handsome as our cousin Walter, you would not perhaps have been so uncharitable in your fears at the pistol."

"Nonsense, Madeline," said Ellinor, blushing, and turning away her face;—there was a moment's pause, which the younger sister broke.

"We do not seem," said she, "to make much progress in the friendship of our singular neighbour. I never knew my father court any one so much as he has courted Mr. Aram, and yet, you see how seldom he calls upon us; nay, I often think that he seeks to shun us; no great compliment to our attractions, Madeline."

"I regret his want of sociability, for his own sake," said Madeline, "for he seems melancholy as well as thoughtful, and he leads so secluded a life, that I cannot but think my father's conversation and society, if he would but encourage it, might afford some relief to his solitude."

"And he always seems," observed Ellinor, "to take pleasure in my father's conversation, as who would not? how his countenance lights up when he converses! it is a pleasure to watch it. I think him positively handsome when he speaks."

"Oh, more than handsome!" said Madeline, with enthusiasm, "with that high, pale brow, and those deep, unfathomable eyes!"

Ellinor smiled, and it was now Madeline's turn to blush.

"Well," said the former, "there is something about him that fills one with an indescribable interest; and his manner, if cold at times, is yet always so gentle."

"And to hear him converse," said Madeline, "it is like music. His thoughts, his very words, seem so different from the language and ideas of others. What a pity that he should ever be silent!"

"There is one peculiarity about his gloom, it never inspires one with distrust," said Ellinor; "if I had observed him in the same circumstances as that ill-omened traveller, I should have had no apprehension."

"Ah! that traveller still runs in your head. If we were to meet him in this spot."

"Heaven forbid!" cried Ellinor, turning hastily round in alarm—and, lo! as if her sister had been a prophet, she saw the very person in question at some little distance behind them, and walking on with rapid strides.

She uttered a faint shriek of surprise and terror, and Madeline, looking back at the sound, immediately participated in her alarm. The spot looked so desolate and lonely, and the imagination of both had been already so worked upon by Ellinor's fears, and their conjectures respecting the ill-boding weapon she had witnessed, that a thousand apprehensions of outrage and murder crowded at once upon the minds of the two sisters. Without, however, giving vent in words to their alarm, they, as by an involuntary and simultaneous suggestion, quickened their pace, every moment stealing a glance behind, to watch the progress of the suspected robber. They thought that he also seemed to accelerate his movements; and this observation increased their terror, and would appear indeed to give it some more rational ground. At length, as by a sudden turn of the road they lost sight of the dreaded stranger, their alarm suggested to them but one resolution, and they fairly fled on as fast as the fear which actuated, would allow, them. The nearest, and indeed the only house in that direction, was Aram's, but they both imagined if they could come within sight of that, they should be safe. They looked back at every interval; now they did not see their fancied pursuer—now he emerged again into view—now—yes—he also was running.

"Faster, faster, Madeline, for God's sake! he is gaining upon us!" cried Ellinor: the path grew more wild, and the trees more thick and frequent; at every cluster that marked their progress they saw the Stranger closer and closer; at length, a sudden break,—a sudden turn in the landscape;—a broad plain burst upon them, and in the midst of it the Student's solitary abode!

"Thank God, we are safe!" cried Madeline. She turned once more to look for the Stranger; in so doing, her foot struck against a fragment of stone, and she fell with great violence to the ground. She

endeavoured to rise, but found herself, at first, unable to stir from the spot. In this state she looked, however, back, and saw the Traveller at some little distance. But he also halted, and after a moment's seeming deliberation, turned aside, and was lost among the bushes.

With great difficulty Ellinor now assisted Madeline to rise; her ancle was violently sprained, and she could not put her foot to the ground; but though she had evinced so much dread at the apparition of the stranger, she now testified an almost equal degree of fortitude in bearing pain.

"I am not much hurt, Ellinor," she said, faintly smiling, to encourage her sister, who supported her in speechless alarm: "but what is to be done? I cannot use this foot; how shall we get home?"

"Thank God, if you are not much hurt!" said poor Ellinor, almost crying, "lean on me—heavier —pray. Only try and reach the house, and we can then stay there till Mr. Aram sends home for the carriage."

"But what will he think? how strange it will seem!" said Madeline, the colour once more visiting her cheek, which a moment since had been blanched as pale as death.

"Is this a time for scruples and ceremony?" said Ellinor. "Come! I entreat you, come; if you linger thus, the man may take courage and attack us yet. There! that's right! Is the pain very great?"

"I do not mind the pain," murmured Madeline; "but if he should think we intrude? His habits are so reserved—so secluded; indeed I fear—"

"Intrude!" interrupted Ellinor. "Do you think so ill of him?—Do you suppose that, hermit as he is, he has lost common humanity? But lean more on me, dearest; you do not know how strong I am!"

Thus alternately chiding, caressing, and encouraging her sister, Ellinor led on the sufferer, till they had crossed the plain, though with slowness and labour, and stood before the porch of the Recluse's house. They had looked back from time to time, but the cause of so much alarm appeared no more. This they deemed a sufficient evidence of the justice of their apprehensions.

Madeline would even now fain have detained her sister's hand from the bell that hung without the porch half imbedded in ivy; but Ellinor, out of patience—as she well might be—with her sister's unseasonable prudence, refused any longer delay. So singularly still and solitary was the plain around the house, that the sound of the bell breaking the silence, had in it something startling, and appeared in its sudden and shrill voice, a profanation to the deep tranquillity of the spot. They did not wait long —a step was heard within—the door was slowly unbarred, and the Student himself stood before them.

He was a man who might, perhaps, have numbered some five and thirty years; but at a hasty glance, he would have seemed considerably younger. He was above the ordinary stature; though a gentle, and not ungraceful bend in the neck rather than the shoulders, somewhat curtailed his proper advantages of height. His frame was thin and slender, but well knit and fair proportioned. Nature had originally cast his form in an athletic mould; but sedentary habits, and the wear of mind, seemed somewhat to have impaired her gifts. His cheek was pale and delicate; yet it was rather the delicacy of thought than of weak health. His hair, which was long, and of a rich and deep brown, was worn back from his face and temples, and left a broad high majestic forehead utterly unrelieved and bare; and on the brow there was not a single wrinkle, it was as smooth as it might have been some fifteen years ago. There was a singular calmness, and, so to speak, profundity, of thought, eloquent upon its clear expanse, which suggested the idea of one who had passed his life rather in contemplation than emotion. It was a face that a physiognomist would have loved to look upon, so much did it speak both of the refinement and the dignity of intellect.

Such was the person—if pictures convey a faithful resemblance—of a man, certainly the most eminent in his day for various and profound learning, and a genius wholly self-taught, yet never contented to repose upon the wonderful stores it had laboriously accumulated.

He now stood before the two girls, silent, and evidently surprised; and it would scarce have been an unworthy subject for a picture—that ivied porch—that still spot—Madeline's reclining and subdued form and downcast eyes—the eager face of Ellinor, about to narrate the nature and cause of

their intrusion—and the pale Student himself, thus suddenly aroused from his solitary meditations, and converted into the protector of beauty.

No sooner did Aram gather from Ellinor the outline of their story, and of Madeline's accident, than his countenance and manner testified the liveliest and most eager sympathy. Madeline was inexpressibly touched and surprised at the kindly and respectful earnestness with which this recluse scholar—usually so cold and abstracted in mood—assisted and led her into the house: the sympathy he expressed for her pain—the sincerity of his tone—the compassion of his eyes—and as those dark—and to use her own thought—unfathomable orbs bent admiringly and yet so gently upon her, Madeline, even in spite of her pain, felt an indescribable, a delicious thrill at her heart, which in the presence of no one else had she ever experienced before.

Aram now summoned the only domestic his house possessed, who appeared in the form of an old woman, whom he seemed to have selected from the whole neighbourhood as the person most in keeping with the rigid seclusion he preserved. She was exceedingly deaf, and was a proverb in the village for her extreme taciturnity. Poor old Margaret; she was a widow, and had lost ten children by early deaths. There was a time when her gaiety had been as noticeable as her reserve was now. In spite of her infirmity, she was not slow in comprehending the accident Madeline had met with; and she busied herself with a promptness that shewed her misfortunes had not deadened her natural kindness of disposition, in preparing fomentations and bandages for the wounded foot.

Meanwhile Aram, having no person to send in his stead, undertook to seek the manor-house, and bring back the old family coach, which had dozed inactively in its shelter for the last six months, to convey the sufferer home.

"No, Mr. Aram," said Madeline, colouring; "pray do not go yourself: consider, the man may still be loitering on the road. He is armed—good Heavens, if he should meet you!"

"Fear not, Madam," said Aram, with a faint smile. "I also keep arms, even in this obscure and safe retreat; and to satisfy you, I will not neglect to carry them with me."

"As he spoke, he took from the wainscoat, from which they hung, a brace of large horse pistols, slung them round him by a leather belt, and flinging over his person, to conceal weapons so alarming to any less dangerous passenger he might encounter, the long cloak then usually worn in inclement seasons, as an outer garment, he turned to depart.

"But are they loaded?" asked Ellinor.

Aram answered briefly, in the affirmative. It was somewhat singular, but the sisters did not then remark it, that a man so peaceable in his pursuits, and seemingly possessed of no valuables that could tempt cupidity, should in that spot, where crime was never heard of, use such habitual precaution.

When the door closed upon him, and while the old woman, relieved with a light hand and soothing lotions, which she had shewn some skill in preparing, the anguish of the sprain, Madeline cast glances of interest and curiosity around the apartment into which she had had the rare good fortune to obtain admittance.

The house had belonged to a family of some note, whose heirs had outstripped their fortunes. It had been long deserted and uninhabited; and when Aram settled in those parts, the proprietor was too glad to get rid of the incumbrance of an empty house, at a nominal rent. The solitude of the place had been the main attraction to Aram; and as he possessed what would be considered a very extensive assortment of books, even for a library of these days, he required a larger apartment than he would have been able to obtain in an abode more compact and more suitable to his fortunes and mode of living.

The room in which the sisters now found themselves was the most spacious in the house, and was indeed of considerable dimensions. It contained in front one large window, jutting from the wall. Opposite was an antique and high mantelpiece of black oak. The rest of the room was walled from the floor to the roof with books; volumes of all languages, and it might even be said, without much exaggeration, upon all sciences, were strewed around, on the chairs, the tables, or the floor.

By the window stood the Student's desk, and a large old-fashioned chair of oak. A few papers, filled with astronomical calculations, lay on the desk, and these were all the witnesses of the result of study. Indeed Aram does not appear to have been a man much inclined to reproduce the learning he acquired;—what he wrote was in very small proportion to what he had read.

So high and grave was the reputation he had acquired, that the retreat and sanctum of so many learned hours would have been interesting, even to one who could not appreciate learning; but to Madeline, with her peculiar disposition and traits of mind, we may readily conceive that the room presented a powerful and pleasing charm. As the elder sister looked round in silence, Ellinor attempted to draw the old woman into conversation. She would fain have elicited some particulars of the habits and daily life of the recluse; but the deafness of their attendant was so obstinate and hopeless, that she was forced to give up the attempt in despair. "I fear," said she at last, her good-nature so far overcome by impatience as not to forbid a slight yawn; "I fear we shall have a dull time of it till my father arrives. Just consider, the fat black mares, never too fast, can only creep along that broken path,—for road there is none: it will be quite night before the coach arrives."

"I am sorry, dear Ellinor, my awkwardness should occasion you so stupid an evening," answered Madeline.

"Oh," cried Ellinor, throwing her arms around her sister's neck, "it is not for myself I spoke; and indeed I am delighted to think we have got into this wizard's den, and seen the instruments of his art. But I do so trust Mr. Aram will not meet that terrible man."

"Nay," said the prouder Madeline, "he is armed, and it is but one man. I feel too high a respect for him to allow myself much fear."

"But these bookmen are not often heroes," remarked Ellinor, laughing.

"For shame," said Madeline, the colour mounting to her forehead. "Do you not remember how, last summer, Eugene Aram rescued Dame Grenfeld's child from the bull, though at the literal peril of his own life? And who but Eugene Aram, when the floods in the year before swept along the low lands by Fairleigh, went day after day to rescue the persons, or even to save the goods of those poor people; at a time too, when the boldest villagers would not hazard themselves across the waters?—But bless me, Ellinor, what is the matter? you turn pale, you tremble.'

"Hush!" said Ellinor under her breath, and, putting her finger to her mouth, she rose and stole lightly to the window; she had observed the figure of a man pass by, and now, as she gained the window, she saw him halt by the porch, and recognised the formidable Stranger. Presently the bell sounded, and the old woman, familiar with its shrill sound, rose from her kneeling position beside the sufferer to attend to the summons. Ellinor sprang forward and detained her: the poor old woman stared at her in amazement, wholly unable to comprehend her abrupt gestures and her rapid language. It was with considerable difficulty and after repeated efforts, that she at length impressed the dulled sense of the crone with the nature of their alarm, and the expediency of refusing admittance to the Stranger. Meanwhile, the bell had rung again,—again, and the third time with a prolonged violence which testified the impatience of the applicant. As soon as the good dame had satisfied herself as to Ellinor's meaning, she could no longer be accused of unreasonable taciturnity; she wrung her hands and poured forth a volley of lamentations and fears, which effectually relieved Ellinor from the dread of her unheeding the admonition. Satisfied at having done thus much, Ellinor now herself hastened to the door and secured the ingress with an additional bolt, and then, as the thought flashed upon her, returned to the old woman and made her, with an easier effort than before, now that her senses were sharpened by fear, comprehend the necessity of securing the back entrance also; both hastened away to effect this precaution, and Madeline, who herself desired Ellinor to accompany the old woman, was left alone. She kept her eyes fixed on the window with a strange sentiment of dread at being thus left in so helpless a situation; and though a door of no ordinary dimensions and doubly locked interposed between herself and the intruder, she expected in breathless terror, every instant, to see the form of the ruffian burst into the apartment. As she thus sat and looked, she shudderingly saw

the man, tired perhaps of repeating a summons so ineffectual, come to the window and look pryingly within: their eyes met; Madeline had not the power to shriek. Would he break through the window? that was her only idea, and it deprived her of words, almost of sense. He gazed upon her evident terror for a moment with a grim smile of contempt; he then knocked at the window, and his voice broke harshly on a silence yet more dreadful than the interruption.

"Ho, ho! so there is some life stirring! I beg pardon, Madam, is Mr. Aram—Eugene Aram, within?"

"No," said Madeline faintly, and then, sensible that her voice did not reach him, she reiterated the answer in a louder tone. The man, as if satisfied, made a rude inclination of his head and withdrew from the window. Ellinor now returned, and with difficulty Madeline found words to explain to her what had passed. It will be conceived that the two young ladies watched the arrival of their father with no lukewarm expectation; the stranger however appeared no more; and in about an hour, to their inexpressible joy, they heard the rumbling sound of the old coach as it rolled towards the house. This time there was no delay in unbarring the door.

CHAPTER IV.
THE SOLILOQUY, AND THE CHARACTER, OF A RECLUSE.—THE INTERRUPTION

"Or let my lamp at midnight hour
Be seen in some high lonely tower,
Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,
Or thrice-great Hermes, and unsphere
The spirit of Plato."

—Milton.—Il Penseroso.

As Aram assisted the beautiful Madeline into the carriage—as he listened to her sweet voice —as he marked the grateful expression of her soft eyes—as he felt the slight yet warm pressure of her fairy hand, that vague sensation of delight which preludes love, for the first time, in his sterile and solitary life, agitated his breast. Lester held out his hand to him with a frank cordiality which the scholar could not resist.

"Do not let us be strangers, Mr. Aram," said he warmly. "It is not often that I press for companionship out of my own circle; but in your company I should find pleasure as well as instruction. Let us break the ice boldly, and at once. Come and dine with me to-morrow, and Ellinor shall sing to us in the evening."

The excuse died upon Aram's lips. Another glance at Madeline conquered the remains of his reserve: he accepted the invitation, and he could not but mark, with an unfamiliar emotion of the heart, that the eyes of Madeline sparkled as he did so.

With an abstracted air, and arms folded across his breast, he gazed after the carriage till the winding of the valley snatched it from his view. He then, waking from his reverie with a start, turned into the house, and carefully closing and barring the door, mounted with slow steps to the lofty chamber with which, the better to indulge his astronomical researches, he had crested his lonely abode.

It was now night. The Heavens broadened round him in all the loving yet august tranquillity of the season and the hour; the stars bathed the living atmosphere with a solemn light; and above —about—around—

"The holy time was quiet as a nun Breathless with adoration." He looked forth upon the deep and ineffable stillness of the night, and indulged the reflections that it suggested.

"Ye mystic lights," said he soliloquizing: "worlds upon worlds—infinite—incalculable.—Bright defiers of rest and change, rolling for ever above our petty sea of mortality, as, wave after wave, we fret forth our little life, and sink into the black abyss;—can we look upon you, note your appointed order, and your unvarying course, and not feel that we are indeed the poorest puppets of an all-pervading and resistless destiny? Shall we see throughout creation each marvel fulfilling its pre-ordered fate—no wandering from its orbit—no variation in its seasons—and yet imagine that the Arch-ordainer will hold back the tides He has sent from their unseen source, at our miserable bidding? Shall we think that our prayers can avert a doom woven with the skein of events? To change a particle of our fate, might change the destiny of millions! Shall the link forsake the chain, and yet the chain be unbroken? Away, then, with our vague repinings, and our blind demands. All must walk onward to their goal, be he the wisest who looks not one step behind. The colours of our existence were doomed before our birth—our sorrows and our crimes;—millions of ages back, when this hoary earth was peopled by other kinds, yea! ere its atoms had formed one layer of its present soil, the Eternal and the all-seeing Ruler of the universe, Destiny, or God, had here fixed the moment of our birth and the limits of our career. What then is crime?—Fate! What life?—Submission!"

Such were the strange and dark thoughts which, constituting a part indeed of his established creed, broke over Aram's mind. He sought for a fairer subject for meditation, and Madeline Lester rose before him.

Eugene Aram was a man whose whole life seemed to have been one sacrifice to knowledge. What is termed pleasure had no attraction for him. From the mature manhood at which he had arrived, he looked back along his youth, and recognized no youthful folly. Love he had hitherto regarded with a cold though not an incurious eye: intemperance had never lured him to a momentary self-abandonment. Even the innocent relaxations with which the austerest minds relieve their accustomed toils, had had no power to draw him from his beloved researches. The delight monstrari digito; the gratification of triumphant wisdom; the whispers of an elevated vanity; existed not for his self-dependent and solitary heart. He was one of those earnest and high-wrought enthusiasts who now are almost extinct upon earth, and whom Romance has not hitherto attempted to pourtray; men not uncommon in the last century, who were devoted to knowledge, yet disdainful of its fame; who lived for nothing else than to learn. From store to store, from treasure to treasure, they proceeded in exulting labour, and having accumulated all, they bestowed nought; they were the arch-misers of the wealth of letters. Wrapped in obscurity, in some sheltered nook, remote from the great stir of men, they passed a life at once unprofitable and glorious; the least part of what they ransacked would appal the industry of a modern student, yet the most superficial of modern students might effect more for mankind. They lived among oracles, but they gave none forth. And yet, even in this very barrenness, there seems something high; it was a rare and great spectacle—Men, living aloof from the roar and strife of the passions that raged below, devoting themselves to the knowledge which is our purification and our immortality on earth, and yet deaf and blind to the allurements of the vanity which generally accompanies research; refusing the ignorant homage of their kind, making their sublime motive their only meed, adoring Wisdom for her sole sake, and set apart in the populous universe, like stars, luminous with their own light, but too remote from the earth on which they looked, to shed over its inmates the lustre with which they glowed.

From his youth to the present period, Aram had dwelt little in cities though he had visited many, yet he could scarcely be called ignorant of mankind; there seems something intuitive in the science which teaches us the knowledge of our race. Some men emerge from their seclusion, and find, all at once, a power to dart into the minds and drag forth the motives of those they see; it is a sort of second sight, born with them, not acquired. And Aram, it may be, rendered yet more acute by his profound and habitual investigations of our metaphysical frame, never quitted his solitude to mix with

others, without penetrating into the broad traits or prevalent infirmities their characters possessed. In this, indeed, he differed from the scholar tribe, and even in abstraction was mechanically vigilant and observant. Much in his nature would, had early circumstances given it a different bias, have fitted him for worldly superiority and command. A resistless energy, an unbroken perseverance, a profound and scheming and subtle thought, a genius fertile in resources, a tongue clothed with eloquence, all, had his ambition so chosen, might have given him the same empire over the physical, that he had now attained over the intellectual world. It could not be said that Aram wanted benevolence, but it was dashed, and mixed with a certain scorn: the benevolence was the offspring of his nature; the scorn seemed the result of his pursuits. He would feed the birds from his window, he would tread aside to avoid the worm on his path; were one of his own tribe in danger, he would save him at the hazard of his life:—yet in his heart he despised men, and believed them beyond amelioration. Unlike the present race of schoolmen, who incline to the consoling hope of human perfectibility, he saw in the gloomy past but a dark prophecy of the future. As Napoleon wept over one wounded soldier in the field of battle, yet ordered without emotion, thousands to a certain death; so Aram would have sacrificed himself for an individual, but would not have sacrificed a momentary gratification for his race. And this sentiment towards men, at once of high disdain and profound despondency, was perhaps the cause why he rioted in indolence upon his extraordinary mental wealth, and could not be persuaded either to dazzle the world or to serve it. But by little and little his fame had broke forth from the limits with which he would have walled it: a man who had taught himself, under singular difficulties, nearly all the languages of the civilized earth; the profound mathematician, the elaborate antiquarian, the abstruse philologist, uniting with his graver lore the more florid accomplishments of science, from the scholastic trifling of heraldry to the gentle learning of herbs and flowers, could scarcely hope for utter obscurity in that day when all intellectual acquirement was held in high honour, and its possessors were drawn together into a sort of brotherhood by the fellowship of their pursuits. And though Aram gave little or nothing to the world himself, he was ever willing to communicate to others any benefit or honour derivable from his researches. On the altar of science he kindled no light, but the fragrant oil in the lamps of his more pious brethren was largely borrowed from his stores. From almost every college in Europe came to his obscure abode letters of acknowledgement or inquiry; and few foreign cultivators of learning visited this country without seeking an interview with Aram. He received them with all the modesty and the courtesy that characterized his demeanour; but it was noticeable that he never allowed these interruptions to be more than temporary. He proffered no hospitality, and shrunk back from all offers of friendship; the interview lasted its hour, and was seldom renewed. Patronage was not less distasteful to him than sociality. Some occasional visits and condescensions of the great, he had received with a stern haughtiness, rather than his wonted and subdued urbanity. The precise amount of his fortune was not known; his wants were so few, that what would have been poverty to others might easily have been competence to him; and the only evidence he manifested of the command of money, was in his extended and various library.

He had now been about two years settled in his present retreat. Unsocial as he was, every one in the neighbourhood loved him; even the reserve of a man so eminent, arising as it was supposed to do from a painful modesty, had in it something winning; and he had been known to evince on great occasions, a charity and a courage in the service of others which removed from the seclusion of his habits the semblance of misanthropy and of avarice. The peasant drew aside with a kindness mingled with his respect, as in his homeward walk he encountered the pale and thoughtful Student, with the folded arms and downeast eyes, which characterised the abstraction of his mood; and the village maiden, as she curtsied by him, stole a glance at his handsome but melancholy countenance; and told her sweetheart she was certain the poor scholar had been crossed in love.

And thus passed the Student's life; perhaps its monotony and dullness required less compassion than they received; no man can judge of the happiness of another. As the Moon plays upon the waves, and seems to our eyes to favour with a peculiar beam one long track amidst the waters, leaving the

rest in comparative obscurity; yet all the while, she is no niggard in her lustre—for though the rays that meet not our eyes seem to us as though they were not, yet she with an equal and unfavouring loveliness, mirrors herself on every wave: even so, perhaps, Happiness falls with the same brightness and power over the whole expanse of Life, though to our limited eyes she seems only to rest on those billows from which the ray is reflected back upon our sight.

From his contemplations, of whatsoever nature, Aram was now aroused by a loud summons at the door;—the clock had gone eleven. Who could at that late hour, when the whole village was buried in sleep, demand admittance? He recollected that Madeline had said the Stranger who had so alarmed them had inquired for him, at that recollection his cheek suddenly blanched, but again, that stranger was surely only some poor traveller who had heard of his wonted charity, and had called to solicit relief, for he had not met the Stranger on the road to Lester's house; and he had naturally set down the apprehensions of his fair visitants to a mere female timidity. Who could this be? no humble wayfarer would at that hour crave assistance;—some disaster perhaps in the village. From his lofty chamber he looked forth and saw the stars watch quietly over the scattered cottages and the dark foliage that slept breathlessly around. All was still as death, but it seemed the stillness of innocence and security: again! the bell again! He thought he heard his name shouted without; he strode once or twice irresolutely to and fro the chamber; and then his step grew firm, and his native courage returned. His pistols were still girded round him; he looked to the priming, and muttered some incoherent words; he then descended the stairs, and slowly unbarred the door. Without the porch, the moonlight full upon his harsh features and sturdy frame, stood the ill-omened Traveller.

CHAPTER V.
A DINNER AT THE SQUIRE'S HALL. —A CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO RETIRED MEN WITH DIFFERENT OBJECTS IN RETIREMENT.—DISTURBANCE FIRST INTRODUCED INTO A PEACEFUL FAMILY

"Can he not be sociable?"

—Troilus and Cressida.

"Subit quippe etiam ipsius inertiae dulcedo;
et invisa primo desidia postremo amatur."

—Tacitus.

"How use doth breed a habit in a man!
This shadowy desert, unfrequented woods,
I better brook than flourishing people towns."

—Winter's Tale.

The next day, faithful to his appointment, Aram arrived at Lester's. The good Squire received him with a warm cordiality, and Madeline with a blush and a smile that ought to have been more grateful to him than acknowledgements. She was still a prisoner to the sofa, but in compliment to

Aram, the sofa was wheeled into the hall where they dined, so that she was not absent from the repast. It was a pleasant room, that old hall! Though it was summer—more for cheerfulness than warmth, the log burnt on the spacious hearth: but at the same time the latticed windows were thrown open, and the fresh yet sunny air stole in, rich from the embrace of the woodbine and clematis, which clung around the casement.

A few old pictures were paneled in the oaken wainscot; and here and there the horns of the mighty stag adorned the walls, and united with the cheeriness of comfort associations of that of enterprise. The good old board was crowded with the luxuries meet for a country Squire. The speckled trout, fresh from the stream, and the four-year-old mutton modestly disclaiming its own excellent merits, by affecting the shape and assuming the adjuncts of venison. Then for the confectionery, —it was worthy of Ellinor, to whom that department generally fell; and we should scarcely be surprised to find, though we venture not to affirm, that its delicate fabrication owed more to her than superintendence. Then the ale, and the cyder with rosemary in the bowl, were incomparable potations; and to the gooseberry wine, which would have filled Mrs. Primrose with envy, was added the more generous warmth of port which, in the Squire's younger days, had been the talk of the country, and which had now lost none of its attributes, save "the original brightness" of its colour.

But (the wine excepted) these various dainties met with slight honour from their abstemious guest; and, for though habitually reserved he was rarely gloomy, they remarked that he seemed unusually fitful and sombre in his mood. Something appeared to rest upon his mind, from which, by the excitement of wine and occasional bursts of eloquence more animated than ordinary, he seemed striving to escape; and at length, he apparently succeeded. Naturally enough, the conversation turned upon the curiosities and scenery of the country round; and here Aram shone with a peculiar grace. Vividly alive to the influences of Nature, and minutely acquainted with its varieties, he invested every hill and glade to which remark recurred with the poetry of his descriptions; and from his research he gave even scenes the most familiar, a charm and interest which had been strange to them till then. To this stream some romantic legend had once attached itself, long forgotten and now revived;—that moor, so barren to an ordinary eye, was yet productive of some rare and curious herb, whose properties afforded scope for lively description;—that old mound was yet rife in attraction to one versed in antiquities, and able to explain its origin, and from such explanation deduce a thousand classic or celtic episodes.

No subject was so homely or so trite but the knowledge that had neglected nothing, was able to render it luminous and new. And as he spoke, the scholar's countenance brightened, and his voice, at first hesitating and low, compelled the attention to its earnest and winning music. Lester himself, a man who, in his long retirement, had not forgotten the attractions of intellectual society, nor even neglected a certain cultivation of intellectual pursuits, enjoyed a pleasure that he had not experienced for years. The gay Ellinor was fascinated into admiration; and Madeline, the most silent of the groupe, drank in every word, unconscious of the sweet poison she imbibed. Walter alone seemed not carried away by the eloquence of their guest. He preserved an unadmiring and sullen demeanour, and every now and then regarded Aram with looks of suspicion and dislike. This was more remarkable when the men were left alone; and Lester, in surprise and anger, darted significant and admonitory looks towards his nephew, which at length seemed to rouse him into a more hospitable bearing. As the cool of the evening now came on, Lester proposed to Aram to enjoy it without, previous to returning to the parlour, to which the ladies had retired. Walter excused himself from joining them. The host and the guest accordingly strolled forth alone.

"Your solitude," said Lester, smiling, "is far deeper and less broken than mine: do you never find it irksome?"

"Can Humanity be at all times contented?" said Aram. "No stream, howsoever secret or subterranean, glides on in eternal tranquillity."

"You allow, then, that you feel some occasional desire for a more active and animated life?"

"Nay," answered Aram; "that is scarcely a fair corollary from my remark. I may, at times, feel the weariness of existence—the tedium vitae; but I know well that the cause is not to be remedied by a change from tranquillity to agitation. The objects of the great world are to be pursued only by the excitement of the passions. The passions are at once our masters and our deceivers;—they urge us onward, yet present no limit to our progress. The farther we proceed, the more dim and shadowy grows the goal. It is impossible for a man who leads the life of the world, the life of the passions, ever to experience content. For the life of the passions is that of a perpetual desire; but a state of content is the absence of all desire. Thus philosophy has become another name for mental quietude; and all wisdom points to a life of intellectual indifference, as the happiest which earth can bestow."

"This may be true enough," said Lester, reluctantly; "but—"

"But what?"

"A something at our hearts—a secret voice—an involuntary impulse—rebels against it, and points to action—action, as the true sphere of man."

A slight smile curved the lip of the Student; he avoided, however, the argument, and remarked,

"Yet, if you think so, the world lies before you; why not return to it?"

"Because constant habit is stronger than occasional impulse; and my seclusion, after all, has its sphere of action—has its object."

"All seclusion has."

"All? Scarcely so; for me, I have my object of interest in my children."

"And mine is in my books."

"And engaged in your object, does not the whisper of Fame ever animate you with the desire to go forth into the world, and receive the homage that would await you?"

"Listen to me," replied Aram. "When I was a boy, I went once to a theatre. The tragedy of Hamlet was performed: a play full of the noblest thoughts, the subtlest morality, that exists upon the stage. The audience listened with attention, with admiration, with applause. I said to myself, when the curtain fell, 'It must be a glorious thing to obtain this empire over men's intellects and emotions.' But now an Italian mountebank appeared on the stage,—a man of extraordinary personal strength and slight of hand. He performed a variety of juggling tricks, and distorted his body into a thousand surprising and unnatural postures. The audience were transported beyond themselves: if they had felt delight in Hamlet, they glowed with rapture at the mountebank: they had listened with attention to the lofty thought, but they were snatched from themselves by the marvel of the strange posture. 'Enough,' said I; 'I correct my former notion. Where is the glory of ruling men's minds, and commanding their admiration, when a greater enthusiasm is excited by mere bodily agility, than was kindled by the most wonderful emanations of a genius little less than divine?' I have never forgotten the impression of that evening."

Lester attempted to combat the truth of the illustration, and thus conversing, they passed on through the village green, when the gaunt form of Corporal Bunting arrested their progress.

"Beg pardon, Squire," said he, with a military salute; "beg pardon, your honour," bowing to Aram; "but I wanted to speak to you, Squire, 'bout the rent of the bit cot yonder; times very hard—pay scarce—Michaelmas close at hand—and—"

"You desire a little delay, Bunting, eh?—Well, well, we'll see about it, look up at the Hall to-morrow; Mr. Walter, I know wants to consult you about letting the water from the great pond, and you must give us your opinion of the new brewing."

"Thank your honour, thank you; much obliged I'm sure. I hope your honour liked the trout I sent up. Beg pardon, Master Aram, mayhap you would condescend to accept a few fish now and then; they're very fine in these streams, as you probably know; if you please to let me, I'll send some up by the old 'oman to-morrow, that is if the day's cloudy a bit."

The Scholar thanked the good Bunting, and would have proceeded onward, but the Corporal was in a familiar mood.

“Beg pardon, beg pardon, but strange-looking dog here last evening—asked after you—said you were old friend of his—trotted off in your direction—hope all was right, Master?—augh!”

“All right!” repeated Aram, fixing his eyes on the Corporal, who had concluded his speech with a significant wink, and pausing a full moment before he continued, then as if satisfied with his survey, he added:

“Ay, ay, I know whom you mean; he had known me some years ago. So you saw him! What said he to you of me?”

“Augh! little enough, Master Aram, he seemed to think only of satisfying his own appetite; said he’d been a soldier.”

“A soldier, humph!”

“Never told me the regiment, though,—shy—did he ever desert, pray, your honour?”

“I don’t know;” answered Aram, turning away. “I know little, very little, about him!” He was going away, but stopped to add: “The man called on me last night for assistance; the lateness of the hour a little alarmed me. I gave him what I could afford, and he has now proceeded on his journey.”

“Oh, then, he won’t take up his quarters hereabouts, your honour?” said the Corporal, inquiringly.

“No, no; good evening.”

“What! this singular stranger, who so frightened my poor girls, is really known to you;” said Lester, in surprise: “pray is he as formidable as he seemed to them?”

“Scarcely,” said Aram, with great composure; “he has been a wild roving fellow all his life, but—but there is little real harm in him. He is certainly ill-favoured enough to—” here, interrupting himself, and breaking into a new sentence, Aram added: “but at all events he will frighten your nieces no more—he has proceeded on his journey northward. And now, yonder lies my way home. Good evening.” The abruptness of this farewell did indeed take Lester by surprise.

“Why, you will not leave me yet? The young ladies expect your return to them for an hour or so! What will they think of such desertion? No, no, come back, my good friend, and suffer me by and by to walk some part of the way home with you.”

“Pardon me,” said Aram, “I must leave you now. As to the ladies,” he added, with a faint smile, half in melancholy, half in scorn, “I am not one whom they could miss;—forgive me if I seem unceremonious. Adieu.”

Lester at first felt a little offended, but when he recalled the peculiar habits of the Scholar, he saw that the only way to hope for a continuance of that society which had so pleased him, was to indulge Aram at first in his unsocial inclinations, rather than annoy him by a troublesome hospitality; he therefore, without further discourse, shook hands with him, and they parted.

When Lester regained the little parlour, he found his nephew sitting, silent and discontented, by the window. Madeline had taken up a book, and Ellinor, in an opposite corner, was plying her needle with an air of earnestness and quiet, very unlike her usual playful and cheerful vivacity. There was evidently a cloud over the groupe; the good Lester regarded them with a searching, yet kindly eye.

“And what has happened?” said he, “something of mighty import, I am sure, or I should have heard my pretty Ellinor’s merry laugh long before I crossed the threshold.”

Ellinor coloured and sighed, and worked faster than ever. Walter threw open the window, and whistled a favourite air quite out of tune. Lester smiled, and seated himself by his nephew.

“Well, Walter,” said he, “I feel, for the first time in these ten years, I have a right to scold you. What on earth could make you so inhospitable to your uncle’s guest? You eyed the poor student, as if you wished him among the books of Alexandria!”

“I would he were burnt with them!” answered Walter, sharply. “He seems to have added the black art to his other accomplishments, and bewitched my fair cousins here into a forgetfulness of all but himself.”

“Not me!” said Ellinor eagerly, and looking up.

"No, not you, that's true enough; you are too just, too kind;—it is a pity that Madeline is not more like you."

"My dear Walter," said Madeline, "what is the matter? You accuse me of what? being attentive to a man whom it is impossible to hear without attention!"

"There!" cried Walter passionately; "you confess it; and so for a stranger,—a cold, vain, pedantic egotist, you can shut your ears and heart to those who have known and loved you all your life; and—and—"

"Vain!" interrupted Madeline, unheeding the latter part of Walter's address.

"Pedantic!" repeated her father.

"Yes! I say vain, pedantic!" cried Walter, working himself into a passion. What on earth but the love of display could make him monopolize the whole conversation?—What but pedantry could make him bring out those anecdotes and allusions, and descriptions, or whatever you call them, respecting every old wall or stupid plant in the country?

"I never thought you guilty of meanness before," said Lester gravely.

"Meanness!"

"Yes! for is it not mean to be jealous of superior acquirements, instead of admiring them?"

"What has been the use of those acquirements? Has he benefited mankind by them? Shew me the poet—the historian—the orator, and I will yield to none of you; no, not to Madeline herself in homage of their genius: but the mere creature of books—the dry and sterile collector of other men's learning—no—no. What should I admire in such a machine of literature, except a waste of perseverance?—And Madeline calls him handsome too!"

At this sudden turn from declamation to reproach, Lester laughed outright; and his nephew, in high anger, rose and left the room.

"Who could have thought Walter so foolish?" said Madeline.

"Nay," observed Ellinor gently, "it is the folly of a kind heart, after all. He feels sore at our seeming to prefer another—I mean another's conversation—to his!"

Lester turned round in his chair, and regarded with a serious look, the faces of both sisters.

"My dear Ellinor," said he, when he had finished his survey, "you are a kind girl—come and kiss me!"

CHAPTER VI.
THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE STUDENT. —A SUMMER SCENE—ARAM'S CONVERSATION WITH WALTER, AND SUBSEQUENT COLLOQUY WITH HIMSELF

"The soft season, the firmament serene,
The loun illuminate air, and firth amene
The silver-scalit fishes on the grete
O'er-thwart clear streams sprinkillond for the heat,"

—Gawin Douglas.

"Ilia subter
Caecum vulnus habes; sed lato balteus auro
Praetegit."

—Persius.

Several days elapsed before the family of the manor-house encountered Aram again. The old woman came once or twice to present the inquiries of her master as to Miss Lester's accident; but Aram himself did not appear. This want to interest certainly offended Madeline, although she still drew upon herself Walter's displeasure, by disputing and resenting the unfavourable strictures on the scholar, in which that young gentleman delighted to indulge. By degrees, however, as the days passed without maturing the acquaintance which Walter had disapproved, the youth relaxed in his attacks, and seemed to yield to the remonstrances of his uncle. Lester had, indeed, conceived an especial inclination towards the recluse. Any man of reflection, who has lived for some time alone, and who suddenly meets with one who calls forth in him, and without labour or contradiction, the thoughts which have sprung up in his solitude, scarcely felt in their growth, will comprehend the new zest, the awakening, as it were, of the mind, which Lester found in the conversation of Eugene Aram. His solitary walk (for his nephew had the separate pursuits of youth) appeared to him more dull than before; and he longed to renew an intercourse which had given to the monotony of his life both variety and relief. He called twice upon Aram, but the student was, or affected to be, from home; and an invitation he sent him, though couched in friendly terms, was, but with great semblance of kindness, refused.

"See, Walter," said Lester, disconcerted, as he finished reading the refusal—"see what your rudeness has effected. I am quite convinced that Aram (evidently a man of susceptible as well as retired mind) observed the coldness of your manner towards him, and that thus you have deprived me of the only society which, in this country of boors and savages, gave me any gratification."

Walter replied apologetically, but his uncle turned away with a greater appearance of anger than his placid features were wont to exhibit; and Walter, cursing the innocent cause of his uncle's displeasure towards him, took up his fishing-rod and went out alone, in no happy or exhilarated mood.

It was waxing towards eve—an hour especially lovely in the month of June, and not without reason favoured by the angler. Walter sauntered across the rich and fragrant fields, and came soon into a sheltered valley, through which the brooklet wound its shadowy way. Along the margin the grass sprung up long and matted, and profuse with a thousand weeds and flowers—the children of the teeming June. Here the ivy-leaved bell-flower, and not far from it the common enchanter's night-shade, the silver weed, and the water-aven; and by the hedges that now and then neared the water, the guelder-rose, and the white briony, overrunning the thicket with its emerald leaves and luxuriant flowers. And here and there, silvering the bushes, the elder offered its snowy tribute to the summer. All the insect youth were abroad, with their bright wings and glancing motion; and from the lower depths of the bushes the blackbird darted across, or higher and unseen the first cuckoo of the eve began its continuous and mellow note. All this cheeriness and gloss of life, which enamour us with the few bright days of the English summer, make the poetry in an angler's life, and convert every idler at heart into a moralist, and not a gloomy one, for the time.

Softened by the quiet beauty and voluptuousness around him, Walter's thoughts assumed a more gentle dye, and he broke out into the old lines:

"Sweet day, so soft, so calm, so bright; The bridal of the earth and sky," as he dipped his line into the current, and drew it across the shadowy hollows beneath the bank. The river-gods were not, however, in a favourable mood, and after waiting in vain for some time, in a spot in which he was usually successful, he proceeded slowly along the margin of the brooklet, crushing the reeds at every step, into that fresh and delicious odour, which furnished Bacon with one of his most beautiful comparisons.

He thought, as he proceeded, that beneath a tree that overhung the waters in the narrowest part of their channel, he heard a voice, and as he approached he recognised it as Aram's; a curve in

the stream brought him close by the spot, and he saw the student half reclined beneath the tree, and muttering, but at broken intervals, to himself.

The words were so scattered, that Walter did not trace their clue; but involuntarily he stopped short, within a few feet of the soliloquist: and Aram, suddenly turning round, beheld him. A fierce and abrupt change broke over the scholar's countenance; his cheek grew now pale, now flushed; and his brows knit over his flashing and dark eyes with an intent anger, that was the more withering, from its contrast to the usual calmness of his features. Walter drew back, but Aram stalking directly up to him, gazed into his face, as if he would read his very soul.

"What! eaves-dropping?" said he, with a ghastly smile. "You overheard me, did you? Well, well, what said I?—what said I?" Then pausing, and noting that Walter did not reply, he stamped his foot violently, and grinding his teeth, repeated in a smothered tone "Boy! what said I?"

"Mr. Aram," said Walter, "you forget yourself; I am not one to play the listener, more especially to the learned ravings of a man who can conceal nothing I care to know. Accident brought me hither."

"What! surely—surely I spoke aloud, did I not?—did I not?"

"You did, but so incoherently and indistinctly, that I did not profit by your indiscretion. I cannot plagiarise, I assure you, from any scholastic designs you might have been giving vent to."

Aram looked on him for a moment, and then breathing heavily, turned away.

"Pardon me," he said; "I am a poor half-crazed man; much study has unnerved me; I should never live but with my own thoughts; forgive me, Sir, I pray you."

Touched by the sudden contrition of Aram's manner, Walter forgot, not only his present displeasure, but his general dislike; he stretched forth his hand to the Student, and hastened to assure him of his ready forgiveness. Aram sighed deeply as he pressed the young man's hand, and Walter saw, with surprise and emotion, that his eyes were filled with tears.

"Ah!" said Aram, gently shaking his head, "it is a hard life we bookmen lead. Not for us is the bright face of noon-day or the smile of woman, the gay unbending of the heart, the neighing steed, and the shrill trump; the pride, pomp, and circumstance of life. Our enjoyments are few and calm; our labour constant; but that is it not, Sir?—that is it not? the body avenges its own neglect. We grow old before our time; we wither up; the sap of youth shrinks from our veins; there is no bound in our step. We look about us with dimmed eyes, and our breath grows short and thick, and pains and coughs, and shooting aches come upon us at night; it is a bitter life—a bitter life—a joyless life. I would I had never commenced it. And yet the harsh world scowls upon us: our nerves are broken, and they wonder we are querulous; our blood curdles, and they ask why we are not gay; our brain grows dizzy and indistinct, (as with me just now,) and, shrugging their shoulders, they whisper their neighbours that we are mad. I wish I had worked at the plough, and known sleep, and loved mirth —and—and not been what I am."

As the Student uttered the last sentence, he bowed down his head, and a few tears stole silently down his cheek. Walter was greatly affected—it took him by surprise; nothing in Aram's ordinary demeanour betrayed any facility to emotion; and he conveyed to all the idea of a man, if not proud, at least cold.

"You do not suffer bodily pain, I trust?" asked Walter, soothingly.

"Pain does not conquer me," said Aram, slowly recovering himself. "I am not melted by that which I would fain despise. Young man, I wronged you—you have forgiven me. Well, well, we will say no more on that head; it is past and pardoned. Your father has been kind to me, and I have not returned his advances; you shall tell him why. I have lived thirteen years by myself, and I have contracted strange ways and many humours not common to the world—you have seen an example of this. Judge for yourself if I be fit for the smoothness, and confidence, and ease of social intercourse; I am not fit, I feel it! I am doomed to be alone—tell your father this—tell him to suffer me to live so! I am grateful for his goodness—I know his motives—but have a certain pride of mind; I cannot bear sufferance—I loath indulgence. Nay, interrupt me not, I beseech you. Look round on Nature—

behold the only company that humbles me not—except the dead whose souls speak to us from the immortality of books. These herbs at your feet, I know their secrets—I watch the mechanism of their life; the winds—they have taught me their language; the stars—I have unravelled their mysteries; and these, the creatures and ministers of God—these I offend not by my mood—to them I utter my thoughts, and break forth into my dreams, without reserve and without fear. But men disturb me—I have nothing to learn from them—I have no wish to confide in them; they cripple the wild liberty which has become to me a second nature. What its shell is to the tortoise, solitude has become to me—my protection; nay, my life!"

"But," said Walter, "with us, at least, you would not have to dread restraint; you might come when you would; be silent or converse, according to your will."

Aram smiled faintly, but made no immediate reply.

"So, you have been angling!" he said, after a short pause, and as if willing to change the thread of conversation. "Fie! It is a treacherous pursuit; it encourages man's worst propensities—cruelty and deceit."

"I should have thought a lover of Nature would have been more indulgent to a pastime which introduces us to her most quiet retreats."

"And cannot Nature alone tempt you without need of such allurements? What! that crisped and winding stream, with flowers on its very tide—the water-violet and the water-lily—these silent brakes—the cool of the gathering evening—the still and luxuriance of the universal life around you; are not these enough of themselves to tempt you forth? if not, go to—your excuse is hypocrisy."

"I am used to these scenes," replied Walter; "I am weary of the thoughts they produce in me, and long for any diversion or excitement."

"Ay, ay, young man! The mind is restless at your age—have a care. Perhaps you long to visit the world—to quit these obscure haunts which you are fatigued in admiring?"

"It may be so," said Walter, with a slight sigh. "I should at least like to visit our great capital, and note the contrast; I should come back, I imagine, with a greater zest to these scenes."

Aram laughed. "My friend," said he, "when men have once plunged into the great sea of human toil and passion, they soon wash away all love and zest for innocent enjoyments. What once was a soft retirement, will become the most intolerable monotony; the gaming of social existence—the feverish and desperate chances of honour and wealth, upon which the men of cities set their hearts, render all pursuits less exciting, utterly insipid and dull. The brook and the angle—ha!—ha!—these are not occupations for men who have once battled with the world."

"I can forego them, then, without regret;" said Walter, with the sanguineness of his years. Aram looked upon him wistfully; the bright eye, the healthy cheek, and vigorous frame of the youth, suited with his desire to seek the conflict of his kind, and gave a naturalness to his ambition, which was not without interest, even to the recluse.

"Poor boy!" said he, mournfully, "how gallantly the ship leaves the port; how worn and battered it will return!"

When they parted, Walter returned slowly homewards, filled with pity towards the singular man whom he had seen so strangely overpowered; and wondering how suddenly his mind had lost its former rancour to the Student. Yet there mingled even with these kindly feelings, a little displeasure at the superior tone which Aram had unconsciously adopted towards him; and to which, from any one, the high spirit of the young man was not readily willing to submit.

Meanwhile, the Student continued his path along the water side, and as, with his gliding step and musing air, he roamed onward, it was impossible to imagine a form more suited to the deep tranquillity of the scene. Even the wild birds seemed to feel, by a sort of instinct, that in him there was no cause for fear; and did not stir from the turf that neighboured, or the spray that overhung, his path.

"So," said he, soliloquizing, but not without casting frequent and jealous glances round him, and in a murmur so indistinct as would have been inaudible even to a listener—"so, I was not overheard,

—well, I must cure myself of this habit; our thoughts, like nuns, ought not to go abroad without a veil. Ay, this tone will not betray me, I will preserve its tenor, for I can scarcely altogether renounce my sole confidant—SELF; and thought seems more clear when uttered even thus. 'Tis a fine youth! full of the impulse and daring of his years; I was never so young at heart. I was—nay, what matters it? Who is answerable for his nature? Who can say, 'I controlled all the circumstances which made me what I am?' Madeline,—Heavens! did I bring on myself this temptation? Have I not fenced it from me throughout all my youth, when my brain did at moments forsake me, and the veins did bound? And now, when the yellow hastens on the green of life; now, for the first time, this emotion—this weakness—and for whom? One I have lived with—known—beneath whose eyes I have passed through all the fine gradations, from liking to love, from love to passion? No;—one, whom I have seen but little; who, it is true, arrested my eye at the first glance it caught of her two years since, but with whom till within the last few weeks I have scarcely spoken! Her voice rings on my ear, her look dwells on my heart; when I sleep, she is with me; when I wake, I am haunted by her image. Strange, strange! Is love then, after all, the sudden passion which in every age poetry has termed it, though till now my reason has disbelieved the notion?... And now, what is the question? To resist, or to yield. Her father invites me, courts me; and I stand aloof! Will this strength, this forbearance, last?—Shall I encourage my mind to this decision?" Here Aram paused abruptly, and then renewed: "It is true! I ought to weave my lot with none. Memory sets me apart and alone in the world; it seems unnatural to me, a thought of dread—to bring another being to my solitude, to set an everlasting watch on my uprisings and my downsittings; to invite eyes to my face when I sleep at nights, and ears to every word that may start unbidden from my lips. But if the watch be the watch of love—away! does love endure for ever? He who trusts to woman, trusts to the type of change. Affection may turn to hatred, fondness to loathing, anxiety to dread; and, at the best, woman is weak, she is the minion to her impulses. Enough, I will steel my soul,—shut up the avenues of sense,—brand with the scathing-iron these yet green and soft emotions of lingering youth,—and freeze and chain and curdle up feeling, and heart, and manhood, into ice and age!"

CHAPTER VII.
THE POWER OF LOVE OVER THE RESOLUTION OF THE STUDENT.—ARAM BECOMES A FREQUENT GUEST AT THE MANOR-HOUSE.—A WALK.—CONVERSATION WITH DAME DARKMANS.—HER HISTORY.—POVERTY AND ITS EFFECTS

MAD. "Then, as Time won thee frequent to our hearth,
Didst thou not breathe, like dreams, into my soul
Nature's more gentle secrets, the sweet lore
Of the green herb and the bee-worshipp'd flower?
And when deep Night did o'er the nether Earth
Diffuse meek quiet, and the Heart of Heaven
With love grew breathless—didst thou not unrol
The volume of the weird chaldean stars,
And of the winds, the clouds, the invisible air,
Make eloquent discourse, until, methought,

No human lip, but some diviner spirit
Alone, could preach such truths of things divine?
And so—and so—"

ARAM. "From Heaven we turned to Earth,
And Wisdom fathered Passion."
.....
ARAM. "Wise men have praised the Peasant's thoughtless lot,
And learned Pride hath envied humble Toil;
If they were right, why let us burn our books,
And sit us down, and play the fool with Time,
Mocking the prophet Wisdom's high decrees,
And walling this trite Present with dark clouds,
'Till Night becomes our Nature; and the ray
Ev'n of the stars, but meteors that withdraw
The wandering spirit from the sluggish rest
Which makes its proper bliss. I will accost
This denizen of toil."

—From Eugene Aram, a MS. Tragedy.

"A wicked hag, and envy's self excelling
In mischiefe, for herself she only vext,
But this same, both herself and others eke perplext."
.....
"Who then can strive with strong necessity,
That holds the world in his still changing state,
.....
Then do no further go, no further stray,
But here lie down, and to thy rest betake."

—Spenser.

Few men perhaps could boast of so masculine and firm a mind, as, despite his eccentricities, Aram assuredly possessed. His habits of solitude had strengthened its natural hardihood; for, accustomed to make all the sources of happiness flow solely from himself, his thoughts the only companion—his genius the only vivifier—of his retreat; the tone and faculty of his spirit could not but assume that austere and vigorous energy which the habit of self-dependence almost invariably produces; and yet, the reader, if he be young, will scarcely feel surprise that the resolution of the Student, to battle against incipient love, from whatever reasons it might be formed, gradually and reluctantly melted away. It may be noted, that the enthusiasts of learning and reverie have, at one time or another in their lives, been, of all the tribes of men, the most keenly susceptible to love; their solitude feeds their passion; and deprived, as they usually are, of the more hurried and vehement occupations of life, when love is once admitted to their hearts, there is no counter-check to its emotions, and no escape from its excitation. Aram, too, had just arrived at that age when a man usually feels a sort of revulsion in the current of his desires. At that age, those who have hitherto pursued love, begin to grow alive to ambition; those who have been slaves to the pleasures of life, awaken from the dream, and direct their desire to its interests. And in the same proportion, they who till then have wasted the prodigal fervours of youth upon a sterile soil; who have served Ambition, or, like Aram, devoted their hearts to Wisdom; relax from their ardour, look back on the departed

years with regret, and commence, in their manhood, the fiery pleasures and delirious follies which are only pardonable in youth. In short, as in every human pursuit there is a certain vanity, and as every acquisition contains within itself the seed of disappointment, so there is a period of life when we pause from the pursuit, and are discontented with the acquisition. We then look around us for something new—again follow—and are again deceived. Few men throughout life are the servants to one desire. When we gain the middle of the bridge of our mortality, different objects from those which attracted us upward almost invariably lure us to the descent. Happy they who exhaust in the former part of the journey all the foibles of existence! But how different is the crude and evanescent love of that age when thought has not given intensity and power to the passions, from the love which is felt, for the first time, in maturer but still youthful years! As the flame burns the brighter in proportion to the resistance which it conquers, this later love is the more glowing in proportion to the length of time in which it has overcome temptation: all the solid and, concentred faculties ripened to their full height, are no longer capable of the infinite distractions, the numberless caprices of youth; the rays of the heart, not rendered weak by diversion, collect into one burning focus;

[Love is of the nature of a burning glass, which kept still in one place, fireth; changed often it doth nothing!"
—Letters by Sir John Suckling.]

the same earnestness and unity of purpose which render what we undertake in manhood so far more successful than what we would effect in youth, are equally visible and equally triumphant, whether directed to interest or to love. But then, as in Aram, the feelings must be fresh as well as matured; they must not have been frittered away by previous indulgence; the love must be the first produce of the soil, not the languid after-growth.

The reader will remark, that the first time in which our narrative has brought Madeline and Aram together, was not the first time they had met; Aram had long noted with admiration a beauty which he had never seen paralleled, and certain vague and unsettled feelings had preluded the deeper emotion that her image now excited within him. But the main cause of his present and growing attachment, had been in the evident sentiment of kindness which he could not but feel Madeline bore towards him. So retiring a nature as his, might never have harboured love, if the love bore the character of presumption; but that one so beautiful beyond his dreams as Madeline Lester, should deign to exercise towards him a tenderness, that might suffer him to hope, was a thought, that when he caught her eye unconsciously fixed upon him, and noted that her voice grew softer and more tremulous when she addressed him, forced itself upon his heart, and woke there a strange and irresistible emotion, which solitude and the brooding reflection that solitude produces—a reflection so much more intense in proportion to the paucity of living images it dwells upon—soon ripened into love. Perhaps even, he would not have resisted the impulse as he now did, had not at this time certain thoughts connected with past events, been more forcibly than of late years obtruded upon him, and thus in some measure divided his heart. By degrees, however, those thoughts receded from their vividness, into the habitual deep, but not oblivious, shade beneath which his commanding mind had formerly driven them to repose; and as they thus receded, Madeline's image grew more undisturbedly present, and his resolution to avoid its power more fluctuating and feeble. Fate seemed bent upon bringing together these two persons, already so attracted towards each other. After the conversation recorded in our last chapter, between Walter and the Student, the former, touched and softened as we have seen, in spite of himself, had cheerfully forborne (what before he had done reluctantly) the expressions of dislike which he had once lavished so profusely upon Aram; and Lester, who, forward as he had seemed, had nevertheless been hitherto a little checked in his advances to his neighbour by the hostility of his son, now felt no scruple to deter him from urging them with a pertinacity that almost forbade refusal. It was Aram's constant habit, in all seasons, to wander abroad at certain times of the day, especially towards the evening; and if Lester failed to win entrance to his house,

he was thus enabled to meet the Student in his frequent rambles, and with a seeming freedom from design. Actuated by his great benevolence of character, Lester earnestly desired to win his solitary and unfriended neighbour from a mood and habit which he naturally imagined must engender a growing melancholy of mind; and since Walter had detailed to him the particulars of his meeting with Aram, this desire had been considerably increased. There is not perhaps a stronger feeling in the world than pity, when united with admiration. When one man is resolved to know another, it is almost impossible to prevent him: we see daily the most remarkable instances of perseverance on one side conquering distaste on the other. By degrees, then, Aram relaxed from his insociability; he seemed to surrender himself to a kindness, the sincerity of which he was compelled to acknowledge; if he for a long time refused to accept the hospitality of his neighbour, he did not reject his society when they met, and this intercourse by little and little progressed, until ultimately the recluse yielded to solicitation, and became the guest as well as companion. This, at first accident, grew, though not without many interruptions, into habit; and at length few evenings were passed by the inmates of the Manor-house without the society of the Student. As his reserve wore off, his conversation mingled with its attractions a tender and affectionate tone. He seemed grateful for the pains which had been taken to allure him to a scene in which, at last, he acknowledged he found a happiness that he never experienced before: and those who had hitherto admired him for his genius, admired him now yet more for his susceptibility to the affections.

There was not in Aram any thing that savoured of the harshness of pedantry, or the petty vanities of dogmatism: his voice was soft and low, and his manner always remarkable for its singular gentleness, and a certain dignified humility. His language did indeed, at times, assume a tone of calm and patriarchal command; but it was only the command arising from an intimate persuasion of the truth of what he uttered. Moralizing upon our nature, or mourning over the delusions of the world, a grave and solemn strain breathed throughout his lofty words and the profound melancholy of his wisdom; but it touched, not offended—elevated, not humbled—the lesser intellect of his listeners; and even this air of unconscious superiority vanished when he was invited to teach or explain. That task which so few do gracefully, that an accurate and shrewd thinker has said: “It is always safe to learn, even from our enemies; seldom safe to instruct even our friends,” [Note: Lacon.] Aram performed with a meekness and simplicity that charmed the vanity, even while it corrected the ignorance, of the applicant; and so various and minute was the information of this accomplished man, that there scarcely existed any branch even of that knowledge usually called practical, to which he could not impart from his stores something valuable and new. The agriculturist was astonished at the success of his suggestions; and the mechanic was indebted to him for the device which abridged his labour in improving its result.

It happened that the study of botany was not, at that day, so favourite and common a diversion with young ladies as it is now, and Ellinor, captivated by the notion of a science that gave a life and a history to the loveliest of earth’s offspring, besought Aram to teach her its principles.

As Madeline, though she did not second the request, could scarcely absent herself from sharing the lesson, this pursuit brought the pair—already lovers—closer and closer together. It associated them not only at home, but in their rambles throughout that enchanting country; and there is a mysterious influence in Nature, which renders us, in her loveliest scenes, the most susceptible to love! Then, too, how often in their occupation their hands and eyes met:—how often, by the shady wood or the soft water-side, they found themselves alone. In all times, how dangerous the connexion, when of different sexes, between the scholar and the teacher! Under how many pretences, in that connexion, the heart finds the opportunity to speak out.

Yet it was not with ease and complacency that Aram delivered himself to the intoxication of his deepening attachment. Sometimes he was studiously cold, or evidently wrestling with the powerful passion that mastered his reason. It was not without many throes, and desperate resistance, that love at length overwhelmed and subdued him; and these alternations of his mood, if they sometimes offended

Madeline and sometimes wounded, still rather increased than lessened the spell which bound her to him. The doubt and the fear—the caprice and the change, which agitate the surface, swell also the tides, of passion. Woman, too, whose love is so much the creature of her imagination, always asks something of mystery and conjecture in the object of her affection. It is a luxury to her to perplex herself with a thousand apprehensions; and the more restlessly her lover occupies her mind, the more deeply he enthrals it.

Mingling with her pure and tender attachment to Aram, a high and unswerving veneration, she saw in his fitfulness, and occasional abstraction and contradiction of manner, a confirmation of the modest sentiment that most weighed upon her fears; and imagined that at those times he thought her, as she deemed herself, unworthy of his love. And this was the only struggle which she conceived to pass between the affection he evidently bore her, and the feelings which had as yet restrained him from its open avowal.

One evening, Lester and the two sisters were walking with the Student along the valley that led to the house of the latter, when they saw an old woman engaged in collecting firewood among the bushes, and a little girl holding out her apron to receive the sticks with which the crone's skinny arms unsparingly filled it. The child trembled, and seemed half-crying; while the old woman, in a harsh, grating croak, was muttering forth mingled objurgation and complaint.

There was something in the appearance of the latter at once impressive and displeasing; a dark, withered, furrowed skin was drawn like parchment over harsh and aquiline features; the eyes, through the rheum of age, glittered forth black and malignant; and even her stooping posture did not conceal a height greatly above the common stature, though gaunt and shrivelled with years and poverty. It was a form and face that might have recalled at once the celebrated description of Otway, on a part of which we have already unconsciously encroached, and the remaining part of which we shall wholly borrow.

"—On her crooked shoulders had she wrapped The tattered remnants of an old stript hanging, That served to keep her carcase from the cold, So there was nothing of a piece about her. Her lower weeds were all o'er coarsely patched With different coloured rags, black, red, white, yellow, And seemed to speak variety of wretchedness."

"See," said Lester, "one of the eyesores of our village, (I might say) the only discontented person."

"What! Dame Darkmans!" said Ellinor, quickly. "Ah! let us turn back. I hate to encounter that old woman; there is something so evil and savage in her manner of talk—and look, how she rates that poor girl, whom she has dragged or decoyed to assist her!"

Aram looked curiously on the old hag. "Poverty," said he, "makes some humble, but more malignant; is it not want that grafts the devil on this poor woman's nature? Come, let us accost her —I like conferring with distress."

"It is hard labour this?" said the Student gently.

The old woman looked up askant—the music of the voice that addressed her sounded harsh on her ear.

"Ay, ay!" she answered. "You fine gentlefolks can know what the poor suffer; ye talk and ye talk, but ye never assist."

"Say not so, Dame," said Lester; "did I not send you but yesterday bread and money? and when do you ever look up at the Hall without obtaining relief?"

"But the bread was as dry as a stick," growled the hag: "and the money, what was it? will it last a week? Oh, yes! Ye think as much of your doits and mites, as if ye stripped yourselves of a comfort to give it to us. Did ye have a dish less—a 'tato less, the day ye sent me—your charity I 'spose ye calls it? Och! fie! But the Bible's the poor cretur's comfort."

"I am glad to hear you say that, Dame," said the good-natured Lester; "and I forgive every thing else you have said, on account of that one sentence."

The old woman dropped the sticks she had just gathered, and glowered at the speaker's benevolent countenance with a malicious meaning in her dark eyes.

"An' ye do? Well, I'm glad I please ye there. Och! yes! the Bible's a mighty comfort; for it says as much that the rich man shall not inter the kingdom of Heaven! There's a truth for you, that makes the poor folk's heart chirp like a cricket—ho! ho! I sits by the imbers of a night, and I thinks and thinks as how I shall see you all burning; and ye'll ask me for a drop o' water, and I shall laugh thin from my pleasant seat with the angels. Och—it's a book for the poor that!"

The sisters shuddered. "And you think then that with envy, malice, and all uncharitableness at your heart, you are certain of Heaven? For shame! Pluck the mote from your own eye!"

"What sinnifies praching? Did not the Blessed Saviour come for the poor? Them as has rags and dry bread here will be ixalted in the nixt world; an' if we poor folk have malice as ye calls it, whose fault's that? What do ye tache us? Eh?—answer me that. Ye keeps all the larning an' all the other fine things to yoursel', and then ye scould, and thritten, and hang us, 'cause we are not as wise as you. Och! there is no jistice in the Lamb, if Heaven is not made for us; and the iverlasting Hell, with its brimstone and fire, and its gnawing an' gnashing of teeth, an' its theirst, an' its torture, and its worm that niver dies, for the like o' you."

"Come! come away," said Ellinor, pulling her father's arm.

"And if," said Aram, pausing, "if I were to say to you,—name your want and it shall be fulfilled, would you have no charity for me also?"

"Umph," returned the hag, "ye are the great scolard; and they say ye knows what no one else do. Till me now," and she approached, and familiarly, laid her bony finger on the student's arm; "till me,—have ye iver, among other fine things, known poverty?"

"I have, woman!" said Aram, sternly.

"Och ye have thin! And did ye not sit and gloat, and eat up your oun heart, an' curse the sun that looked so gay, an' the winged things that played so blithe-like, an' scowl at the rich folk that niver wasted a thought on ye? till me now, your honour, till me!"

And the crone curtesied with a mock air of beseeching humility.

"I never forgot, even in want, the love due to my fellow-sufferers; for, woman, we all suffer,—the rich and the poor: there are worse pangs than those of want!"

"Ye think there be, do ye? that's a comfort, umph! Well, I'll till ye now, I feel a rispict for you, that I don't for the rest on 'em; for your face does not insult me with being cheary like their's yonder; an' I have noted ye walk in the dusk with your eyes down and your arms crossed; an' I have said,—that man I do not hate, somehow, for he has something dark at his heart like me!"

"The lot of earth is woe," answered Aram calmly, yet shrinking back from the crone's touch; "judge we charitably, and act we kindly to each other. There—this money is not much, but it will light your hearth and heap your table without toil, for some days at least!"

"Thank your honour: an' what think you I'll do with the money?"

"What?"

"Drink, drink, drink!" cried the hag fiercely; "there's nothing like drink for the poor, for thin we fancy oursels what we wish, and," sinking her voice into a whisper, "I thinks thin that I have my foot on the billies of the rich folks, and my hands twisted about their intrails, and I hear them shriek, and—thin I'm happy!"

"Go home!" said Aram, turning away, "and open the Book of life with other thoughts."

The little party proceeded, and, looking back, Lester saw the old woman gaze after them, till a turn in the winding valley hid her from his sight.

"That is a strange person, Aram; scarcely a favourable specimen of the happy English peasant;" said Lester, smiling.

"Yet they say," added Madeline, "that she was not always the same perverse and hateful creature she is now."

"Ay," said Aram, "and what then is her history?"

"Why," replied Madeline, slightly blushing to find herself made the narrator of a story, "some forty years ago this woman, so gaunt and hideous now, was the beauty of the village. She married an Irish soldier whose regiment passed through Grassdale, and was heard of no more till about ten years back, when she returned to her native place, the discontented, envious, altered being you now see her."

"She is not reserved in regard to her past life," said Lester. "She is too happy to seize the attention of any one to whom she can pour forth her dark and angry confidence. She saw her husband, who was afterwards dismissed the service, a strong, powerful man, a giant of his tribe, pine and waste, inch by inch, from mere physical want, and at last literally die from hunger. It happened that they had settled in the country in which her husband was born, and in that county, those frequent famines which are the scourge of Ireland were for two years especially severe. You may note, that the old woman has a strong vein of coarse eloquence at her command, perhaps acquired in (for it partakes of the natural character of) the country in which she lived so long; and it would literally thrill you with horror to hear her descriptions of the misery and destitution that she witnessed, and amidst which her husband breathed his last. Out of four children, not one survives. One, an infant, died within a week of the father; two sons were executed, one at the age of sixteen, one a year older, for robbery committed under aggravated circumstances; and the fourth, a daughter, died in the hospitals of London. The old woman became a wanderer and a vagrant, and was at length passed to her native parish, where she has since dwelt. These are the misfortunes which have turned her blood to gall; and these are the causes which fill her with so bitter a hatred against those whom wealth has preserved from sharing or witnessing a fate similar to hers."

"Oh!" said Aram, in a low, but deep tone, "when—when will these hideous disparities be banished from the world? How many noble natures—how many glorious hopes—how much of the seraph's intellect, have been crushed into the mire, or blasted into guilt, by the mere force of physical want? What are the temptations of the rich to those of the poor? Yet see how lenient we are to the crimes of the one,—how relentless to those of the other! It is a bad world; it makes a man's heart sick to look around him. The consciousness of how little individual genius can do to relieve the mass, grinds out, as with a stone, all that is generous in ambition; and to aspire from the level of life is but to be more graspingly selfish."

"Can legislators, or the moralists that instruct legislators, do so little, then, towards universal good?" said Lester, doubtingly.

"Why? what can they do but forward civilization? And what is civilization, but an increase of human disparities? The more the luxury of the few, the more startling the wants, and the more galling the sense, of poverty. Even the dreams of the philanthropist only tend towards equality; and where is equality to be found, but in the state of the savage? No; I thought otherwise once; but I now regard the vast lazar-house around us without hope of relief:—Death is the sole Physician!"

"Ah, no!" said the high-souled Madeline, eagerly; "do not take away from us the best feeling and the highest desire we can cherish. How poor, even in this beautiful world, with the warm sun and fresh air about us, that alone are sufficient to make us glad, would be life, if we could not make the happiness of others!"

Aram looked at the beautiful speaker with a soft and half-mournful smile. There is one very peculiar pleasure that we feel as we grow older,—it is to see embodied in another and a more lovely shape the thoughts and sentiments we once nursed ourselves; it is as if we viewed before us the incarnation of our own youth; and it is no wonder that we are warmed towards the object, that thus seems the living apparition of all that was brightest in ourselves! It was with this sentiment that Aram now gazed on Madeline. She felt the gaze, and her heart beat delightedly, but she sunk at once into a silence, which she did not break during the rest of their walk.

"I do not say," said Aram, after a pause, "that we are not able to make the happiness of those immediately around us. I speak only of what we can effect for the mass. And it is a deadening thought

to mental ambition, that the circle of happiness we can create is formed more by our moral than our mental qualities. A warm heart, though accompanied but by a mediocre understanding, is even more likely to promote the happiness of those around, than are the absorbed and abstract, though kindly powers of a more elevated genius; but (observing Lester about to interrupt him), let us turn from this topic,—let us turn from man's weakness to the glories of the mother-nature, from which he sprung."

And kindling, as he ever did, the moment he approached a subject so dear to his studies, Aram now spoke of the stars, which began to sparkle forth,—of the vast, illimitable career which recent science had opened to the imagination,—and of the old, bewildering, yet eloquent theories, which from age to age had at once misled and elevated the conjecture of past sages. All this was a theme which his listeners loved to listen to, and Madeline not the least. Youth, beauty, pomp, what are these, in point of attraction, to a woman's heart, when compared to eloquence?—the magic of the tongue is the most dangerous of all spells!

CHAPTER VIII.
THE PRIVILEGE OF GENIUS.—LESTER'S SATISFACTION AT THE ASPECT OF EVENTS.—HIS CONVERSATION WITH WALTER.—A DISCOVERY

"Alc.—I am for Lidian:
This accident no doubt will draw him from his hermit's life!

"Lis.—Spare my grief, and apprehend
What I should speak."

—Beaumont and Fletcher.—The Lovers' Progress.

In the course of the various conversations our family of Grassdale enjoyed with their singular neighbour, it appeared that his knowledge had not been confined to the closet; at times, he dropped remarks which shewed that he had been much among cities, and travelled with the design, or at least with the vigilance, of the observer; but he did not love to be drawn into any detailed accounts of what he had seen, or whither he had been; an habitual though a gentle reserve, kept watch over the past—not indeed that character of reserve which excites the doubt, but which inspires the interest. His most gloomy moods were rather abrupt and fitful than morose, and his usual bearing was calm, soft, and even tender.

There is a certain charm about great superiority of intellect, that winds into deep affections which a much more constant and even amiability of manners in lesser men, often fails to reach. Genius makes many enemies, but it makes sure friends—friends who forgive much, who endure long, who exact little; they partake of the character of disciples as well as friends. There lingers about the human heart a strong inclination to look upward—to revere: in this inclination lies the source of religion, of loyalty, and also of the worship and immortality which are rendered so cheerfully to the great of old. And in truth, it is a divine pleasure to admire! admiration seems in some measure to appropriate to ourselves the qualities it honours in others. We wed,—we root ourselves to the natures we so love to contemplate, and their life grows a part of our own. Thus, when a great man, who has engrossed our thoughts, our conjectures, our homage, dies, a gap seems suddenly left in the world; a wheel in the mechanism of our own being appears abruptly stilled; a portion of ourselves, and not our worst

portion, for how many pure, high, generous sentiments it contains, dies with him! Yes! it is this love, so rare, so exalted, and so denied to all ordinary men, which is the especial privilege of greatness, whether that greatness be shewn in wisdom, in enterprise, in virtue, or even, till the world learns better, in the more daring and lofty order of crime. A Socrates may claim it to-day—a Napoleon to-morrow; nay, a brigand chief, illustrious in the circle in which he lives, may call it forth no less powerfully than the generous failings of a Byron, or the sublime excellence of the greater Milton.

Lester saw with evident complacency the passion growing up between his friend and his daughter; he looked upon it as a tie that would permanently reconcile Aram to the hearth of social and domestic life; a tie that would constitute the happiness of his daughter, and secure to himself a relation in the man he felt most inclined, of all he knew, to honour and esteem. He remarked in the gentleness and calm temper of Aram much that was calculated to ensure domestic peace, and knowing the peculiar disposition of Madeline, he felt that she was exactly the person, not only to bear with the peculiarities of the Student, but to venerate their source. In short, the more he contemplated the idea of this alliance, the more he was charmed with its probability.

Musing on this subject, the good Squire was one day walking in his garden, when he perceived his nephew at some distance, and remarked that Walter, on seeing him, was about, instead of coming forward to meet him, to turn down an alley in an opposite direction.

A little pained at this, and remembering that Walter had of late seemed estranged from himself, and greatly altered from the high and cheerful spirits natural to his temper, Lester called to his nephew; and Walter, reluctantly and slowly changing his purpose of avoidance, advanced and met him.

"Why, Walter!" said the uncle, taking his arm; "this is somewhat unkind, to shun me; are you engaged in any pursuit that requires secrecy or haste?"

"No, indeed, Sir!" said Walter, with some embarrassment; "but I thought you seemed wrapped in reflection, and would naturally dislike being disturbed."

"Hem! as to that, I have no reflections I wish concealed from you, Walter, or which might not be benefited by your advice." The youth pressed his uncle's hand, but made no reply; and Lester, after a pause, continued:—

"You seem, Walter, I am most delighted to think, entirely to have overcome the little unfavourable prepossession which at first you testified towards our excellent neighbour. And for my part, I think he appears to be especially attracted towards yourself, he seeks your company; and to me he always speaks of you in terms, which, coming from such a quarter, give me the most lively gratification."

Walter bowed his head, but not in the delighted vanity with which a young man generally receives the assurance of another's praise.

"I own," renewed Lester, "that I consider our friendship with Aram one of the most fortunate occurrences in my life; at least," added he with a sigh, "of late years. I doubt not but you must have observed the partiality with which our dear Madeline evidently regards him; and yet more, the attachment to her, which breaks forth from Aram, in spite of his habitual reserve and self-control. You have surely noted this, Walter?"

"I have," said Walter, in a low tone, and turning away his head.

"And doubtless you share my satisfaction. It happens fortunately now, that Madeline early contracted that studious and thoughtful turn, which I must own at one time gave me some uneasiness and vexation. It has taught her to appreciate the value of a mind like Aram's. Formerly, my dear boy, I hoped that at one time or another, she and yourself might form a dearer connection than that of cousins. But I was disappointed, and I am now consoled. And indeed I think there is that in Ellinor which might be yet more calculated to render you happy; that is, if the bias of your mind should ever lean that way."

"You are very good," said Walter, bitterly. "I own I am not flattered by your selection; nor do I see why the plainest and least brilliant of the two sisters must necessarily be the fittest for me."

"Nay," replied Lester, piqued, and justly angry, "I do not think, even if Madeline have the advantage of her sister, that you can find any fault with the personal or mental attractions of Ellinor. But indeed this is not a matter in which relations should interfere. I am far from any wish to prevent you from choosing throughout the world any one whom you may prefer. All I hope is, that your future wife will be like Ellinor in kindness of heart and sweetness of temper."

"From choosing throughout the world!" repeated Walter; "and how in this nook am I to see the world?"

"Walter! your voice is reproachful!—do I deserve it?"

Walter was silent.

"I have of late observed," continued Lester, "and with wounded feelings, that you do not give me the same confidence, or meet me with the same affection, that you once delighted me by manifesting towards me. I know of no cause for this change. Do not let us, my son, for I may so call you—do not let us, as we grow older, grow also more apart. Time divides with a sufficient demarcation the young from the old; why deepen the necessary line? You know well, that I have never from your childhood insisted heavily on a guardian's authority. I have always loved to contribute to your enjoyments, and shewn you how devoted I am to your interests, by the very frankness with which I have consulted you on my own. If there be now on your mind any secret grievance, or any secret wish, speak it, Walter:—you are alone with the friend on earth who loves you best!"

Walter was wholly overcome by this address: he pressed his good uncle's hand to his lips, and it was some moments before he mustered self-composure sufficient to reply.

"You have ever, ever been to me all that the kindest parent, the tenderest friend could have been:—believe me, I am not ungrateful. If of late I have been altered, the cause is not in you. Let me speak freely: you encourage me to do so. I am young, my temper is restless; I have a love of enterprise and adventure: is it not natural that I should long to see the world? This is the cause of my late abstraction of mind. I have now told you all: it is for you to decide."

Lester looked wistfully on his nephew's countenance before he replied—

"It is as I gathered," said he, "from various remarks which you have lately let fall. I cannot blame your wish to leave us; it is certainly natural: nor can I oppose it. Go, Walter, when you will!"

The young man turned round with a lighted eye and flushed cheek.

"And why, Walter?" said Lester, interrupting his thanks, "why this surprise? why this long doubt of my affection? Could you believe I should refuse a wish that, at your age, I should have expressed myself? You have wronged me; you might have saved a world of pain to us both by acquainting me with your desire when it was first formed; but, enough. I see Madeline and Aram approach,—let us join them now, and to-morrow we will arrange the time and method of your departure.

"Forgive me, Sir," said Walter, stopping abruptly as the glow faded from his cheek, "I have not yet recovered myself; I am not fit for other society than yours. Excuse my joining my cousin, and—"

"Walter!" said Lester, also stopping short and looking full on his nephew, "a painful thought flashes upon me! Would to heaven I may be wrong!—Have you ever felt for Madeline more tenderly than for her sister?"

Walter literally trembled as he stood. The tears rushed into Lester's eyes:—he grasped his nephew's hand warmly—

"God comfort thee, my poor boy!" said he, with great emotion; "I never dreamt of this."

Walter felt now that he was understood. He gratefully returned the pressure of his uncle's hand, and then, withdrawing his own, darted down one of the intersecting walks, and was almost instantly out of sight.

CHAPTER IX.
THE STATE OF WALTER'S MIND. —AN ANGLER AND A MAN OF THE WORLD.—A COMPANION FOUND FOR WALTER

"This great disease for love I dre,
There is no tongue can tell the wo;
I love the love that loves not me,
I may not mend, but mourning mo."

—The Mourning Maiden.

"I in these flowery meads would be,
These crystal streams should solace me,
To whose harmonious bubbling voice
I with my angle would rejoice."

—Izaac Walton.

When Walter left his uncle, he hurried, scarcely conscious of his steps, towards his favourite haunt by the water-side. From a child, he had singled out that scene as the witness of his early sorrows or boyish schemes; and still, the solitude of the place cherished the habit of his boyhood.

Long had he, unknown to himself, nourished an attachment to his beautiful cousin; nor did he awaken to the secret of his heart, until, with an agonizing jealousy, he penetrated the secret at her own. The reader has, doubtless, already perceived that it was this jealousy which at the first occasioned Walter's dislike to Aram: the consolation of that dislike was forbid him now. The gentleness and forbearance of the Student's deportment had taken away all ground of offence; and Walter had sufficient generosity to acknowledge his merits, while tortured by their effect. Silently, till this day, he had gnawed his heart, and found for its despair no confidant and no comfort. The only wish that he cherished was a feverish and gloomy desire to leave the scene which witnessed the triumph of his rival. Every thing around had become hateful to his eyes, and a curse had lighted upon the face of Home. He thought now, with a bitter satisfaction, that his escape was at hand: in a few days he might be rid of the gall and the pang, which every moment of his stay at Grassdale inflicted upon him. The sweet voice of Madeline he should hear no more, subduing its silver sound for his rival's ear:—no more he should watch apart, and himself unheeded, how timidly her glance roved in search of another, or how vividly her cheek flushed when the step of that happier one approached. Many miles would at least shut out this picture from his view; and in absence, was it not possible that he might teach himself to forget? Thus meditating, he arrived at the banks of the little brooklet, and was awakened from his reverie by the sound of his own name. He started, and saw the old Corporal seated on the stump of a tree, and busily employed in fixing to his line the mimic likeness of what anglers, and, for aught we know, the rest of the world, call the "violet fly."

"Ha! master,—at my day's work, you see:—fit for nothing else now. When a musquet's halfworn out, schoolboys buy it—pop it at sparrows. I be like the musket: but never mind—have not seen the world for nothing. We get reconciled to all things: that's my way—augh! Now, Sir, you shall watch me catch the finest trout you have seen this summer: know where he lies—under the bush yonder. Whi—sh! Sir, whi—sh!"

The Corporal now gave his warrior soul up to the due guidance of the violet-fly: now he shipped it lightly on the wave; now he slid it coquettishly along the surface; now it floated, like an unconscious beauty, carelessly with the tide; and now, like an artful prude, it affected to loiter by the way, or to steal into designing obscurity under the shade of some overhanging bank. But none of these manoeuvres captivated the wary old trout on whose acquisition the Corporal had set his heart; and what was especially provoking, the angler could see distinctly the dark outline of the intended victim, as it lay at the bottom,—like some well-regulated bachelor who eyes from afar the charms he has discreetly resolved to neglect.

The Corporal waited till he could no longer blind himself to the displeasing fact, that the violet-fly was wholly inefficacious; he then drew up his line, and replaced the contemned beauty of the violet-fly, with the novel attractions of the yellow-dun.

"Now, Sir!" whispered he, lifting up his finger, and nodding sagaciously to Walter. Softly dropped the yellow-dun upon the water, and swiftly did it glide before the gaze of the latent trout; and now the trout seemed aroused from his apathy, behold he moved forward, balancing himself on his fins; now he slowly ascended towards the surface; you might see all the speckles of his coat;—the Corporal's heart stood still—he is now at a convenient distance from the yellow-dun; lo, he surveys it steadfastly; he ponders, he see-saws himself to and fro. The yellow-dun sails away in affected indifference, that indifference whets the appetite of the hesitating gazer, he darts forward; he is opposite the yellow-dun,—he pushes his nose against it with an eager rudeness,—he—no, he does not bite, he recoils, he gazes again with surprise and suspicion on the little charmer; he fades back slowly into the deeper water, and then suddenly turning his tail towards the disappointed bait, he makes off as fast as he can,—yonder,—yonder, and disappears! No, that's he leaping yonder from the wave; Jupiter! what a noble fellow! What leaps he at?—a real fly—"Damn his eyes!" growled the Corporal.

"You might have caught him with a minnow," said Walter, speaking for the first time.

"Minnow!" repeated the Corporal gruffly, "ask your honour's pardon. Minnow!—I have fished with the yellow-dun these twenty years, and never knew it fail before. Minnow!—baugh! But ask pardon; your honour is very welcome to fish with a minnow if you please it."

"Thank you, Bunting. And pray what sport have you had to-day?"

"Oh,—good, good," quoth the Corporal, snatching up his basket and closing the cover, lest the young Squire should pry into it. No man is more tenacious of his secrets than your true angler. "Sent the best home two hours ago; one weighed three pounds, on the faith of a man; indeed, I'm satisfied now; time to give up;" and the Corporal began to disjoint his rod.

"Ah, Sir!" said he, with a half sigh, "a pretty river this, don't mean to say it is not; but the river Lea for my money. You know the Lea?—not a morning's walk from Lunnun. Mary Gibson, my first sweetheart, lived by the bridge,—caught such a trout there by the by!—had beautiful eyes—black, round as a cherry—five feet eight without shoes—might have listed in the forty-second."

"Who, Bunting!" said Walter smiling, "the lady or the trout?"

"Augh!—baugh!—what? Oh, laughing at me, your honour, you're welcome, Sir. Love's a silly thing—know the world now—have not fallen in love these ten years. I doubt—no offence, Sir, no offence—I doubt whether your honour and Miss Ellinor can say as much."

"I and Miss Ellinor!—you forge yourself strangely, Bunting," said Walter, colouring with anger.

"Beg pardon, Sir, beg pardon—rough soldier—lived away from the world so long, words slipped out of my mouth—absent without leave."

"But why," said Walter, smothering or conquering his vexation,—"why couple me with Miss Ellinor? Did you imagine that we,—we were in love with each other?"

"Indeed, Sir, and if I did, 'tis no more than my neighbours imagine too."

"Humph! your neighbours are very silly, then, and very wrong."

"Beg pardon, Sir, again—always getting askew. Indeed some did say it was Miss Madeline, but I says,—says I,—'No! I'm a man of the world—see through a millstone; Miss Madeline's too

easy like; Miss Nelly blushes when he speaks; scarlet is love's regimentals—it was ours in the forty-second, edged with yellow—pepper and salt pantaloons! For my part I think,—but I've no business to think, howsomever—baugh!"

"Pray what do you think, Mr. Bunting? Why do you hesitate?"

"'Fraid of offence—but I do think that Master Aram—your honour understands—howsomever Squire's daughter too great a match for such as he!"

Walter did not answer; and the garrulous old soldier, who had been the young man's playmate and companion since Walter was a boy; and was therefore accustomed to the familiarity with which he now spoke, continued, mingling with his abrupt prolixity an occasional shrewdness of observation, which shewed that he was no inattentive commentator on the little and quiet world around him.

"Free to confess, Squire Walter, that I don't quite like this larned man, as much as the rest of 'em—something queer about him—can't see to the bottom of him—don't think he's quite so meek and lamb-like as he seems:—once saw a calm dead pool in foren parts—peered down into it—by little and little, my eye got used to it—saw something dark at the bottom—stared and stared—by Jupiter—a great big alligator!—walked off immediately—never liked quiet pools since—augh, no!"

"An argument against quiet pools, perhaps, Bunting; but scarcely against quiet people."

"Don't know as to that, your honour—much of a muchness. I have seen Master Aram, demure as he looks, start, and bite his lip, and change colour, and frown—he has an ugly frown, I can tell ye—when he thought no one nigh. A man who gets in a passion with himself may be soon out of temper with others. Free to confess, I should not like to see him married to that stately beautiful young lady—but they do gossip about it in the village. If it is not true, better put the Squire on his guard—false rumours often beget truths—beg pardon, your honour—no business of mine—baugh! But I'm a lone man, who have seen the world, and I thinks on the things around me, and I turns over the quid—now on this side, now on the other—'tis my way, Sir—and—but I offend your honour."

"Not at all; I know you are an honest man, Bunting, and well affected to our family; at the same time it is neither prudent nor charitable to speak harshly of our neighbours without sufficient cause. And really you seem to me to be a little hasty in your judgment of a man so inoffensive in his habits and so justly and generally esteemed as Mr. Aram."

"May be, Sir—may be,—very right what you say. But I thinks what I thinks all the same; and indeed, it is a thing that puzzles me, how that strange-looking vagabond, as frighted the ladies so, and who, Miss Nelly told me, for she saw them in his pocket, carried pistols about him, as if he had been among cannibals and hottentots, instead of the peaceablest county that man ever set foot in, should boast of his friendship with this larned schollard, and pass a whole night in his house. Birds of a feather flock together—augh!—Sir!"

"A man cannot surely be answerable for the respectability of all his acquaintances, even though he feel obliged to offer them the accommodation of a night's shelter."

"Baugh!" grunted the Corporal. "Seen the world, Sir—seen the world—young gentlemen are always so good-natured; 'tis a pity, that the more one sees the more suspicious one grows. One does not have gumption till one has been properly cheated—one must be made a fool very often in order not to be fooled at last!"

"Well, Corporal, I shall now have opportunities enough of profiting by experience. I am going to leave Grassdale in a few days, and learn suspicion and wisdom in the great world."

"Augh! baugh!—what?" cried the Corporal, starting from the contemplative air which he had hitherto assumed. "The great world?—how?—when?—going away;—who goes with your honour?"

"My honour's self; I have no companion, unless you like to attend me;" said Walter, jestingly—but the Corporal affected, with his natural shrewdness, to take the proposition in earnest.

"I! your honour's too good; and indeed, though I say it, Sir, you might do worse; not but what I should be sorry to leave nice snug home here, and this stream, though the trout have been shy lately,—ah! that was a mistake of yours, Sir, recommending the minnow; and neighbour Dealtry, though

his ale's not so good at 'twas last year; and—and—but, in short, I always loved your honour—dandled you on my knees;—You recollect the broadsword exercise?—one, two, three—augh! baugh!—and if your honour really is going, why rather than you should want a proper person who knows the world, to brush your coat, polish your shoes, give you good advice—on the faith of a man, I'll go with you myself!"

This alacrity on the part of the Corporal was far from displeasing to Walter. The proposal he had at first made unthinkingly, he now seriously thought advisable; and at length it was settled that the Corporal should call the next morning at the manor-house, and receive instructions as to the time and method of their departure. Not forgetting, as the sagacious Bunting delicately insinuated, "the wee settlements as to wages, and board wages, more a matter of form, like, than any thing else—augh!"

CHAPTER X.
THE LOVERS.—THE ENCOUNTER AND QUARREL OF THE RIVALS

Two such I saw, what time the laboured ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came.

—Comus.

Pedro. Now do me noble right.

Rod. I'll satisfy you;
But not by the sword.

—Beaumont and Fletcher.—The Pilgrim.

While Walter and the Corporal enjoyed the above conversation, Madeline and Aram, whom Lester soon left to themselves, were pursuing their walk along the solitary fields. Their love had passed from the eye to the lip, and now found expression in words.

"Observe," said he, as the light touch of one who he felt loved him entirely rested on his arm, —"Observe, as the later summer now begins to breathe a more various and mellow glory into the landscape, how singularly pure and lucid the atmosphere becomes. When, two months ago, in the full flush of June, I walked through these fields, a grey mist hid yon distant hills and the far forest from my view. Now, with what a transparent stillness the whole expanse of scenery spreads itself before us. And such, Madeline, is the change that has come over myself since that time. Then, if I looked beyond the limited present, all was dim and indistinct. Now, the mist had faded away—the broad future extends before me, calm and bright with the hope which is borrowed from your love!"

We will not tax the patience of the reader, who seldom enters with keen interest into the mere dialogue of love, with the blushing Madeline's reply, or with all the soft vows and tender confessions which the rich poetry of Aram's mind made yet more delicious to the ear of his dreaming and devoted mistress.

"There is one circumstance," said Aram, "which casts a momentary shade on the happiness I enjoy—my Madeline probably guesses its nature. I regret to see that the blessing of your love must be purchased by the misery of another, and that other, the nephew of my kind friend. You have doubtless observed the melancholy of Walter Lester, and have long since known its origin."

"Indeed, Eugene," answered Madeline, "it has given me great pain to note what you refer to, for it would be a false delicacy in me to deny that I have observed it. But Walter is young and high-spirited; nor do I think he is of a nature to love long where there is no return!"

"And what," said Aram, sorrowfully,—"what deduction from reason can ever apply to love? Love is a very contradiction of all the elements of our ordinary nature,—it makes the proud man meek,—the cheerful, sad,—the high-spirited, tame; our strongest resolutions, our hardiest energy fail before it. Believe me, you cannot prophesy of its future effect in a man from any knowledge of his past character. I grieve to think that the blow falls upon one in early youth, ere the world's disappointments have blunted the heart, or the world's numerous interests have multiplied its resources. Men's minds have been turned when they have not well sifted the cause themselves, and their fortunes marred, by one stroke on the affections of their youth. So at least have I read, Madeline, and so marked in others. For myself, I knew nothing of love in its reality till I knew you. But who can know you, and not sympathise with him who has lost you?"

"Ah, Eugene! you at least overrate the influence which love produces on men. A little resentment and a little absence will soon cure my cousin of an ill-placed and ill-requited attachment. You do not think how easy it is to forget."

"Forget!" said Aram, stopping abruptly; "Ay, forget—it is a strange truth! we do forget! the summer passes over the furrow, and the corn springs up; the sod forgets the flower of the past year; the battle-field forgets the blood that has been spilt upon its turf; the sky forgets the storm; and the water the noon-day sun that slept upon its bosom. All Nature preaches forgetfulness. Its very order is the progress of oblivion. And I—I—give me your hand, Madeline,—I, ha! ha! I forget too!"

As Aram spoke thus wildly, his countenance worked; but his voice was slow, and scarcely audible; he seemed rather conferring with himself, than addressing Madeline. But when his words ceased, and he felt the soft hand of his betrothed, and turning, saw her anxious and wistful eyes fixed in alarm, yet in all unsuspecting confidence, on his face; his features relaxed into their usual serenity, and kissing the hand he clasped, he continued, in a collected and steady tone,

"Forgive me, my sweetest Madeline. These fitful and strange moods sometimes come upon me yet. I have been so long in the habit of pursuing any train of thought, however wild, that presents itself to my mind, that I cannot easily break it, even in your presence. All studious men—the twilight Eremites of books and closets, contract this ungraceful custom of soliloquy. You know our abstraction is a common jest and proverb: you must laugh me out of it. But stay, dearest!—there is a rare herb at your feet, let me gather it. So, do you note its leaves—this bending and silver flower? Let us rest on this bank, and I will tell you of its qualities. Beautiful as it is, it has a poison."

The place in which the lovers rested, is one which the villagers to this day call "The Lady's-seat;" for Madeline, whose history is fondly preserved in that district, was afterwards wont constantly to repair to that bank (during a short absence of her lover, hereafter to be noted), and subsequent events stamped with interest every spot she was known to have favoured with resort. And when the flower had been duly conned, and the study dismissed, Aram, to whom all the signs of the seasons were familiar, pointed to her the thousand symptoms of the month which are unheeded by less observant eyes; not forgetting, as they thus reclined, their hands clasped together, to couple each remark with some allusion to his love or some deduction which heightened compliment into poetry. He bade her mark the light gossamer as it floated on the air; now soaring high—high into the translucent atmosphere; now suddenly stooping, and sailing away beneath the boughs, which ever and anon it hung with a silken web, that by the next morn, would glitter with a thousand dew drops. "And, so," said he fancifully, "does Love lead forth its numberless creations, making the air its path and empire; ascending aloof at its wild will, hanging its meshes on every bough, and bidding the common grass break into a fairy lustre at the beam of the daily sun!"

He pointed to her the spot, where, in the silent brake, the harebells, now waxing rare and few, yet lingered—or where the mystic ring on the soft turf conjured up the associations of Oberon

and his train. That superstition gave licence and play to his full memory and glowing fancy; and Shakspeare—Spenser—Ariosto—the magic of each mighty master of Fairy Realm—he evoked, and poured into her transported ear. It was precisely such arts, which to a gayer and more worldly nature than Madeline's might have seemed but wearisome, that arrested and won her imaginative and high-wrought mind. And thus he, who to another might have proved but the retired and moody Student, became to her the very being of whom her "Maiden meditation" had dreamed—the master and magician of her fate.

Aram did not return to the house with Madeline; he accompanied her to the garden gate, and then taking leave of her, bent his way homeward. He had gained the entrance of the little valley that led to his abode, when he saw Walter cross his path at a short distance. His heart, naturally susceptible to kindly emotion, smote him as he remarked the moody listlessness of the young man's step, and recalled the buoyant lightness it was once wont habitually to wear. He quickened his pace, and joined Walter before the latter was aware of his presence.

"Good evening," said he, mildly; "if you are going my way, give me the benefit of your company."

"My path lies yonder," replied Walter, somewhat sullenly; "I regret that it is different from yours."

"In that case," said Aram, "I can delay my return home, and will, with your leave, intrude my society upon you for some few minutes."

Walter bowed his head in reluctant assent. They walked on for some moments without speaking, the one unwilling, the other seeking an occasion, to break the silence.

"This to my mind," said Aram at length, "is the most pleasing landscape in the whole country; observe the bashful water stealing away among the woodlands. Methinks the wave is endowed with an instinctive wisdom, that it thus shuns the world."

"Rather," said Walter, "with the love for change which exists everywhere in nature, it does not seek the shade until it has passed by 'towered cities, and 'the busy hum of men.'"

"I admire the shrewdness of your reply," rejoined Aram; "but note how far more pure and lovely are its waters in these retreats, than when washing the walls of the reeking town, receiving into its breast the taint of a thousand pollutions, vexed by the sound, and stench, and unholy perturbation of men's dwelling-place. Now it glasses only what is high or beautiful in nature—the stars or the leafy banks. The wind that ruffles it, is clothed with perfumes; the rivulet that swells it, descends from the everlasting mountains, or is formed by the rains of Heaven. Believe me, it is the type of a life that glides into solitude, from the weariness and fretful turmoil of the world.

'No flattery, hate, or envy lodgeth there, There no suspicion walled in proved steel, Yet fearful of the arms herself doth wear, Pride is not there; no tyrant there we feel!'"

[Phineas Fletcher.]

"I will not cope with you in simile, or in poetry," said Walter, as his lip curved; "it is enough for me to think that life should be spent in action. I hasten to prove if my judgment be erroneous."

"Are you, then, about to leave us?" inquired Aram.

"Yes, within a few days."

"Indeed, I regret to hear it."

The answer sounded jarringly on the irritated nerves of the disappointed rival.

"You do me more honour than I desire," said he, "in interesting yourself, however lightly, in my schemes or fortune!"

"Young man," replied Aram, coldly, "I never see the impetuous and yearning spirit of youth without a certain, and it may be, a painful interest. How feeble is the chance, that its hopes will be fulfilled! Enough, if it lose not all its loftier aspirings, as well as its brighter expectations."

Nothing more aroused the proud and fiery temper of Walter Lester than the tone of superior wisdom and superior age, which his rival assumed towards him. More and more displeased with his

present companion, he answered, in no conciliatory tone, “I cannot but consider the warning and the fears of one, neither my relation nor my friend, in the light of a gratuitous affront.”

Aram smiled as he answered,

“There is no occasion for resentment. Preserve this hot spirit, and high self-confidence, till you return again to these scenes, and I shall be at once satisfied and corrected.”

“Sir,” said Walter, colouring, and irritated more by the smile than the words of his rival, “I am not aware by what right or on what ground you assume towards me the superiority, not only of admonition but reproof. My uncle’s preference towards you gives you no authority over me. That preference I do not pretend to share.”—He paused for a moment, thinking Aram might hasten to reply; but as the Student walked on with his usual calmness of demeanour, he added, stung by the indifference which he attributed, not altogether without truth, to disdain, “And since you have taken upon yourself to caution me, and to forebode my inability to resist the contamination, as you would term it, of the world, I tell you, that it may be happy for you to bear so clear a conscience, so untouched a spirit as that which I now boast, and with which I trust in God and my own soul I shall return to my birth-place. It is not the holy only that love solitude; and men may shun the world from another motive than that of philosophy.”

It was now Aram’s turn to feel resentment, and this was indeed an insinuation not only unwarrantable in itself, but one which a man of so peaceable and guileless a life, affecting even an extreme and rigid austerity of morals, might well be tempted to repel with scorn and indignation; and Aram, however meek and forbearing in general, testified in this instance that his wonted gentleness arose from no lack of man’s natural spirit. He laid his hand commandingly on young Lester’s shoulder, and surveyed his countenance with a dark and menacing frown.

“Boy!” said he, “were there meaning in your words, I should (mark me!) avenge the insult;—as it is, I despise it. Go!”

So high and lofty was Aram’s manner—so majestic was the sternness of his rebuke, and the dignity of his bearing, as he now waving his hand turned away, that Walter lost his self-possession and stood fixed to the spot, absorbed, and humbled from his late anger. It was not till Aram had moved with a slow step several paces backward towards his home, that the bold and haughty temper of the young man returned to his aid. Ashamed of himself for the momentary weakness he had betrayed, and burning to redeem it, he hastened after the stately form of his rival, and planting himself full in his path, said, in a voice half choked with contending emotions,

“Hold!—you have given me the opportunity I have long desired; you yourself have now broken that peace which existed between us, and which to me was more bitter than wormwood. You have dared,—yes, dared to use threatening language towards me. I call on you to fulfil your threat. I tell you that I meant, I designed, I thirsted to affront you. Now resent my purposed—premeditated affront as you will and can!”

There was something remarkable in the contrasted figures of the rivals, as they now stood fronting each other. The elastic and vigorous form of Walter Lester, his sparkling eyes, his sunburnt and glowing cheek, his clenched hands, and his whole frame, alive and eloquent with the energy, the heat, the hasty courage, and fiery spirit of youth; on the other hand,—the bending frame of the student, gradually rising into the dignity of its full height—his pale cheek, in which the wan hues neither deepened nor waned, his large eye raised to meet Walter’s bright, steady, and yet how calm! Nothing weak, nothing irresolute could be traced in that form—or that lofty countenance; yet all resentment had vanished from his aspect. He seemed at once tranquil and prepared.

“You designed to affront me!” said he; “it is well—it is a noble confession;—and wherefore? What do you propose to gain by it?—a man whose whole life is peace, you would provoke to outrage? Would there be triumph in this, or disgrace?—A man whom your uncle honours and loves, you would insult without cause—you would waylay—you would, after watching and creating your opportunity, entrap into defending himself. Is this worthy of that high spirit of which you boasted?—is this worthy

a generous anger, or a noble hatred? Away! you malign yourself. I shrink from no quarrel—why should I? I have nothing to fear: my nerves are firm—my heart is faithful to my will; my habits may have diminished my strength, but it is yet equal to that of most men. As to the weapons of the world—they fall not to my use. I might be excused by the most punctilious, for rejecting what becomes neither my station nor my habits of life; but I learnt this much from books long since, 'hold thyself prepared for all things:'—I am so prepared. And as I can command the spirit, I lack not the skill, to defend myself, or return the hostility of another." As Aram thus said, he drew a pistol from his bosom; and pointed it leisurely towards a tree, at the distance of some paces.

"Look," said he, "you note that small discoloured and white stain in the bark—you can but just observe it;—he who can send a bullet through that spot, need not fear to meet the quarrel which he seeks to avoid."

Walter turned mechanically, and indignant, though silent, towards the tree. Aram fired, and the ball penetrated the centre of the stain. He then replaced the pistol in his bosom, and said:—

"Early in life I had many enemies, and I taught myself these arts. From habit, I still bear about me the weapons I trust and pray I may never have occasion to use. But to return.—I have offended you—I have incurred your hatred—why? What are my sins?"

"Do you ask the cause?" said Walter, speaking between his ground teeth. "Have you not traversed my views—blighted my hopes—charmed away from me the affections which were more to me than the world, and driven me to wander from my home with a crushed spirit, and a cheerless heart. Are these no cause for hate?"

"Have I done this?" said Aram, recoiling, and evidently and powerfully affected. "Have I so injured you?—It is true! I know it—I perceive it—I read your heart; and—bear witness Heaven!—I felt for the wound that I, but with no guilty hand, inflict upon you. Yet be just:—ask yourself, have I done aught that you, in my case, would have left undone? Have I been insolent in triumph, or haughty in success? if so, hate me, nay, spurn me now."

Walter turned his head irresolutely away.

"If it please you, that I accuse myself, in that I, a man seared and lone at heart, presumed to come within the pale of human affections;—that I exposed myself to cross another's better and brighter hopes, or dared to soften my fate with the tender and endearing ties that are meet alone for a more genial and youthful nature;—if it please you that I accuse and curse myself for this—that I yielded to it with pain and with self-reproach—that I shall think hereafter of what I unconsciously cost you with remorse—then be consoled!"

"It is enough," said Walter; "let us part. I leave you with more soreness at my late haste than I will acknowledge, let that content you; for myself, I ask for no apology or—."

"But you shall have it amply," interrupted Aram, advancing with a cordial openness of mien not usual to him. "I was all to blame; I should have remembered you were an injured man, and suffered you to have said all you would. Words at best are but a poor vent for a wronged and burning heart. It shall be so in future, speak your will, attack, upbraid, taunt me, I will bear it all. And indeed, even to myself there seems some witchcraft, some glamoury in what has chanced. What! I favoured where you love? Is it possible? It might teach the vainest to forswear vanity. You, the young, the buoyant, the fresh, the beautiful?—And I, who have passed the glory and zest of life between dusty walls; I who—well, well, fate laughs at probabilities!"

Aram now seemed relapsing into one of his more abstracted moods; he ceased to speak aloud, but his lips moved, and his eyes grew fixed in reverie on the ground. Walter gazed at him for some moments with mixed and contending sensations. Once more, resentment and the bitter wrath of jealousy had faded back into the remoter depths of his mind, and a certain interest for his singular rival, despite of himself, crept into his breast. But this mysterious and fitful nature, was it one in which the devoted Madeline would certainly find happiness and repose?—would she never regret her choice? This question obtruded itself upon him, and while he sought to answer it, Aram, regaining

his composure, turned abruptly and offered him his hand. Walter did not accept it, he bowed with a cold respect. “I cannot give my hand without my heart,” said he; “we were foes just now; we are not friends yet. I am unreasonable in this, I know, but—”

“Be it so,” interrupted Aram; “I understand you. I press my good will on you no more. When this pang is forgotten, when this wound is healed, and when you will have learned more of him who is now your rival, we may meet again with other feelings on your side.”

Thus they parted, and the solitary lamp which for weeks past had been quenched at the wholesome hour in the Student’s home, streamed from the casement throughout the whole of that night; was it a witness of the calm and learned vigil, or of the unresting heart?

CHAPTER XI.
THE FAMILY SUPPER.—THE TWO SISTERS IN THEIR CHAMBER. —A MISUNDERSTANDING FOLLOWED BY A CONFESSION.—WALTER’S APPROACHING DEPARTURE AND THE CORPORAL’S BEHAVIOUR THEREON.— THE CORPORAL’S FAVOURITE INTRODUCED TO THE READER.—THE CORPORAL PROVES HIMSELF A SUBTLE DIPLOMATIST

So we grew together
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet an union in partition.

—Midsummer Night’s Dream.

The Corporal had not taken his measures so badly in this stroke of artilleryship.
—Tristram Shandy.

It was late that evening when Walter returned home, the little family were assembled at the last and lightest meal of the day; Ellinor silently made room for her cousin beside herself, and that little kindness touched Walter. “Why did I not love her?” thought he, and he spoke to her in a tone so affectionate, that it made her heart thrill with delight. Lester was, on the whole, the most pensive of the group, but the old and young man exchanged looks of restored confidence, which, on the part of the former, were softened by a pitying tenderness.

When the cloth was removed, and the servants gone, Lester took it on himself to break to the sisters the intended departure of their cousin. Madeline received the news with painful blushes, and a certain self-reproach; for even where a woman has no cause to blame herself, she, in these cases, feels a sort of remorse at the unhappiness she occasions. But Ellinor rose suddenly and left the room.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.