VARIOUS

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Содержание

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VIRGIL, TASSO, AND RAPHAEL

Originality of conception and fidelity of observation in general mark the efforts of genius in the earlier ages of society; and it is then, accordingly, that those creative minds appear which stamp their own impress upon the character of a whole people, and communicate to their literature, in the most distant periods, a certain train of thought, a certain class of images, a certain family resemblance. Homer, Phidias, and Æschylus in ancient times – Dante, Michael Angelo, Ariosto, and Shakspeare in modern, belong to this exalted class. Each in his own department has struck out a new range of thought, and created a fresh brood of ideas, which, on "winged words," have taken their flight to distant regions, and to the end of the world will never cease to delight and influence mankind. Subsequent ages may refine their images, expand their sentiments, perhaps improve their expression; but they add little to the stock of their

conceptions. The very greatness of their predecessors precludes fresh creations: the furrows of the ancient wheels are so deep that the modern chariot cannot avoid falling into them. So completely in all persons of education are the great works of antiquity incorporated with thought, that they arise involuntarily with every exercise of the faculty of taste, and insensibly recur to the cultivated mind, with all that it admires, and loves, and venerates.

But though originality of conception, the creation of imagery, and the invention of events belong to early ages, delicacy of taste, refinement of sentiment, perfection of expression, are the growth of a more advanced period of society. The characters which are delineated by the hand of Genius in early times, are those bold and original ones in which the features are distinctly marked, the lines clearly drawn, the peculiarities strongly brought out. The images which are adopted are those which have first occurred to the creative mind in forming a world of fancy: the similes employed, those which convey to the simple and unlettered mind the clearest or most vivid conception of the idea or event intended to be illustrated. Valour, pride, resolution, tenderness, patriotism, are the mental qualities which are there portrayed in imaginary characters, and called forth by fictitious events: and it is this first and noblest delineation of mental qualities in an historical gallery which has rendered the *Iliad* immortal. The images and similes of Homer are drawn from a close observation of nature, but they are not very varied in their range: he paints every incident, every occurrence, every feature, but he is not much diversified in

conception, and surprisingly identical in expression. His similes of a boar beset by hunters, of a lion prowling round a fold and repelled by the spear of the shepherd, of a panther leaping into a herd of cattle, are represented in the same words wherever he has a close fight of one of his heroes with a multitude of enemies to recount. So forcibly is the creative mind, in the first instance, fascinated by the variety and brilliancy of its conceptions, that it neglects and despises their subordinate details. It is careless of language, because it is intent on ideas: it is niggardly in language, because it is prodigal of thought. Homer's expressions or epithets are in general admirably chosen, and speak at once a graphic eye and an imaginative mind; but it is extraordinary how often they recur without any variation. It is the same with Ariosto: he is somewhat more varied in his expression, but even more identical in his details. Prodigal of invention, varied in imagination, unbounded in conception, in the incidents and great features of his story, he has very little diversity in its subordinate parts. He carries us over the whole earth, through the air, and to the moon: but giants, castles, knights, and errant damsels occur at every step, with hardly any alteration. The perpetual jousts of the knights, charging with the lance and then drawing the sword, are exactly parallel to the endless throwing of the spear and leaping from the chariot in the *Iliad*.

No man can read the *Æneid* without seeing that it has been constructed, both in its general conception and chief incidents, on the poems of Homer; and yet so exquisite was the taste,

so refined the sentiment, so tender the heart of Virgil, that he has produced upon the world the impression of a great original author. Dante worshipped him as a species of divinity; he made him his guide through the infernal regions, to unfold the crimes of the wicked and the intentions of the Deity in the distribution of future rewards and punishments. Throughout the middle ages he was regarded as a sort of necromancer, a mighty magician, to whom the past and the future are alike known, and whose power even the elements of nature were constrained to obey. The "Sortes Virgilianæ," so well known, and so long practised in every country of Europe, arose from this belief. The imagery, mythology and characters of his epic poem are drawn from the *Iliad*: but in two particulars he is entirely original, and his genius has opened the two fountains from which the most prolific streams of beauty in modern poetry have flowed. He is the father of *descriptive* and *amatory* poetry. The passion of love, as we understand it, was unknown to Homer, as much as was the description of nature as a separate and substantive object. He has made the whole *Iliad*, indeed, turn upon the wrath of Achilles for the loss of Briseis; and he has painted, with inimitable tenderness and pathos, the conjugal attachment of Hector and Andromache; but he had no conception of love as a passion, mingled with sentiment, and independent of possession. The wrath of Achilles is the fury of an Eastern sultan whose harem has been violated: the parting of Hector and Andromache is the rending asunder of the *domestic* affections, the farewell from the family hearth,

the breaking up of the home circle. But the love of Dido for Æneas is the refined passion which is the soul of the romances and of half the poetry of modern times. It was the creature of the imagination, the offspring of the soul from its own conceptions, kindled only into life by an external object. It arose from mental admiration; it was inhaled more by the ear than the eye; it was warmed at his recital of the sack of Troy, and his subsequent wanderings over the melancholy main. It had no resemblance to the seducing voluptuousness of Ovid, any more than the elegant indecencies of Catullus. It resembled the passion of Desdemona for Othello.

Homer painted with graphic fidelity and incomparable force, often with extraordinary beauty, the appearances of nature; but it was as illustrations, or for the purpose of similitude only, that he did so. It was on human events that his thoughts were fixed: it was the human heart, in all its various forms and changes, that he sought to depict. But Virgil was the high-priest of nature, and he worshipped her with all a poet's fervour. He identifies himself with rural life, he describes with devout enthusiasm its joys, its occupations, its hardships: the rocks, the woods, the streams, awaken his ardent admiration; the animals and insects are the objects of his tender solicitude. When the Mantuan bard wrote,

> – "Sæpe exiguus mus
> Sub terram posuit domos atque horrea fecit,"

he was inspired with the same spirit that afterwards animated Burns when he contemplated the daisy, Cowper when he sympathized with the hare. The descriptive poetry of modern times has owed much to his exquisite eye and sensitive heart. Thomson, in his *Seasons*, has expanded the theme in a kindred spirit, and with prodigal magnificence. Scott and Byron have brought that branch of the poetic art to the highest perfection, by blending it with the moral affections, with the picturesque imagery of the olden time, with the magic of eastern or classical association. But none of our poets – how great soever their genius, how varied their materials – have exceeded, if they have equalled, the exquisite beauty of his descriptions; and the purest taste in observation, as the utmost beauty of expression, is still to be best attained by studying night and day the poems of Virgil.

Modern epic poetry arose in a different age, and was moulded by different circumstances. The mythology of antiquity was at an end, and with it had perished the gay and varied worship which had so long amused or excited an imaginative people. The empire of the Cæsars, with its grandeur and its recollections, had sunk into the dusk; the venerable letters, S. P. Q. R., no longer commanded the veneration of mankind. A new faith, enjoining moral duties, had descended upon the earth: a holier spirit had come to pervade the breasts of the faithful. An unknown race of fierce barbarians had broken into the decaying provinces of the Roman empire, and swept away their government, their laws, their property, and their institutions. But the Christian

faith had proved more powerful than the arms of the legions; it alone had survived, amidst the general wreck of the civilized world. Mingling with the ardent feelings and fierce energy of the barbarian victors, it sat

> – "a blooming bride
> By valour's arm'd and awful side."

Incorporating itself with the very souls of the conquerors – descending on their heads with the waters of baptism, never leaving them till the moment of extreme unction – it moulded between these two extremes their whole character. A new principle superior to all earthly power was introduced – a paramount authority established, to which even the arm of victorious conquest was compelled to submit – ruthless warriors were seen kneeling at the feet of unarmed pontiffs. The crown of the Cæsars had more than once been lowered before the cross of the head of the faithful.

From the intensity and universality of these religious emotions, and the circumstance of the Holy Land being in the hands of the Saracens, with whom Christendom had maintained so long, and at times so doubtful, a struggle, a new passion had seized upon the people of modern Europe, to which no parallel is to be found in the previous or subsequent history of mankind. The desire to recover the Holy Sepulchre, and re-open it to the pilgrimages of the faithful, had come to inflame the

minds of men with such vehemence, that nothing approaching to it had ever before occurred in the world. It had pervaded alike the great and the humble, the learned and the ignorant, the prince and the peasant. It had torn up whole nations from Europe, and precipitated them on Asia. It had caused myriads of armed men to cross the Hellespont. In Asia Minor, on the theatre of the contest of the Greeks and Trojans, it had brought vast armies into collision, far outnumbering the hosts led by Hector or Agamemnon. It had brought them together in a holier cause, and on more elevated motives, than prompted the Greek confederates to range themselves under the king of men. It had impelled Richard Cœur-de-Lion and Godfrey of Bouillon from Europe. It had roused Saladin and Solyman the Magnificent in Asia. Unlike other popular passions, it had continued through successive generations. It had survived for centuries, and declined at length less from want of ardour in the cause, than from failure of the physical and material resources to maintain at so vast a distance so wasting a struggle, and supply the multitudes of the faithful whose bones whitened the valley of the Danube or the sands of Asia.

But religious and devout emotions had not alone become all-powerful from the blending of the ardour of a spiritual faith with the fierce energy of northern conquests. The northern nations had brought with them from their woods two principles unknown to the most civilized nations of antiquity. Tacitus has recorded, that a tribe in Germany maintained its authority solely by the justice

of its decisions; and that in all the tribes, women were held in the highest respect, and frequently swayed the public councils on the most momentous occasions. It is in these two principles, the love of justice and respect for women, that the foundation was laid for the *manners of chivalry*, which form the grand characteristic and most ennobling feature of modern times. New elements were thence infused into the breast of the warriors, into the heart of women, into the songs of poetry. Chivalry had arisen with its dreams, its imaginations, its fantasy; but, at the same time, with its elevation, its disinterestedness, its magnanimity. The songs of the Troubadours had been heard in southern Europe; the courts of love had been held in Provence; the exploits of Charlemagne and Richard had resounded throughout the world. The *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, who dedicated himself to the service of God and of his lady, was a less natural, but he was a far more elevated being, than either Achilles or Æneas. Knights-errant, who went about in quest of adventures, redressing wrongs, succouring damsels, combating giants, defying sorcerers, delivering captives – faithful amidst every temptation to their lady-love, true amidst every danger to the Polar-star of duty – formed the leading characters in a species of romance, which is less likely, in all probability, to be durable in fame than the *Iliad* or the *Æneid*; but which is so, in a great degree, from the circumstance that the characters it portrays had, from an extraordinary combination of events, been strung upon a higher key than is likely to be sympathized with by future

generations of man.

Ariosto was the great original mind in this extravagant but yet noble style of poetry; he was the Homer of this romance of modern Europe. He possessed the same fruitful invention, the same diversified conception, the same inexhaustible fancy as the Grecian bard; and in melody and occasional beauty of versification, he is often his superior. But he will bear no sort of comparison with Homer in knowledge of character or the delineation of the human heart. His heroes are almost all cast in one of two models, and bear one of two images and superscriptions. The Christian paladins are all gentle, true, devoted, magnanimous, unconquerable; the Saracen soldans haughty, cruel, perfidious, irascible, but desperately powerful in combat. No shades of difference and infinite diversity in character demonstrate, as in the *Iliad*, a profound knowledge and accurate observation of the human heart. No fierce and irascible Achilles disturbs the sympathy of the reader with the conquerors; no self-forgetting, but country-devoted Hector enlists our sympathies on the side of the vanquished. His imagination, like the winged steed of Astolfo, flies away with his judgment; it bears him to the uttermost parts of the earth, to the palace of the syren Alcina, to the halls in the moon, but it destroys all unity or identity of interest in the poem. The famous siege of Paris by the Saracens in the time of Charlemagne, which was so often expected during the middle ages, that it at last came to be believed to have been real, was the main point of his story; but he

diverges from it so often, in search of adventures with particular knights, that we wellnigh forget the principal object of the poem, and feel no absorbing interest in the issue of any particular events, or the exploits of any particular heroes. He had no great moral to unfold, or single interest to sustain, in his composition. His object was to amuse, not instruct – to fascinate, not improve. He is often as beautiful as Virgil in his descriptions, as lofty as Homer in his conceptions; but he as often equals Ovid in the questionable character of his adventures, or Catullus in the seducing warmth of his descriptions. There is no more amusing companion than the *Orlando Furioso* for the fireside; but there is none less likely to produce the heroes whom it is his object to portray.

That which Ariosto wants, Tasso has. The *Jerusalem Delivered* is, beyond all question, the epic poem of modern Europe. In it, as in the *Iliad*, unity of interest and of action is entirely preserved. It is one great struggle between Europe and Asia which is recorded; it is for the attack and defence of one city that the forces of Christendom and of Mahometanism are arrayed. But the object of contention, the moral character of the struggle, is incomparably higher in the modern than the ancient poem. It is not "another Helen who has fired another Troy;" it is no confederacy of valour, thirsting for the spoils of opulence, which is contending for victory. It is the pilgrim, not the host, whose wrongs have now roused Europe into action; it is not to ravish beauty from its seducer, but the holy sepulchre from its profaners, that Christendom has risen in arms. The

characters of the chiefs correspond to the superior sanctity of their cause, and indicate the mighty step in advance which the human mind, under the influence of Christianity and civilization, had made since the days of Homer. In Godfrey of Bouillon we perceive enthusiasm guided by wisdom; difficulties overcome by resolution, self-subdued by devotion. Rinaldo, like Achilles, is led astray by beauty and the issue of the war is prolonged from the want of his resistless arm; but the difference between his passion for Armida, and the Grecian hero's wrath for the loss of Briseis, marks the influence of the refined gallantry of modern times. The exquisite episode of the flight of Erminia, the matchless pathos of the death of Clorinda, can be compared to nothing either in the *Iliad* or *Æneid*; they belong to the age of chivalry, and are the efflorescence of that strange but lofty aspiration of the human mind. Above all, there is a moral grandeur in the poem, a continued unity of interest, owing to a sustained elevation of purpose – a forgetfulness of self in the great cause of rescuing the holy sepulchre, which throws an air of sanctity around its beauties, and renders it the worthy epic of Europe in its noblest aspect.

Notwithstanding these inimitable beauties, the *Jerusalem Delivered* never has, and never will make the impression on the world which the *Iliad* has done. The reason is, that it is not equally drawn from nature; the characters are taken from romantic conception, not real life. The chiefs who assemble in council with Godfrey, the knights who strive before Jerusalem

with Tancred, have little resemblance either to the greyhaired senators who direct human councils, or the youthful warriors who head actual armies. They are poetical abstractions, not living men. We read their speeches with interest, we contemplate their actions with admiration; but it never occurs to us that we have seen such men, or that the imagination of the poet has conceived any thing resembling the occurrences of real life. The whole is a fairy dream – charming, interesting, delightful, but still a dream. It bears the same resemblance to reality which the brilliant gossamer of a snow-clad forest, glittering in the morning sun, does to the boughs when clothed with the riches and varied by the hues of summer. It is the perfection of our conceptions of chivalry, mingled with the picturesque machinery of antiquity and romantic imagery of the East, told with the exquisite beauty of European versification. But it is a poetical conception only, not a delineation of real life. In Homer, again, the marvellous power of the poet consists in his deep insight into human character, his perfect knowledge of the human heart, and his inimitable fidelity of drawing every object, animate or inanimate. Aristotle said that he excelled all poets that ever appeared in "διαγνοια." Aristotle was right; no one can study the *Iliad* without feeling the justice of the observation. It is the penetration, the piercing insight of the Greek bard, which constitute his passport to immortality. Other poets may equal him in variety of imagination; some may excel him in melody of versification or beauty of language: none will probably ever approach him in delineation of character, or

clothing abstract conceptions in the flesh and blood of real life.

Considered with reference to unity of action and identity of interest, the *Jerusalem Delivered*, equal to the *Iliad*, is much superior to the *Æneid*. Virgil appears, in his admiration of Homer, to have aimed at uniting in his poem the beauties both of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, and thence in a great measure his failure to rival either. While the first six books, which contain the wanderings of the Trojan exile and the dismal recital of the sack of Troy, are an evident imitation of the *Odyssey*, the last six, containing the strife in Italy, the efforts of the Trojans to gain a footing on the Ausonian shores, and the concluding single combat of Turnus and Æneas, are as evidently framed upon the model of the *Iliad*. But it is impossible in this manner to tack together two separate poems, and form an homogeneous whole from their junction. Patchwork will appear in spite of all the genius and taste of Virgil. Epic poetry, indeed, is not confined within the narrow limits of the Grecian stage; the poem may embrace a longer period than it requires to read it. But in epic poetry, as in all the fine arts, one unity is indispensable – the unity of interest or emotion. Unity of time and place is not to be disregarded to any great degree without manifest danger. The whole period embraced in the *Iliad* is only forty-eight days, and the interest of the piece – that which elapses from Hector lighting his fires before the Greek intrenchments till his death in front of the Scæan Gate – is only thirty-six hours. Tasso has the same unity of time, place, and interest in his poems: the

scene is always around Jerusalem; the time not many weeks; the main object, the centre of the whole action, the capture of the city. The charming episodes of Erminia's flight and Armida's island are felt to be episodes only: they vary the narrative without distracting the interest. But in Virgil the interest is various and complicated, the scene continually shifting, the episodes usurp the place of the main story. At one time we are fascinated by the awful recital of the murder of Priam, the burning of Troy, and the flight of Æneas: at another, we weep with the sorrows of Dido at Carthage, and the exquisite pathos of his heart-rending lamentations: at a third, we are charmed by the descent into the infernal regions on the shores of Avernus, we sympathize with the patriotic effort of Turnus and the people of Ausonia to expel the invaders from the Italian shores. Though Virgil did not intend it, he has twice transferred the reader's sympathy from the hero of his story: once by his inimitable description of the mourning and death of Dido from the departure and perfidy of Æneas, and again, from the burst of patriotic feeling which he has represented as animating the Etruscan tribes at the violent intrusion of the Trojan invaders.

Virgil's heroes will bear no sort of comparison with those either of the *Iliad* or the *Jerusalem Delivered*. Æneas himself is a vain conceited man, proud of his piety and his wanderings, and destroying our admiration for either by the ostentation with which he brings them forward on all occasions. The well-known line,

"Sum pius Æneas, famâ super æthere notus,"

occurs too frequently to render it possible to take any interest in such a self-applauding character. Compare this with the patriotic devotion, the heroic courage, the domestic tenderness, the oblivion of self in Hector, in the *Iliad*, and it will at once appear how far deeper the insight into the human heart was in the Grecian than the Roman poet. One striking instance will at once illustrate this. When Hector parts from Andromache at the Scæan Gate, and after he has taken his infant son from his arms, he prays to Jupiter that he may become so celebrated that the people in seeing himself pass, may say only – "He far exceeds his father." What sentiment on the part of a hero himself, and at the moment the bulwark and sole stay of Troy! But what does Virgil make Æneas say in similar circumstances? – "Learn, boy, virtue and true labour from ME, fortune from others."

What a difference between the thought in the two poets, and the interest which their words excite in the breast of the reader!

What an historical gallery, or rather what a gallery of imaginary portraits, does the *Iliad* contain! It is the embodying so many separate and well-distinguished characters, in different persons, which forms the grand characteristic – the unequalled supremacy of the poem. Only think of what they are. Achilles, vehement alike in anger and in grief, wrathful, impetuous, overbearing, "the most terrible character ever conceived by

man;" yet not insensible at times to the tender emotions, loving his country, weeping for his father, devoted to his home, but yet determined to purchase deathless renown by a short life, ere he met the death he knew awaited him under the walls of Troy. Hector, calm, resolute, patriotic; sustaining by his single arm the conflict with a host of heroes; retaining by his single suavity the confederacy of many jealous and discordant nations; unconquerable in the field; undaunted in council; ever watching over his country; ever forgetful of himself; overflowing with domestic affection, yet prodigal of self-sacrifice; singly awaiting before the Scæan Gate the approach of Achilles, when his celestial armour shone like the setting sun, and all Troy in terror had sought refuge within the walls; deaf to the wailing even of Andromache and Priam, at the call of patriotic duty; and when betrayed by Minerva in the last conflict, and deprived of his home, yet drawing his sword to do deeds of which men might speak thereafter! Diomede, unsubdued even amidst the wreck of Grecian fortunes during the absence of Achilles, alone sustaining the war, when all around him quailed before the spear of Hector; and resolute to hold his ground with a few followers, even though the whole of his Grecian leaders fled in their ships. Agamemnon, proud, imperious, passionate; doing injustice in anger, yet willing to repair it on reflection; wresting the blue-eyed maid from Achilles in the first burst of fury, yet publicly acknowledging his fault in the council of the chiefs; sending embassies, and offering his own daughter, to obtain a

reconciliation with the son of Peleus. Ulysses, wary alike in council and in action; provident in forming designs, intrepid in carrying them into execution; sparing of the blood of his soldiers, but unconquerable in the resolution with which they were led; ever counselling prudent measures, but ever ruled by invincible determination. Ajax, singly resisting the onset of the Trojan multitude; slowly retreating, covered by his broad shield; midway between the two armies, when all around him fled; striving with desperate resolution for the body of Patroclus, and covering the retreat of his followers who dragged along the lifeless hero, when Hector, clad in the shining panoply he had wrested from the Myrmidonian chief, was thundering in close pursuit. What has Virgil to exhibit as a set-off to this band of heroes – "Fortem Gyan, fortemque Cloanthum" – the boyish eagerness of Ascanius, the savage wrath of Turnus when bereaved of his bride! We seem, in passing from the *Iliad* to the *Æneid*, to have fallen, so far as character goes, from a race of giants to a brood of pigmies.

Modern partiality cannot claim for Tasso the merit of having conceived a band of heroes whose characters were as strongly marked, or boldly drawn, as those of the Grecian bard; yet may it justly claim for the Italian poet the second honours. Tasso did not draw his characters from nature, like Homer; he lived at a period when the manners of the heroic age had passed away, and the recollections of it were preserved only in the stanzas of poetry and the romances of the Troubadours; yet did the

force of his genius, the elevation of his sentiments, the loftiness of his conceptions, in a great measure supply the defect, and produce a magnificent, and to this day unequalled, picture of the chivalry of modern Europe. Godfrey of Bouillon is the model of a Christian hero whose arm has been devoted to the sacred lance; antiquity did not, and could not, conceive any such character. Hector is the nearest approach to it; but the patriotism of the Trojan chief is mingled with his domestic affections; it is for his father, his wife, his child, his hearth, his country, that he fights. In Godfrey, all these affections, warm and ennobling as they are, appear to be obliterated by the perpetual sense of a sacred duty superior to them all – by the intensity of the pious fervour which had concentrated all earthly affections. He is the personification of the Church militant, combating for its Saviour's cause. The profound feelings, the self-negation, the martyr-like spirit which had been nursed for centuries amidst the solitude of the cloister, appears in him brought forth into action, and producing the most intense enthusiasm, yet regulated by the caution of Ulysses, combined with the foresight of Agamemnon, sustained by the constancy of Ajax.

Rinaldo, youthful, vehement, impassioned, is the ideal of a hero not yet weaned from the passions of the world. Vehement, capricious, and irascible, he disturbs, like Achilles, the council of the chiefs by his wrath, and is seduced by the beauty of Armida to abandon the cause of the cross; yet even in her enchanted gardens, and when surrounded by all that can fascinate

the imagination and allure the senses, the sparks of a noble nature are not extinct in his breast; he is recalled to his duty by the sight of her warriors; he flies the arms of the syren; he penetrates with invincible courage the enchanted forest; and when he descends purified from the stains of the world from the lofty mountain, on whose summit at sunrise he had dedicated himself to God, he is the worthy and invincible champion of the cross. Not less bold than his youthful rival, not less enthusiastic in his affections, Tancredi is the victim of a romantic passion. But it is no enchantress for whom he pines; it is no seducing frail one who allures him from the path of duty. Clorinda appears in the Saracen ranks; her arms combat with heroic power for the cause of Mahomet; the glance which has fascinated the Christian knight came from beneath the plumed helmet. Lofty enthusiasm has unstrung his arm – devoted tenderness has subdued his heart – the passion of love in its purest form has fascinated his soul; yet even this high-toned sentiment can yield to the influences of religion; and when Tancredi, after the fatal nocturnal conflict in which his sword pierced the bosom of his beloved, is visited by her in his dreams, and assured that she awaits him in Paradise, the soul of the Crusader is aroused within him, and he sets forth with ardent zeal to seek danger and death in the breach of Jerusalem. It cannot be said that these characters are so natural as those of Homer, at least they are not so similar to what is elsewhere seen in the world; and therefore they will never make the general impression which the heroes of the Iliad have done. But they are

more refined – they are more exalted; and if less like what men are, they are perhaps not the less like what they ought to be.

How is it, then, if Virgil is so inferior to Homer and Tasso in the unity of action, the concentration of interest, and the delineation of character, that he has acquired his prodigious reputation among men? How is it that generation after generation has ratified the opinion of Dante, who called him his "Divine Master" – of Petrarch, who spent his life in the study of his works? How is it that his verses are so engraven in our recollection that they have become, as it were, a second nature to every cultivated mind, and insensibly recur whenever the beauty of poetry is felt, or the charms of nature experienced? Rest assured the judgment of so many ages is right: successive generations and different nations never concur in praising any author, unless his works, in some respects at least, have approached perfection. If we cannot discern the beauties, the conclusion to be drawn is that our taste is defective, rather than that so many ages and generations have concurred in lavishing their admiration on an unworthy object. Nor is it difficult to see in what the excellence of Virgil consists; we cannot read a page of him without perceiving what has fascinated the world, without concurring in the fascination. It is the tenderness of his heart, his exquisite pathos, his eye for the beauty of nature, the unrivalled beauty of his language, which have given him immortality, and to the end of time render the study of his works the most perfect means of refining the taste and inspiring a genuine feeling of

poetic beauty.

So melodious is the versification, so delicate the taste, so exquisite the feeling, so refined the sentiment of Virgil, that it may truly be said that he will ever remain the model on which the graces of composition in every future age must be formed. Of him more truly than any human being it may be said, "Nihil quod tetegit non ornavit." The *Georgics* demonstrate that, in the hands of genius, and under the guidance of taste, the most ordinary occupations of rural life may be treated with delicacy, and rendered prolific of beauty. The dressing of vines, the subduing of the clod by the sturdy heifers, the different manures for the soil, the sowing of seed, the reaping of harvest, the joys of the vintage, the vehemence of storms, the snows of winter, the heats of summer, the blossoms of spring, the riches of autumn, become in his hands prolific of description and prodigal of beauty. Even the dumb animals are the objects of his tender solicitude. We hear the heifers lowing for their accustomed meal in winter; we gaze on the sporting of the lambs in spring; we see the mountain goat suspended from the shaggy rock in summer; we sympathize with the provident industry of the bees; we even feel we have a friend in the little underground nest of the field mouse. The opening lines of the Eclogues, which every schoolboy knows by heart, give an earnest of the exquisite taste which pervades his writings: —

"Tityre, tu patulæ, recubans sub tegmine fagi,

Sylvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena;
Nos patriæ fines et dulcia linquimus arva.
Nos patriam fugimus: tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra,
Formosam resonare doces Amaryllida sylvas."

Virgil, it has been said, was so strongly impressed with the inferiority of the *Æneid* to what he conceived epic poetry should be, that he desired that poem to be thrown into the flames after his death; yet though deficient in the principal requisites of an epic poem, so far as the structure of the story and the delineation of the characters are concerned, what exquisite beauties does it contain – what an assemblage of lovely images has it brought together – what an irreparable loss would its destruction have been to all future generations of men! Not all the genius of subsequent ages could have supplied its place. There are beauties in the *Æneid*, which neither Thomson in descriptive, nor Racine in dramatic poetry, have been able to rival.

If Homer excels all subsequent writers in conception of character, vigour of imagination, and graphic delineation, Virgil is not less unrivalled in delicacy of sentiment, tenderness of feeling, and beauty of expression. There are many more striking scenes in the *Iliad*, more animating events, more awful apparitions; but in the *Æneid*, passages of extraordinary beauty are much more numerous. What is present to the imagination when we rise from the former, is the extraordinary series of brilliant or majestic images which it has presented; what is engraven on the memory when we conclude the latter, is the

charming series of beautiful passages which it contains. There are many more events to recollect in the Grecian, but more lines to remember in the Roman poet. To the *Iliad*, subsequent ages have turned with one accord for images of heroism, traits of nature, grandeur of character. To the *Æneid*, subsequent times will ever have recourse for touches of pathos, expressions of tenderness, felicity of language. Flaxman drew his conception of heroic sculpture from the heroes of the *Iliad*: Racine borrowed his heart-rending pathetic from the sorrows of Dido. Homer struck out his conceptions with the bold hand, and in the gigantic proportions, of Michael Angelo's frescoes; Virgil finished his pictures with the exquisite grace of Raphael's Madonnas.

Virgil has been generally considered as unrivalled in the pathetic; but this observation requires to be taken with a certain limitation. No man ever exceeded Homer in the pathetic, so far as he wished to portray it; but it was one branch only of that emotion that he cared to paint. It was the *domestic pathetic* that he delineated with such power: it was in the distresses of home life, the rending asunder of home affections, that he was so great a master. The grief of Andromache on the death of Hector, and the future fate of his son begging his bread from the cold charity of strangers – the wailings of Priam and Hecuba, when that noble chief awaited before the Scæan Gate the approach of Achilles – the passionate lamentations of the Grecian chief over the dead body of Patroclus – never were surpassed in any language; they abound with traits of nature, which, to the end of the world, will

fascinate and melt the human heart. The tender melancholy of Evander for the fate of Pallas, who had perished by the spear of Turnus, is of the same description, and will bear a comparison with its touching predecessor. But these are all the sorrows of domestic life. Virgil and Tasso, in the description of the despair consequent on the severing of the ties of the passion of love, have opened a new field, unknown in the previous poetry of antiquity. It is to be found touched on in the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides, and but touched on. The passion they represent under the name of love was not what we understand by the word, or what constitutes so important an element in the poetry and romance of modern Europe. It was not the imaginative flame feeding on hope, nursed by smiles, transcendent in enjoyment, but a furious mania, resembling rather, and classed with, the ravings of insanity. Destiny was the grand ruling power in Greek tragedy: the distress brought out was the striving of man against the iron chain of fate. Love as a passion, independent of destiny, detached from sense, feeding on the imagination, living in the presence of the beloved object, is glanced at in Catullus; but it is in Virgil that we must look for the perfect delineation of its suffering, a thorough knowledge of its nature – in Tasso, that it has been wrought up to the highest conceivable perfection.

But, for all that, we will not have old Homer defrauded of his dues. The *Iliad* cannot, for the reasons already mentioned, produce passages to be placed beside the pathetic tenderness of Dido's love for Æneas, the romantic chivalry of Tancredi, or

Erminia's passion. But in the earlier and more natural affections, in the delineation of domestic grief, in the rending asunder the parental or filial ties, who has ever surpassed the pathetic simplicity of the Grecian bard? Where can we find such heart-rending words as Priam addresses to Hector, leaning over the towers of Troy, when his heroic son was calmly awaiting the approach of the god-like Achilles, resplendent in the panoply of Vulcan, and shielded by the Ægis of Minerva?

But we know not whether three lines in the *Odyssey* do not convey a still more touching picture of grief – so powerful is the wail of untaught nature. When Proteus informed Menelaus of the murder of Agamemnon, his grief is thus described —

> "Ὣς ἔφατ᾽ · αὐτὰρ ἔμοιγε κατεκλάσθη φίλον ἦτορ
> Κλαῖον δ᾽ ἐν ψαμάθοισι καθήμενος· οὐδέ νύ μοι κῆρ
> Ἤθελ᾽ ἔτι ζώειν, καὶ ὁρᾶν φάος ἠελίοιο."
>
> *Odyssey, IV. 538.*

"Thus he spoke; my soul was crushed within me; I sat weeping on the sand; nor had I the heart to wish to live, and behold the light of the sun." Here is the pathos of nature: "Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

One peculiar beauty belongs to the epic poems of antiquity, and especially Homer, from the combination of heroic sentiments and actions with a simplicity which will be looked for in vain, and in truth would be unseemly, in the later ages of

society. We hear of princes, kings, and the daughters of kings, and our imagination immediately clothes them with the pomp and circumstance of modern royalty. But erelong some little circumstance, let out as it were accidentally, brings us back at once to the simplicity and habits of early life. Bellerophon met the daughter of a king amidst the grassy meads, and a race of heroes sprung from this occasion; but he met her as he was tending his herds, and she her lambs. The beauteous daughters of the Trojan chiefs repaired to the hot and cold springs of the Scamander, near the Scæan Gate, but they went there to wash their clothes in its limpid fountains. The youngest daughter of Nestor, with the innocence of a child, though the beauty of womanhood, did, by her father's desire, to Telemachus the duties of the bath. Many a chief is described as rich; but generally the riches consist in flocks and herds, in wrought brass or golden ornaments – not unfrequently in meadows and garden-stuffs. This beauty could not, from the superior age of the world, belong to Tasso. His soldans are arrayed in all the pomp of Asiatic magnificence – his princes appear in the pride of feudal power – his princesses surrounded with the homage of chivalrous devotion. Virgil has often the same exquisite traits of nature, the same refreshing return to the young world, in the *Æneid*: He dwells on those peeps into pastoral simplicity as Tacitus did on the virtue of the Germans in the corrupted days of Roman society, when "corrumpere et corrumpi seculum vocatur." We may conceive the enchantment with which the Romans, when

the Capitol was in all its splendour in the time of Augustus, read his charming description of its shaggy precipices in the days of Evander.

"Hinc ad Tarpeiam sedem et Capitolia ducit,
Aurea nunc, olim sylvestribus horrida dumis.
Jam tum religio pavidos terrebat agrestes
Dira loci; jam tum sylvam saxumque tremebant.
'Hoc nemus, hunc,' inquit, 'frondoso vertice collem,
Quis deus incertum est, habitat deus: Arcades ipsum
Credunt se vidisse Jovem, cum sæpe nigrantem
Ægida concuteret dextrâ nimbosque cieret.'

******

Talibus inter se dictis, ad tecta subibant
Pauperis Evandri, passimque armenta videbant
Romanoque foro, et lautis mugire Carinis." —*Æneid*, viii. 347.

What Homer was to Virgil, and Ariosto to Tasso, that Michael Angelo was to Raphael. Though both these illustrious men lived in the same age, yet the former was born nine years before the latter,[1] and he had attained to eminence while his younger

[1] Raphael was born in 1483, Michael Angelo in 1474.

rival was yet toiling in the obscurity of humble life. It was the sight of the magnificent frescoes of Michael Angelo that first emancipated Raphael from the stiff and formal, though beautiful style of his master, Pietro Perugino, and showed him of what his noble art was susceptible. So great was the genius, so ardent the effort, of the young aspirant, so rapid the progress of art in those days, when the genius of modern Europe, locked up during the long frost of the middle ages, burst forth with the vigour and beauty of a Canadian spring, that he had brought painting, which he had taken up in a state of infancy in the studio of Pietro Perugino, to absolute perfection when he died, at the age of thirty-seven. Seventeen years, in Raphael's hands, sufficed to bring an art as great and difficult as poetry to absolute perfection! Subsequent ages, vainly as yet attempting to imitate, can never hope to surpass him. How vast must have been the genius, how capacious the thought, how intense the labour, of the man who could thus master and bring to perfection this difficult art, in a period so short as, to men even of superior parts and unwearied application, barely to gain the command of the pencil!

Modern painting, as it appears in the works of Michael Angelo, Raphael, and Titian, is an art as elevated in kind as the highest flights of the epic or tragic muse, and it has been brought to a perfection to be paralleled only by the greatest conceptions of Grecian statuary. If called upon to assign the arts which human genius had, since the beginning of the world, brought to absolute perfection, no one would hesitate to fix on Grecian sculpture and

Italian painting. Imagination can conceive a more faultless poem than the *Iliad*, a more dignified series of characters than those of the *Æneid*, a more interesting epic than *Paradise Lost*; but it can figure nothing more perfect than the friezes of Phidias, or more heavenly than the *Holy Families* of Raphael. It is one of the most extraordinary and inexplicable facts recorded in the history of the human mind, that these two sister arts should both have been brought to perfection near each other, on the shores of the Mediterranean, in the lifetime of a single generation; for the transition from the marbles of Ægina to those of the Parthenon, made in the lifetime of Pericles, is as great as from the paintings of Pietro Perugino to those of Raphael, made in the lifetime of Leo X.

The sculpture of antiquity aimed chiefly, if not entirely, at the representation of a *single figure*. Even the procession on the frieze of the Parthenon is not sculpture – it is a series of isolated horsemen or figures passing. The group of Niobe and her children is the only attempt extant at telling a story, or representing emotion by a variety of figures. Within this limited range, the great sculptors carried the art to the highest imaginable perfection. The Apollo is the most perfect representation of manly beauty, the Venus of feminine grace and delicacy. The Laocoon exhibits the most fearful contortions and agonized expressions of pain and anguish in suffering humanity; the Fighting Gladiator – the most inimitable representation of war-like energy at its extreme tension – the Dying Warrior of the

Capitol, of valour sinking beneath the ebbing stream of blood. The Hercules Farnese is the perfection of physical strength, the Jupiter Tonans of awful majesty, the Venus Calipyge of alluring beauty. Thus the expression of *character* was their great object; emotion was not overlooked, but it was studied only as it brought out or illustrated the permanent temper of mind. A collection of ancient statues is a vast imaginary gallery, in which, as in the heroes of the *Iliad*, every conceivable gradation of the human mind is exhibited, from the stern vengeance of Achilles, whom not even the massacre of half the Grecian host could melt, to the tender heart of Andromache, who wept her husband's valour, and her sad presentiments for her infant son.

In modern painting, as it appeared in the hands of Raphael and Michael Angelo, a wider range was attempted: more spiritual and touching objects had come to engross the human mind. The mere contemplation of abstract character – its delineation by the graphic representation of the human form, had ceased to be the principal object of genius. The temple of the unknown God was no longer to be filled with idols made under image of man. The gospel had been preached to the poor; the words of mercy and peace had been heard on the earth. Painting had come to be the auxiliary of religion; it was in the churches of a spiritual and suffering faith that its impression was to be produced. Calvary was to be presented to the eye; the feeling of the centurion. "Truly this man was the Son of God," engraven on the heart. It was to the faithful who were penetrated with the glad words of salvation,

that the altar-pieces were addressed; it was the feeling of the song of Simeon that had gone forth on the earth. It was those divine feelings which painting, as it arose in modern Europe, was called to embody in the human form; it was to this heavenly mission that the genius of Italy was called. And if ever there was a mind fitted to answer such a call – if ever the spirit of the gospel was breathed into the human breast, that mind and that breast were those of Raphael.

Michael Angelo was the personification of the genius of Dante. The bold conceptions, the awful agonies, the enduring suffering which are brought forth in that immortal poet, had penetrated his kindred spirit, and realized the *Inferno* in the representation of the *Last Judgment*. But it was the Spirit of Christ which had been breathed into the heart of Raphael. The divine words, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," had inspired his immortal conceptions. It is neither physical beauty nor mental character, as in the Greek sculpture, which is represented in his paintings. It is the Divine spirit breathed into the human heart; it is the incarnation of deity in the human form that formed the object of his pencil. He has succeeded in the attempt beyond any other human being that ever existed. If any works of man ever deserved the name of divine, they are the *Holy Families* of Raphael.

Superficial writers will ask, what has Raphael to do with Virgil? mere artists will enquire, how they are to be benefited

by the study of Tasso? Those, again, who have reflected on the means by which the higher stages in any art are attained, will acknowledge that, at a certain elevation, their principles are the same.

To move the heart, whether by painting, poetry, or eloquence, requires the same mind. The means by which the effect is to be produced are not different. The one works, indeed, with the pencil, the other with the pen; the one composes in verse, the other in prose – but what then? These are the means to the end, they are not the end itself. There are many avenues to the human heart, but the inner doors in them all are to be opened only by one key, and that key is never denied to the suit of genius.

It is in his lesser pieces that the exquisite taste and divine conceptions of Raphael are chiefly to be seen. His greater paintings, the *Transfiguration*, the frescoes in the Vatican, the cartoons, are invaluable to the artist as studies, and specimens of the utmost power of drawing and energy of conception; but it is not there that the divine Raphael appears. In the larger ones his object was to cover space and display talent; and in the prosecution of these objects he never has been exceeded; but it is in his groups of two or three figures that his exquisite conceptions appear. It is there that he has given free scope to his exquisite conception, intended to represent in the maternal, and therefore universally felt affection, the divine spirit and parental tenderness of the gospel. "My son, give me thy heart," was what he always aimed at. "God is love," the idea which he ever strove

to represent, as embodying the essence of the Christian faith. The Madonna della Seggiola at Florence, the Assumption of the Virgin at Dresden, the Madonna di Foligno in the Vatican, the Holy Family at Naples, St John in the Desert in the Tribune at Florence, the small Holy Family in the Louvre, the large Holy Family, with the flowers, brought from Fontainbleau, also in the Louvre, St Mark at Munich, and several of the lesser pieces of Raphael in the same rich collection in that city, are so many gems of art, embodying this conception, which to the end of the world, even when preserved only in the shadowy imitation of engraving, will improve the heart and refine the mind, as well as fascinate the imagination. It may be doubted if they ever will be equalled: excelled they can never be.

Whoever will study those inimitable productions, even when standing to gaze at the engravings from them in a print-shop window, will have no difficulty in feeling the justice of Cicero's remark, that all the arts which relate to humanity have a certain common bond, a species of consanguinity between them. The emotion produced by the highest excellence in them all is the same. So intense is this emotion, so burning the delight which it occasions, that it cannot be borne for any length of time: the mind's eye is averted from it as the eyeball is from the line of "insufferable brightness," as Gray calls it, which often precedes the setting of the sun. It is difficult to say in which this burning charm consists. Like genius or beauty, its presence is felt by all, but can be described by none. It would seem to be an emanation

of Heaven – a chink, as it were, opened, which lets us feel for a few seconds the ethereal joys of a superior state of existence. But it is needless to seek to define what, all who have felt it must acknowledge, passes all understanding.

It is a common saying, even among persons of cultivated taste, that it is hopeless to attempt to advance any thing new on the beauties of ancient authors; that every thing that can be said on the subject has already been exhausted, and that it is in the more recent fields of modern literature that it is alone possible to avoid repetition. We are decidedly of opinion that this idea is erroneous, and that its diffusion has done more than any thing else to degrade criticism to the low station which, with some honourable exceptions, it has so long held in the world of letters. But when ancient excellence is contemplated with a generous eye, even when the mind that sees is but slenderly gifted, who will say that nothing new will occur? When it meets kindred genius, when it is elevated by a congenial spirit, what a noble art does criticism become? What has it proved in the hands of Dryden and Pope, of Wilson and Macaulay? It is in the contemplation of ancient greatness, and its comparison with the parallel efforts of modern genius, that the highest flights of these gifted spirits have been attained, and the native generosity of real intellectual power most strikingly evinced. Criticism of words will soon come to an end; the notes of scholiasts and annotators are easily made, as apothecaries make drugs by pouring from one phial into another. But criticism of things, of ideas, of

characters, of conceptions, can never come to an end; for every successive age is bringing forth fresh comparisons to make, and fresh combinations to exhibit. It is the outpouring of a heart overburdened with admiration which must be delivered, and will ever discover a new mode of deliverance.

How many subjects of critical comparison in this view, hitherto nearly untouched upon, has the literature of Europe, and even of this age, afforded! Æschylus, Shakspeare, and Schiller – Euripides, Alfieri, and Corneille – Sophocles, Metastasio, and Racine – Pindar, Horace, and Gray – Ovid, Ariosto, and Wieland – Lucretius, Darwin, and Campbell – Demosthenes, Cicero, and Burke – Thucydides, Tacitus, and Gibbon – Thomson, Cowper, and Claude Lorraine: such are a few which suggest themselves at first sight to every one who reflects on the rich retrospect of departed genius. It is like looking back to the Alps through the long and rich vista of Italian landscape; the scene continually varies, the features are ever new, the impression is constantly fresh, from the variety of intervening objects, though the glittering pinnacles of the inaccessible mountains ever shine from afar on the azure vault of heaven. Human genius is ever furnishing new proofs of departed excellence. Human magnanimity is ever exhibiting fresh examples of the fidelity of former descriptions, or the grandeur of former conception. What said Hector, drawing his sword, when, betrayed by Minerva in his last conflict with Achilles, he found himself without his lance in presence of his fully-armed and heaven-shielded antagonist?

"Not at least inglorious shall I perish, but after doing some great thing that men may be spoken of in ages to come."[2]

[2] "Μὴ μὰν ἀσπουδει γε καὶ ἀκλειῶς ἀπολοίμην᾽Αλλὰ μέγα ῥέξας τι καὶ ἐσσομενοιοι πυθέσθαι." Iliad, XXII. 304.

PING-KEE'S VIEW OF THE STAGE

This is not, O Cho-Ling-Kyang! a barbarian land, as in our foolish childhood we were taught; but, contrariwise, great is the wisdom of the English, and great their skill. Yea, I will not conceal the fact, that in some things they are worthy to be imitated by the best and most learned in the flowery land. Three moons have I resided in London, and devoted myself, with all the powers of my mind and body, to fulfil the task which you and the ever-venerated Chang-Feu have laid upon me. Convey to his benignant ear the words of my respect, and tell him that my brow is ever on the outer edge of his footstool. As I understand my office – having pondered over the same ever since the ship left the shore of my beloved country – it is, to give you a report of the manners and customs of the inhabitants of this extraordinary land, and smooth the way for the sending forth of an ambassador from the immaculate emperor to the governor of this nation. I have completely executed your commission, O excellent Cho-Ling-Kyang! and this was the manner of the doing thereof. When I embarked on board of the large ship with the three masts, which had for name the Walter Scott – after a great general who conquered a province called Scotland, and was presented with a blue button as a reward for his magnanimity – I was entirely ignorant of the language spoken by the mariners, with the exception of the short form of

prayer which they constantly use when speaking of each others' eyes, and a few phrases not easily translatable into our refined tongue; and I accordingly experienced great difficulty in making myself understood. Notwithstanding, I soon got friendly with the captain, and also with the men – who pulled my back hair whenever I passed them, in the most warm and affectionate manner possible. I took greatly to study when I had overcome the sea-sickness; and although I could not master the pronunciation of their words, I soon arrived at a degree of skill, which enabled me to read their printed books. There was a large library on board of the ship, and all day long – with the aid of Morrison's wonderful dictionary – I toiled in the delightful task of making myself acquainted with the masterpieces of English literature. And this I considered the best preparation for the duty set before me; for without books, how could I furnish my mind with a knowledge of the past? – and without mastering the language, how could I understand the characters and modes of thought of the men who now are? I therefore studied history; but their historians write so much, and differ so greatly from each other, that it was perplexing to know if what they told was true – and I was utterly confused. But, fortunately, there was in the ship a young person, who had been sent out by his friends to a merchant's office in Canton; but had discovered that he was a great poet, and very clever man, and was going back to tell his father he would not hide his talents any more, but be a wonder to all men for his genius and abilities; and this young person

was very kind to me. He advised me what to read – which was principally his own writings; and on my telling him I wished to study history, he said nobody cared for it now, and that all the history he knew was in Shakspeare's plays. This Shakspeare was a great writer long ago, who turned all the histories of his country into dramatic scenes; and they are acted on grand occasions before the Queen and her court at this very day. When I enquired of the young person how his countrymen preserved the memory of events which had happened since the death of the great Shakspeare, he said there were other people as clever perhaps as Shakspeare, who embalmed important incidents in immortal verse, but whom a brutal public did not sufficiently appreciate; and he offered to read to me a poem of his own called the Napoleonad, giving an account of a great war that happened some time ago – and which had been published, he said, week after week, in the Bath and Bristol Literary Purveyor. He read it to me, and it was very fine; but I did not gain much information. I read various parts of English history in Shakspeare; but from the specimens he gives of the kings that reigned long ago in England, I fear they were a very cruel and barbarous race of men. One of the name of Lear gave up the kingdom to his three daughters, and two of them treated him very cruelly, turned him out of doors on a stormy night, put out his followers' eyes, and behaved very ill indeed. Another was called John – a bad man. Three Henries – the first two great fighters, and one of them a common highway robber in conjunction with a fat old gentleman who was a great

coward, but boasted he killed the chief warrior of the enemy – and the other Henry, a weak old man, who was murdered by another very bad king called Richard. There was another Henry who sent away his wife – a fat, bloated, villanous kind of man; and after that no mention is made of any of the English kings in Shakspeare's history. And when I asked the young person if there had been any kings since, he said he had never heard of any except George the Third, grandfather of the present Queen. I demanded of him if all the plays in England were forced to be histories? and he said, no. And when I further enquired what they represented, and of what use they were, he said they were to hold a mirror up to nature, and to be the abstract and brief chronicle of the time; by which he afterwards explained to me he meant this – that although tragedies and the loftier portions of the drama treated generally of great events, yet that, in England, there were many men of extraordinary talent, who taught great moral lessons by means of the stage, and, above all things, never overstepped the modesty of nature, but in every scene gave a vivid and true imitation of the actual events of life. In short, that the best way of seeing English character was to study the English stage; for all classes of men were more fully, truly, and fairly represented there, than even in the House of Commons itself. The young person, to prove the truth of this, read me a comedy, which he was going to have acted at Covent-Garden Theatre; and it was very amusing, for he laughed excessively at every speech. You will easily believe, O Cho-Ling-Kyang!

that I rejoiced greatly at hearing this account of the stage; and unbounded was my satisfaction in finding among the books in the library a large collection of English plays, which I studied deeply and took notes from, for my future guidance in mingling with society. What a blessing it is for a nation to be in possession of so useful an institution, where the actual manners of the time are brought exactly forward, and the people can see the different classes of society with all their different feelings and peculiarities – their modes of thought – their faults and weaknesses – their wishes and vices – as vividly produced as if the performers were in reality the very beings they represent! How it must instruct the boorish in the gracefulness of polished life – how it must reprove the bad by the contemplation of honest simplicity – and what an insight must it give to the foreigners, into all the secrets of the domestic existence of this great and extraordinary people! O Cho-Ling-Kyang! when the young person told me this, I said to my heart – "Be still – beat no more with the pulses of uncertainty – I shall only buy a perpetual ticket to the pit of the theatre, and write home a minute account of all I see and hear." On my arrival in London I took down the names of the theatres, and for three months I have studied character every night. Yet, though I devoted my nights to the stage, I pored all the morning over the many volumes I have collected of the printed dramas; and as they all agree in their descriptions, I think I cannot be deceived, and that you may safely present the subjoined result of my enquiries to the very sparkling eyes of the ever-venerated

Chang-Feu. There are many ranks of men in this land, and he of the highest rank is called a lord. When young, a lord is always rich and gay, and a great admirer of the ladies; and it is also the case that many ladies are devotedly attached to him, and make no scruple to confess it to their chambermaids, before they have been acquainted with him half an hour. When the lord is old, he is a stiff stupid man, who generally talks politics, and boasts how eloquent he is in the great national assembly. He is also always very harsh to his children, till they marry against his will, and then he forgives them, and prays for their happiness. The title bestowed on the wife, and sometimes on the daughter of a lord, is lady or ladyship; but this dignity is also possessed by the wives of a class of men very numerous in this country, who are called sirs.

The "ladies," almost without exception, are very disagreeable people, and highly immoral, as they are always in love with some one else besides their husbands, – and are great gamblers at cards, and very malicious in their observations on their friends. The "sirs" are divided into two classes – sometimes they are fat rich old men who have made large fortunes by trade, and have handsome girls either of their own, or left to their charge by deceased relations, – and sometimes they are gay fascinating young men, running away with rich people's daughters, or stupid people's wives; but luckily they always take names that give fair warning of their character, so that they are generally foiled in their infamous attempts. And this is a fine illustration of the openness of the English disposition. A man here seldom

conceals his propensities, but assumes a name which reveals all his character at once. Sir Brilliant Fashion, and Sir Bashful Constant, and Sir Harry Lovewit, show at once their respective peculiarities – as do Colonel Tornado, Tempest, Hurricane, Absolute, Rapid, and a thousand others that I have met with in my reading. But the thing which astonished me most of all was, that in this great mercantile nation, a merchant is very little appreciated unless he is in debt or a cheat; but the hero of most of the histories, if he is of a mercantile family, is over head and ears in the books of Jew usurers, and has left the respectable circle of his equals in rank, and spends his time and constitution in the gaieties of the lords and ladies. And that this has long been the case, is proved by old plays and new ones. There is a play in the oldest-looking of the volumes I possess, called, "How to grow Rich," which shows the style of manners in this respect forty or fifty years ago; and I will translate the beginning of it, that you may see a real picture of English society with your own eyes.

Mr Warford, the nephew of Mr Smalltrade, a banker, is in conversation with Mr Plainly, the head clerk: —

> "*Plainly.*– Nay, do not think me curious or impertinent, Mr Warford. I have lived so long with you and your uncle, that I cannot see you unhappy without enquiring the cause.
>
> "*Warford.*– My uncle is himself the cause. His weakness and credulity will undo us all.
>
> "*Plainly.*– Excuse me, sir; but I'm afraid the young lady now on a visit at our banking-house, the charming Lady Henrietta, has she not made a very deep impression?

"*Warford.*– To confess the truth she has; and though, from my inferior situation in life, I can never aspire to the gaining of her affections, she may still have to thank me for saving her from ruin.

"*Plainly.*– From ruin, sir?

"*Warford.*– Ay; she is now on the very brink of it. When her father, Lord Orville, went abroad for his health, he gave her a fortune of eight thousand pounds, and left her to the care of her uncle, Sir Thomas Roundhead. At his country seat Mr Smalltrade met with her, and, being banker to her father, he thought it his duty to invite her to his house.

"*Plainly.*– And she had no sooner entered it than she became acquainted with Sir Charles and Miss Dazzle? I suspect their infamous designs.

"*Warford.*– Yes, Plainly, when Miss Dazzle has robbed her of her fortune at the gaming-table, Sir Charles is to attempt to deprive her of her honour; but if I don't shame and expose them! Oh, think of the heartfelt satisfaction in saving such a woman as Lady Henrietta! 'Tis true most of her fortune is already lost, and Sir Thomas is so offended at her conduct, that, wanting an heir to his estate, he has adopted his god-daughter Rosa."

In the next page we are shown the mode in which banking was carried on in country towns by persons who had the daughters of lords visiting them – who have gone abroad for their health, and left then such uncountable heaps of sycee silver.

"*Smalltrade.*– There is nothing like a snug country bank.

[*Enter a servant.*

"*Servant.*– I want change for this draft of Sir Harry Hockley's.

"*Smalltrade.*– Very well, how much is it for?

"*Servant.*– A hundred pounds.

"*Smalltrade.*– What?

"*Servant.*– A hundred pounds.

"*Smalltrade.*– Mercy on me! you've set me all in a tremble. Draw on a country bank for a hundred pounds! – why, does your master suppose himself drawing on the bank of Amsterdam?

"*Plainly.*– True, sir; and, if you recollect, we had a large run upon us yesterday.

"*Smalltrade.*– So we had – a very large run! Sir Thomas Roundhead drew in one draft for the enormous sum of twenty-five pounds, and here's your master draws for a hundred. Talk of a country bank! the Bank of England couldn't stand this.

"*Servant.*– I can't tell, sir; Sir Harry said he had ten times the money in your hands.

"*Smalltrade.*– So he has, and what then? Doesn't he place money in my hands that it may be safe; and if he is to draw it out in large sums, that is, if he is to get it out when he wants it, where would be the use of a banker?"

In a succeeding scene, Miss Dazzle meets her brother Sir Charles, and says, —

"Welcome from London, brother! I have just left the idol of your heart, the charming Henrietta. As usual, the banker's nephew was attending her.

"*Sir Charles.*– Ay, ay, it's all pretty plain, but I won't be scandalous.

"*Miss Dazzle.*– Well, if she's his to-day she'll be yours to-morrow. I have seen Mr Smalltrade; he talks of becoming a partner; and, if you play your cards well, Lady Henrietta will be completely in your power.

"*Sir Charles.*– Yes, for when I've won all her money I can be generous enough to become her protector. Well, sister, we shall ruin them all."

It will be seen from this, O Cho-Ling-Kyang! that sirs and their sisters unite with country bankers in setting up a gaming-house – and that the method of treating a lord's daughter, is to ruin her first at cards, and in character afterwards. The picture of private life which I have quoted, is from the works of one Frederick Reynolds; the play was acted with the greatest applause, and has passed through a great many editions. So there can be no doubt of its presenting a true image of the usual course of events in this great and wonderful nation.

In another volume I find a similar representation. It is called, "The Way to get Married," and is written by one Thomas Morton. I will translate some passages for you, and you will see that the English are very different people in their own country from what they are in their counting-houses at Hong-Kong.

There was a gentleman of the name of Toby Allspice, a grocer, who was sheriff of his county, and expected by the death of an old maid, Miss Sarah Sapless, to succeed to thirty thousand pounds. He has a daughter who is very anxious to be "stylish,"

and marry a "lord" or a "sir," if she can.

To Mr Allspice's town goes a London merchant of the name of Dashall, who receives a letter on his arrival, and reads it to the whole of the audience: —

> "*Dashall*, (*reads*). – 'Dear Dashall, all's up. Transfer swears if you don't settle your beer account in a week, he'll blackboard you. Affectionate enquiries are making after you at Lloyd's; and to crown all, hops were so lively last market, that there is already a loss of thousands on that scheme. Nothing can save you but the ready. Yours,
> *'"Tim Tick.*
>
> "'N.B. – Green peas were yesterday sold at Leadenhall market at ninepence a-peck, so your bet of three thousand pounds on that event is lost.' – So! Lurched every way; stocks, insurance, hops, hazard, and green peas, all over the left shoulder; and then, like a flat, I must get pigeoned at Faro by ladies of quality, for the swagger of saying, 'The Duchess and I were curst jolly last night.' But confusion to despair! I'm no flincher. If I can but humbug Allspice out of a few thousands, and marry his daughter, I shall cut a gay figure, and make a splash yet.
>
> "*Waiter*, (*without.*) – A room for Lady Sorrel.
>
> "*Dashall.*– What the devil brings her here? Old and ugly as she is, I'll take decent odds that 'tis an intrigue.
>
> [*Enter Lady Sorrel.*
>
> "*Lady Sorrel.*– Inform my cousin Caustic I'm here. Ah, Dashall! I suppose the warm weather has driven you from town?

"*Dashall.*– True, London was certainly too hot for me, but how could your ladyship leave the fascination of play?

"*Lady Sorrel.*– Hush! that's not my rural character. I always assimilate. The fact is, Dick, I have here a strange, plain-spoken, worthy, and wealthy relation; he gives me considerable sums to distribute in London to the needy, which I lose in play to people of fashion; and you'll allow that is giving them to the needy, and fulfilling the worthy donor's intentions. – Ha! ha!

"*Dashall.*– Then you are not here because your favourite, young Tangent, is arrived? – Eh?

"*Lady Sorrel.*– What, Dick, have you found out my attachment there? Well, I confess it; and if my regard be not, I'll take care my revenge shall be, gratified; and 'tis a great consolation that one is nearly as sweet as the other."

And when the above-named cousin of Lady Sorrel has a palaver with the same merchant Dashall, he is instructed in the inner secrets of the commercial world after the following guise: —

"*Dashall.*– Capital! – an old bugbear – never thought of now. No! paper, discount, does it all.

"*Caustic.*– Paper!

"*Dashall.*– Ay. Suppose I owe a tradesman – my tailor, for instance – two thousand pounds —

"*Caustic.*– A merchant owe his tailor two thousand pounds! – Mercy on me!

"*Dashall.*– I give him my note for double the sum – he discounts it – I touch half in the ready – note comes due

– double the sum again – touch half again – and so on to the tune of fifty thousand pounds. If monopolies answer, make all straight; if not; smash into the Gazette. Brother merchants say, 'D – d fine fellow; lived in style – only traded beyond his capital.' So certificate's signed, ruin a hundred or two reptiles of retailers, and so begin the war again. That's the way to make a splash – devilish neat, isn't it? How you stare! you don't know nothing of life, old boy.

"*Caustic.*– Vulgar scoundrel!

"*Dashall.*– We are the boys in the city. Why, there's Sweetwort the brewer – don't you know Sweetwort? Dines an hour later than any duke in the kingdom – imports his own turtle – dresses turbot by a stop watch – has house-lamb fed on cream, and pigs on pine apples – gave a jollification t'other day – stokehole in the brew-house – asked a dozen peers – all glad to come – can't live as we do. Who make the splash in Hyde Park? – who fill the pit at the opera? – who inhabit the squares in the West? Why, the knowing ones from the East to be sure.

"*Caustic.*– Not the wise ones from the East, I'm sure.

"*Dashall.*– Who support the fashionable Faro tables? Oh, how the duchesses chuckle and rub their hands, when they see one of us!

"*Caustic.*– Duchesses keep gaming-tables!

"*Dashall.*– To be sure! How the devil should they live?"

Such, O learned Cho-Ling-Kyang! is the real life of those extraordinary beings who are so steady and plodding to outward appearance. Little would you suspect that, when one of the

merchants of the factory got home, he would aid duchesses in the setting up of Faro tables, and mix with all the brilliant and dissolute society of a great city. To us, such thoughts would seem unnatural, and scarcely would the president of the Hong consider himself qualified to hold a chopstick in the presence of a yellow button. And I fear greatly; that in the extremity of your unbelief you say, Tush, tush – Ping-Kee is deceiving us by inventing foolish deceits! An English merchant would not make open profession of his bankruptcy; an English lady of rank would not exult in the number of people she had ruined by false play at cards; an English gentleman would not concert plans with his sister for the seduction of a lord's daughter; an English sheriff would not throw off his grocer's apron to go and receive the judges, while an English barrister put it on, and sold figs to the beautiful daughter of a British captain. But consider, O Cho-Ling-Kyang! that I am a man of veracity from my youth, and that if I make so bold as to invent, or even to misquote, there may be many beside you who can convict me at once. And if you persist in your doubts, and say, verily the writers of those plays give no true account of their countrymen, but write false things which have no existence in reality, what shall we think of the countless numbers who go to see those representations, and take no steps to punish the authors for libels and defamations – but, contrariwise, applaud and clap their hands, and say "good, good" – would they do this if the picture had no resemblance? But they hold up the stage as a school of morals, and a copy

of things that are. And another argument, O Cho-Ling-Kyang! that these dramas are drawn from experience and observation is, that they do not contradict each other, as they would assuredly do if they proceeded from any source but reality. No, no – great sir – believe me, that the scenes I have quoted are excellent descriptions of the characters introduced, and that their originals are to be met with every day. Again, perhaps you will say – not so; O Ping-Kee, the writers of those plays are stupid men – with shaved heads – that have no understanding, and receive no greater reward than the conjurers who catch balls on their foreheads, and balance long poles in the market-place! But the case is far different, as I will prove to you from the preface to one of those works, written by a lady called Inchbald, who herself wrote many comedies, and received much money for the same.

"It is well known that the English theatres never flourished as they do at present, (1807.) When it is enquired, why painting, poetry, and sculpture, decline in England? want of encouragment is the sure reply; but this reply cannot be given to the question, why dramatic literature fails? for never was there such high remuneration conferred upon every person, and every work belonging to the drama. A new play which, from a reputed wit of former times, would not with success bring him a hundred pounds, a manager will now purchase from a reputed blockhead at the price of near a thousand, and sustain all risk of whether it be condemned or not. Great must be the attraction of modern plays to repay such speculation. It is a consolation to the dramatist

of the present age, that while his plays are more attractive than ever those of former writers were, those authors had their contemporary critics as well as he, though less acute and less severe indeed than the present race."

I have not time to reduce into celestial money the English sum of a thousand pounds; but it is great, yea, more than the value in three years of the longest peacock's feather in Pekin, and the value of a play is not diminished since then. Not many moons ago, there was a reward offered by one of the managers, of five hundred gold coins called guineas, to the person who should send to him the best comedy illustrative of present manners. O Cho-Ling-Kyang, the power of five hundred guineas in awakening the poetic powers of mankind! The great majority of the English nation for a whole year wrote nothing but plays; all the world was a stage, and all the men and women merely writers; and when the time came, all had broken down in the attempt, except ninety-six. But through these fourscore and sixteen dramas, all painting the habits and characteristics of the present time, the judges appointed by the manager had to read. And they read – and read; and when they came to a decision, lo! it was in favour of a lady – one of the cleverest authors, in other styles, that England has ever seen – bright, polished, witty; and although not in a dramatic form, more dramatic and lively than any professed play-writer since one called Sherry, from his fondness for drinking wine. 'Midst the applause of all the rest of the world, and the hatred and jealousy of her ninety-five competitors, she was presented

with the money; and the manager, on looking through a hole in the curtain on the first night of the performance, saw the whole house crowded from the floor to the roof, and thought he had never so wisely laid out five hundred guineas in his life. "Oho!" said wise men to each other in the boxes, "we shall see ourselves as we are – no farcical exaggeration, no vulgar grievances; the woman is an observing woman, and has mixed in great society; moreover, it is the best play out of nearly a hundred; let us wait, it will be as good as the *School for Scandal*." And they stamped loud with their feet. The play was called the *Day of Dupes*; and wise men in the boxes were not exempt from the general fate. All were dupes together. For the authoress was a wise woman, and jingled the five hundred guineas in a purse, and kept all her own clever observation of life and manners to be used on some other occasion, and took the same view and no other of English customs and character that Reynolds, and Morton, and O'Keefe, and Colman, had done before her. So her heroes and heroines flew about the stage, and talked funny things, and swore a little, and conversed in a provincial dialect called slang, and behaved exactly as Dashall, and Miss Dazzle, and Lord Sparkle had behaved before. Oh! was not this a triumph to the great authors of former days, and did it not prove that wise men in the boxes are foolish men when judging of the stage? It did, O Cho-Ling-Kyang! but a greater triumph was at hand. The manager having read and studied the preface by the female Inchbald, which I have translated for your instruction, and having

given a small sum – so they consider five hundred guineas in this land of ingots – to a reputed wit, thought he would gain much silver if he obtained a drama from a reputed blockhead. And he was right in his calculation; for he applied to an author who had written farces in five acts, where various impossible things were done, and persons talked in great jokes invented long ago by a nobleman of the name of Miller, and behaved like the clown in a pantomime, without the advantage of being dressed in his parti-coloured garments; and in a short time this author furnished the manager with a comedy called *Old Heads and Young Hearts*. Oh! he knew so much of life, this famous author; he would show what the real state of society was; and, said I to myself, I will go and judge for myself. I will see whether the books I have been studying are filled with lies. I will see how gentlemen speak, and how ladies look and act. Oho! I will put Reynolds and Morton to the proof. I will put on my European dress. I will ask the way to the theatre. I will sit in the pit. So shall I be able to send to Cho-Ling-Kyang, and to the venerated Chang-Feu, an account from my personal experience of English fashionable life. And so the first person I saw on the stage was a young gentleman greatly in debt, a studier of the law, who lives in a building called the Temple, in a room meagrely furnished, and talks about his intimacy with duchesses, exactly as Dashall and Tangent had done before. Oh! said I, this is complete proof that the great Reynolds and great Morton drew from life, and also the great author of this beautiful play. His name, not the author's name, but

the young gentleman's name, is Littleton Coke, after two sages of the law called Coke and Littleton; but he makes no money by his profession, and has found all his great friends desert him when he made application to them for a loan. Their names are Lord St James and Mister Deuceace. His brother also writes him a letter, enclosing the blessing of the Reverend Mr Rural, but no cash. But suddenly comes in Lord Charles Roebuck, the younger son of the Earl of Pompion, (for in this country all the younger sons of Earls take the title of "Lord,") and tells Mr Littleton Coke that he is in love with a lady he lifted out of a carriage that had been upset.

"*Littleton.*– Is that all?

"*Roebuck.*– Forbid it, Venus! No, with incredible trouble I traced them. The father, the dragon who guards this Hesperian fruit, is an old East Indian colonel, as proud as Lucifer, and as hot as his dominions. I hovered round the house for a week.

"*Littleton.*– Successfully?

"*Roebuck.*– I saw her once for a second at the back garden-gate.

"*Littleton.*– To speak to her?

"*Roebuck.*– I hadn't time.

"*Littleton.*– No? Oh!

"*Roebuck.*– No. So I gave her a kiss.

"*Littleton.*– Excellent economy; and her name —

"*Roebuck.*– Is Rocket – her father, an eccentric old bully, turns his house into a barrack, mounts guard at the hall door;

the poor girl can't move without a sentry, and I believe her lady's-maid is an old one-eyed corporal of artillery."

From this you will perceive, O Cho-Ling-Kyang! that the English are different from the Chinese in many respects; but that Colonel Rocket so far differs from his countrymen as to keep a strict guard over his daughter. There was a gentleman of the name of Thunder in one of the volumes I read on board of the ship, who was very like this Rocket – probably his uncle; and he again was the son or grandson of an old admiral I read of in a book, called *Trunnion*– all evidently excellent men, and frequently met with in English society. The Earl of Pompion is prime minister of England, and of course a very clever man, and he has determined that his son shall marry his cousin Lady Alice, the widow of another lord – Lord George Hawthorn. She is called Lady Alice, though her husband's name was George; for it is usual for a lady to retain her Christian name in spite of her marriage, although instances, I am told, are known where a lady – even a duke's daughter – marrying a marquis's son, takes the Christian name of her husband along with his title, and calls herself Lady Thomas or Lady William; but the author of this drama, of course, knows best. Lord Charles Roebuck tries to avoid a marriage with Lady Alice, and begs Mr Littleton Coke to propose for her himself, which he of course agrees to do; and in preparation for which he would probably have found the large sum of twenty pounds he wished to borrow from Lord St James, very useful. In addition to the hand of the widow, who has a fortune of £5000 a-year, Lord

Charles insures him a seat in Parliament; and the two friends go out in a great hurry on hearing a knock at the door, to take up their residence in the house of the Earl of Pompion.

The knock at the door is given by the brother of the young barrister, who speaks in a language which they told me was the vernacular of a foreign kingdom called York; he is accompanied by a priest of one of the religions tolerated in this country, called the Christian, which was once universal, but has now fallen into disrepute. They come in search of the spendthrift, and are taken for a money-lender and a bailiff by the young lawyer's clerk; and this makes a great laugh, it is so natural a mistake.

Lady Alice Hawthorn is a delightful lady. She has invited Colonel Rocket and his daughter to dine with Lord Pompion, (whom she calls Pompey, after a great philosopher in ancient Rome,) and who, she says, although he is her uncle, "talked impudence" to her when he was half tipsy at a ball at a place called Almacks. She tells the Earl that Colonel Rocket is rich and powerful; but in this she tells a non-verity – for she looked at me – even me – where I was sitting in the pit, and said he is "a half-pay colonel, with less interest than a treasury clerk, but a glorious old fellow; I'll bet he'll kiss the countess in a week. What fun!" I, even I, Ping-Kee, was so astonished, that I could say nothing, but sat and blushed very much at the communication; and still redder did my cheek become when I saw what followed. For when Lord Charles and the barrister came in, the young lord recognises Lady Alice's tones. "Blest voice," he says, surely it is —

"*Lady Alice.*– Your cousin Alice; how are you, Charley? – (he hesitates) – all right go on, I'm human nature, (he kisses her.) What's your friend's name?"

And then Mr Littleton Coke is presented to Lord and Lady Pompion, who receive him very kindly; for they mistake him for the foreign gentleman who does not speak English, his brother from the kingdom of York. And Lady Alice, besides asking her cousin to kiss her, lets the young barrister make love to her, and kiss her hand before they are acquainted ten minutes, and altogether gives a very fascinating idea of widows of high rank. Colonel Rocket always gives his commands in military language, as if he were at the head of his regiment, and Lord Charles Roebuck frightens the common people with his haughty looks. There is a very elegant gentleman, who is called a butler, and comes in to inform Lord Charles that dinner is on the table; and the second act ends in the following dignified manner: —

"*Butler.*– Ahem – dinner, my lord" – (a pause – he goes behind their causeuse) – "Dinner, my – " (They start up confused.) Roebuck looks sternly at the butler, and they *exeunt* followed by Butler, bowing.

In the next act there is a great deal of kissing and talking, for which I could see no reason; and people ran out and in, and up and down so much, that I became rather confused. But the old Bonze is very stupid, and makes a number of mistakes; and the young barrister is very gay, and treats Lady Alice as if she was no better than a dancer at a festival; and they all

treat each other in such extraordinary ways, that I could only perceive that English young ladies and English young gentlemen, if they behaved in Canton as they do at home, would speedily be consigned to the lockup-house. But at last I was glad to recognise Lord Charles, disguised in top-boots and knee-breeches as a groom, and I was very proud of my cleverness in recognizing him; for his own father speaks to him for a long time, and never makes the discovery; and shortly after, Mr Littleton Coke appears, also disguised as a groom, but for what purpose I could not find out. And there was a long time employed in love-making again, and quarrelling and mistaking, till at last all things seemed to go right, and the old Bonze united the hands of the lovers on the stage, and we all laughed and clapped our hands. Of a truth, O Cho-Ling-Kyang! the persons who find fault with the drama are foolish. It is not with the drama such critics should find fault, but with the people who believe in real life in such a curious manner. No – it will not do to throw the blame of such representations on the author. He does nothing but paint what he sees. And therefore you will be wise if you send over to this people an ambassador who is not of the sect of the moral Con-fu-tse; for as he will have to mix in the society of Lady Alices and Countesses of Pompions, he might be shocked and degraded by meeting them, if he had any regard for female delicacy or manly feeling. It will not require a man of the abilities of the venerated Chang-Feu to twist round his thumb so very stupid a mortal as the Earl of Pompion, who is secretary of state; and, therefore,

you may save much silver by engaging a common Button to conduct the negotiations with the English crown. I could see no one on the stage, or meet with any one in the books, bearing any resemblance to Pottinger or Davis; and, therefore, I suppose all the clever men are banished by this curious people, and all the silly ones kept at home. You will therefore be wise to make your treaties with the Pompions, who reside in Whitehall, rather than with the Goughs and Parkers, who are transported to Hong-Kong. In the mean time I will continue my researches, and I will also make personal experiments as to the veracity of the stage representations. I will go at once to one of the great men's houses, and will kiss his wife in a week, and disguise myself like a postilion, and run away with one of his daughters. And of the result I will make you aware. Such is the view of your servant Ping-Kee, who touches the ground you stand on with his forehead nine times – and one time more.

THE MIDNIGHT WATCH

Chapter I

"For the watch to babble and talk,
Is most tolerable, and not to be endured."

Much Ado about Nothing.

About the period when the civil wars between the Republican and Royalist parties in England had terminated, after the execution of the unfortunate Charles I., in the utter defeat of his son at the battle of Worcester, and the dispersion of all the adherents to the royal cause, a small castellated mansion, not far from the eastern coast of England, was garrisoned by a party of the Parliamentary troops.

This mansion, which had belonged to a Royalist family who had fled the land, having been seized upon and confiscated by the Parliamentary commissioners employed in sequestrating the property of confirmed enemies of the commonwealth, had been converted into a sort of fortress or stronghold, the natural defences and isolated position of which, rendered it peculiarly adapted as a place of confinement for prisoners of war. Its situation, at the same time, so near the coast, gave it an additional

advantage as a post of observation, whence measures might be taken for the interception of such Royalists, who, proscribed as obstinate malignants, might be led to this part of the country in their attempts to seek the means of escape.

Flanked on one side by the waters of the river, this isolated house was cut off on the other three by a broad ditch or moat, being thus entirely surrounded by water, except at one point the most remote from the river, where it communicated by a wooden bridge with a causeway, lined by an avenue of trees, which served as an approach, and traversed at some length a low level tract of land before it reached the higher and more hilly country. A similar tract of level, but of a more marshy and swampy description, stretched along the opposite bank of the river, terminating at some distance by a line of low well-wooded hills. Not far from the house, which stood thus alone, like a solitary bittern in a Dutch landscape, the river widened suddenly into a large expanse of water, called in this part of England a "broad," which was itself only separated from the sea by a narrow strip of low sand-banks, and sandy downs or deanes, as they are there termed, and extended thus along the shore to some distance, when again assuming the form of a river, it poured its waters into the German Ocean.

Of the more ancient part of this mansion, which boasted (it was never well known upon what authority) a Roman origin, only a large circular tower was left, which was attached somewhat awkwardly, like an ill-adjusted headpiece, on to the more modern

building. Although constructed in the comparatively peaceful times of Henry VII.'s reign, the more modern house had been evidently built with some ideas of strength and defence, and in a demi-castellated form, various smaller additions having been made to it at subsequent and different periods, without any great observance of order or style.

Behind the main body of the house thus irregularly constructed, was a species of small inner-court or garden, enclosed between the old tower and the walls that connected it with the mansion on one side, and a wing of the building which extended to the side of the stream on the other; whilst opposite to the back of the house, which was now wholly unoccupied, and almost in a ruinous state, a strong and thick parapet skirted the river, and completed the parallelogram. – Formerly an opening in the centre of this parapet had evidently conducted by several steps to the water's edge, in order to facilitate the communications with boats on the river; but it had now been blocked up by a fresh mass of heavy brickwork and masonry, as if for the purpose of adding security to the place; and at the time we write, two culverins, mounted so as to be on a level with the top of the parapet, contributed to give to the spot the look of a fortified stronghold. The forms of flower-beds of prim shapes, the former decorations of the spot, might still be traced here and there in the now almost level and sandy surface of the coast, giving evidence that some pains had probably been originally bestowed upon this interior enclosure. But beyond these faint traces of flower-beds,

nothing now remained of its better days but a few evergreens and other bushes, which, growing close by the parapet wall, had equally escaped the rude trampling of the unheeding soldiers, or the wanton devastations of some of the over-zealous of the day; men who looked upon all adornment of whatever kind, all appearance of gratification of a refined taste, however innocent, as sinful and condemnable. A vaulted passage traversed the wing of the building mentioned as stretching to the water's edge, and formed the usual and more direct communication between this sort of court and other parts of the establishment.

Late on a fine autumn afternoon of the year 1652, some little time after the battle of Worcester, a young man, musket on arm, paced up and down this inner court as sentinel. His dress, which partook of the military uniform of the times, without precisely belonging to any particular regiment, and the finer cloth of some parts of his attire, which was of a far finer texture than was customary upon the person of a common soldier, proved that he was one of the many volunteers who had enrolled themselves among the troops of the Parliamentary army, and probably of gentler birth than might be generally found employed in such humble military functions. Loose boots of so great a size towards their upper part, that each might have been imagined to contain, at least, half a calf-skin, mounted towards his large hose of plain but good material. A tuck or rapier of some length was girded round his loins; a corselet, with bandoleer slung around it, covered the front of his buff-coat; and a morion, destitute of

all feather or ornament, concealed for the greater part his hair, closely clipped in compliance with the puritanical fashions of the times, the colour of which, however, might be divined by the fairness of the young mustache that curled lovingly about his upper lip.

Sometimes, as he paced backwards and forwards upon his lonesome watch, the eye of the young man rested for a while upon the dull swampy landscape, the chief beauty of which, at the moment, was a slight haze that hovered over stream and marsh, and stunted willow and distant hill, tinged with a golden hue from the slanting rays of the sun; the only living sights and sounds of which, were busy flights of gnats whirling up and down with drowsy hum; an occasional frog, that splashed from the opposite shore into the water with an uneasy croak; and one solitary fisherman, who, after having drawn up his boat among the rushes on the river's bank, near the opening upon the "broad," and left his line to float along the lazy stream, seemed to have lain down in his broad flat-bottomed punt, to sleep at his ease. Sometimes he paused to scrutinize more earnestly the heavy pile of the old tower, to guard all egress from which might be supposed, from his periodical examinations of its walls, to be the peculiar duty of his post. Sometimes again he gazed listlessly upon the marks of devastation, where the carved armorial bearings of the family to whom the mansion had belonged, had been hacked away from the walls of the building, and other symbols of nobility or religion had been wantonly mutilated or destroyed; and at

such moments, an almost unconscious sigh would escape him, ill according with the tenets of the party which he evidently served. But most generally his attention was directed towards a low window in the first floor of the projecting wing, not very many feet above the level of the ground, in front of which a small wooden balcony, filled with flowers, showed that the occupant of the chamber to which it belonged was probably of the gentler sex, and of an age when such matters are still objects of tender and careful solicitude. At these times, evidences of impatience, almost amounting to pettishness, would appear in his uneasy gestures; and after a scrutiny of some duration, he would again turn away to resume his pacing, with a look of trouble and annoyance upon his brow. The handsome features of that fine face, however, were not formed to express grief, nor that clear bright eye sorrowful thought; yet, such were the circumstances of the times, that whenever disengaging them from associations connected with the balconied window, as his reflections reverted to himself and his own position, his countenance would fall, and his eye cloud over with an expression of sadness.

Gerald Clynton was of old family and noble birth. His father, Lord Clynton, had doated upon his wife with the fondest and most exclusive affection; and the birth of Gerald, his second son, having been the occasion of her death in childbed, the agonized husband, who was inconsolable for her loss, had never been able to look upon the child, and, in its infant years, had banished it altogether from his sight. The time arrived, however, when it

became necessary to remove the little boy from the sole care of menials, and to commence the rudiments of his education; and at that period Mr Lyle, the brother of the deceased Lady Clynton, finding the aversion of the father towards the poor innocent cause of the mother's death still more strongly rooted by time, and his whole paternal affections centred and lavished upon his eldest born, had taken the child to his home, and, being himself childless, had treated, and as it were adopted, the boy as his own son.

Time crept on. The boy grew into the youth; the youth approached to the man; but still Lord Clynton evinced no interest in his young son – gave no demonstration of awakening affection. With time also crept on the angry and troubled clouds that arose upon the political horizon of the land. The storm at length burst forth. The fatal struggle commenced between the unfortunate Charles and his Parliament; and the civil wars broke out. A stanch Royalist, Lord Clynton joined with enthusiasm the cause of the monarch; while Mr Lyle, whose tenets were of the Presbyterian persuasion, and whose political opinions were entirely of that party, found himself enrolled in the ranks of the Parliamentary army, in which his name and fortune and his active, but stern, cold courage, gave him much influence.

Entirely deprived of the affections of a father, whom he never remembered to have seen, and on whom, with the usual levity of boyhood, he seldom or never bestowed a passing thought, Gerald Clynton, or Gerald Lyle, as he was constantly called after his

uncle – and most people knew not that he bore any other name – naturally imbibed the opinions and sentiments of his protector; and, when the civil war was openly declared, followed him to the camp. The reflection never crossed him, that the unknown author of his being might be engaged in the ranks of the enemy; that his uncle and his father might chance to meet face to face upon the battle-field; that either his real parent, or the parent of his affections, might fall by the hand of the other. To do justice to the feelings of the youth, no idea of the kind had ever been suggested to him by his uncle, not a word mentioned of the political sentiments of his father. Colonel Lyle – for such became his rank in the Parliamentary army – was a man of firm adherence to his principles; and although a cold, hard man, in all things but his affection for his adopted son, too earnest and eager a supporter of the party for which he battled, to allow such a proselyte to what he considered the just and upright cause – such a follower in his own footsteps as his nephew – to escape him on account of any family considerations, which he stigmatized as "prejudices to be despised and set at nought in so holy a matter."

Enrolled as a volunteer in his uncle's regiment, Gerald had, in some of the scanty moments of peace and repose snatched between the quickly following phases of the struggle, found opportunities to cultivate the acquaintance of an old friend of his uncle's – an officer in the same regiment – or rather, it ought to be owned without reserve, the acquaintance of the fair daughter of that friend. In these troubled but precious moments it was,

that Gerald's young heart first awakened to love; and when, upon the death of his uncle Colonel Lyle, who never recovered the wounds he had received upon the field of Naseby, old Lazarus Seaman received the command of the regiment, it was again the bright eyes of pretty Mistress Mildred that served as a loadstone to attach him to it, and to attract him to follow the troop which garrisoned the lone mansion upon the eastern coast of England; for Colonel Lazarus Seaman was the governor or commander of this impromptu sort of fortress; and Colonel Lazarus Seaman's daughter, his only and motherless child, quitted her father's side as little as possible. She it was who was the tenant of the room appertaining to that balconied window, and those bright and carefully-tended flowers, to which the eyes of Gerald now so often strayed, as he paced up and down the dull court, to perform the duties of sentinel.

Gerald's thoughts, however, as already intimated, were not placid, nor were they exclusively occupied by the object of his affections. They dwelt, from time to time, with grief upon his uncle, whose death had excited in him so many bitter regrets; and those sad recollections, in their turn, called forth in him other reflections of a new and painful nature. He recalled to mind how, in his dying moments, the self-elected father of his youth had summoned him to his side, and talked to him of that other father whom he had never known; how he had spoken, in broken accents, and with much remorse, of the possible hatred engendered between father and son; of his own regrets,

now first clearly awakened in him, that he himself might have been the cause of such a consummation; and how then, with his last breath, he in vain endeavoured to murmur expressions of bitter repentance for some cruel wrong done, the nature of which no longer met the ear of the anxious listener, and was soon left for ever unexplained in the silence of death. These sad remembrances led to a train of thought of a most painful and harassing description. His position as a voluntary supporter of a cause repugnant to the principles of a father, whom, although unknown to him, it was his duty to honour and obey, and as affianced to the daughter of a man whose Republican principles were so decided, appeared to him involved with the most perplexing difficulties. New and conflicting feelings had arisen in the young man's breast. There was already within him a bitter struggle between love and duty – between long inculcated opinions and newly awakened emotions. As the one or the other feeling predominated, Gerald walked backwards and forwards with gloomy face, or turned to gaze upon the window, the closed casement of which seemed then to call forth from him gestures and words of a somewhat testy impatience.

"She knows that this is my hour for mounting guard, and yet she comes not to the window. She shows no sign of the least thought or care for me," he muttered angrily to himself, stamping more firmly and sharply as he recommenced his pacing, after a pause, in which he had eyed the window with bent brow and bitten lip. "But she does not love me," he added bitterly. "She has

never loved me. She has never done otherwise than trifle with my affections – seeking for demonstrations of my love to feed her vanity, and then flinging them aside with the sick stomach of an over-pampered child. I am a fool to let myself be thus dragged at her skirts, in such tinselled leading-strings. No; I will loose myself from this thraldom. But what if she love another? More than once I have thought she looked with much complacency upon that young recruit – the new volunteer – that Maywood, I think they call him. Were it true, 'sdeath! I would slit his ears for him. God forgive me the oath!" Gerald asked no forgiveness for the revengeful thought.

He was still continuing his half-muttered soliloquy of jealousy and spite, when the click of a casement-hasp caught his lover's ear. In a moment, the angry expression of his brow was cleared away like a mist before the sun – a bright gleam of satisfaction illumed his countenance, as he looked eagerly and hastily towards the window of Mistress Mildred's chamber. The casement opened, and first appeared a fair hand, which, with a long tapering jug of blue and white Dutch porcelain, was bestrewing water upon the flowers in the little wooden balcony. Then there stood at the open window a youthful female form; but the head was bent down so low over the flowers – the damsel was so absorbed in her gentle occupation – she was of course so completely unaware of the presence of any person in the court below who might expect a greeting from her, that it was difficult at first to distinguish the features. A pure white, pinched,

and plaited cap covered the bended head, but not, however, so entirely, as fully to contain or hide a profusion of dark brown hair, which perhaps, according to the fashion of the times, it should have done. Through the flowers, also, that partially obscured the long low window, might be distinguished part of a sad-coloured gown, the simplicity of which, in its make, could not conceal, as perhaps it ought to have done, the rounded outlines of a full but graceful form; while, at the same time, its dull hue was charmingly relieved – of course without any intention of coquetry – by a ruff and gorget of the most glittering purity, and, at the end of the long sleeves, by two small, delicate, white cuffs, which seemed to be playing a game of rivalry with the little hands for the palm of fairness.

As Gerald hemmed, and coughed, and shuffled with his feet impatiently, he imagined, for a moment, that one hasty glance of the eyes which bent over the flowers was directed into the court, and then averted with the quickness of lightning, but he was no doubt mistaken; for when the task of watering the plants was at an end, the head was only raised to watch the clouds for a very short space of time – sufficient time, however, to show two dark pencilled eyebrows placed over a pair of bright dark eyes, in that peculiar arch which gives a look of tormenting *espièglerie* to the expression, and in the blooming cheeks, full, but not too full for grace, two laughter-loving dimples, which imparted to a lovely countenance a joyous and fascinating character – and then was again withdrawn. The fair white hand again already rested upon

the hasp of the casement, as if to close it, when Gerald, who had waited with renewed feelings of vexation the greeting of his lady-love, called in a low, but almost angry tone of voice, "Mildred! – Mistress Mildred!"

"Master Gerald Lyle, is it you? Who would have thought that you were there?" said pretty Mistress Mildred, again showing at the window her arch countenance, the expression of which seemed to be at most wicked variance with her prim attire.

"Methinks a friendly greeting were not ill bestowed upon an old acquaintance," muttered the young man in the same tone of testy impatience.

"Know you not," responded the damsel, with something of the canting whine adopted at the time, and in a semi-serious tone, to the genuineness of which her dimples very naughtily gave a direct lie – whatever their mistress might have intended – "Know you not, that such bowings of the head, and kissings of the hand, are but vain and worldly symbols and delusions."

"Trifle not with me, I beseech you, Mildred," said the vexed lover, "for my heart is sad and my mind is harassed. During the weary hours of my watch, I have longed for a smile from that sweet face – a glance from those bright eyes, as my only solace; and yet the hours passed by and you came not to your window, although I had let you know that it was my duty to keep this watch; and when you did come, you would have left again without a single word to me. This was unkind. And now you are there, you bend your brow upon me with an angry look. What have I done

to offend you, Mildred? You cannot doubt my love, my truth."

"And what is there in my conduct or in my words that can justify Master Lyle in thus treating me as a trifler?" answered Mildred with a pouting air, avoiding any direct answer to all his other remarks. "Methinks I have every right to be offended at so unjust an accusation." But in spite of the gross offence, Mistress Mildred now seemed to have no thought of punishing it, by withdrawing from the window.

"I offend you! you know I would give the whole world, were it mine, to spare you one painful feeling," cried the young man. "It is you who wrong me, it is you who are unjust, and even now you seek to quarrel with me. But perhaps you wish to break the troth you have given me – perhaps your light heart has already offered its affections to another!"

"As you will, sir. Perhaps my light heart, as you are pleased to call it, would do well to seek some less morose and tetchy guardian," said the young lady, tossing up her head, and preparing again to close the windows.

But as her eye fell upon the despairing look and gestures of her lover, the arched eyebrow was unknit, and raised with an expression of comic vexation; a smile lurked for a moment in the dimples and corners of the pouting mouth; and then at last broke out into a fit of decided laughter.

After indulging a moment in her mirth, Mildred looked at the young man fondly and said, "Go to, Gerald! you show not the patient spirit of a Christian man; and even now your face wears

such a frown, as methinks must have wrinkled the brow of the jealous blackamoor in those wicked stage-plays, of which my poor mother told me, before my father chid her for it, and bid her cease to speak of such vanities – fie now! out upon you! shall I throw you down my little mirror that you may see that face? Well! I am a naughty froward child. See there! I am sitting on the stool of penance, and I ask thee pardon."

"Forgive me also," cried Gerald, springing forward, his heart melting before the arch look of fondness that beamed down upon him. "Forgive me my pettish impatience with you, Mildred."

"Forgiveness of injuries is ordained unto us as our first of duties," rejoined Mildred with another demure look – which was all the wickeder for its demureness.

"But why came you not before, my Mildred?" said the lover, with a slight lingering tone of expostulation; "you know not the bitterness of those countless minutes of anxiety, and doubt, and eager waiting."

"I could not leave my father," replied Mildred more seriously; "although he knows and approves our attachment; he would have chid me had he been aware that I come to have speech of you from my window; and as it is, I have done wrong to come. Besides, he was weary, and bade me read to him, and I sat by his side, and read to him the Bible, until, in the midst of an exhortation to watch and pray, I heard a sound that he himself might have called an uplifting of the horn of Sion, and behold he was snoring in his chair; and then, in the naughtiness of my

heart, I stole from his presence to come to my room – and – and – tend my flowers," she added with an arch smile.

"You thought of me then, and came, though late, to see me?" said Gerald eagerly.

"You? Did I not say my flowers, Master Gerald?" asked Mildred still laughing.

"Oh! mock me no longer, cruel girl! You know not all I have suffered during this tedious watch – all the doubts and fears with which my poor mind has been tortured. Did you know, you would console, not mock me, and one word would console all. Tell me you love me still."

"One word, you say – what shall it be?" said Mildred, raising her eyebrows as if to seek the word; and then, looking down upon him kindly, she added, "Ever."

"And you love none but me? you have no thought for any other?" continued the lover with an evident spice of jealousy still lurking in his mind.

"What! two words now?" said the laughing girl. "Are all lovers such arrant beggars? give them a penny and they ask a groat. Well! well! but one other, and that shall be the last. None" – and as Mildred spoke, she bent herself over the balcony to smile on Gerald, and rested one tiny hand, of course unconsciously, on the outer framework.

"Thanks, thanks, my dear, my pretty, my darling Mildred!" exclaimed the young man, and as he spoke, he sprang, musket on arm, upon a stone bench, which stood out from the wall

immediately under Mistress Mildred's window, and endeavoured to snatch the white hand that just peeped so invitingly over the edge of the low wooden balcony.

"Out upon you, Master Sentinel," said the young lady, putting back her hand. "Is it thus you keep your watch? Another such step and I shall sound the alarm, and denounce you as a deserter to your post. Look ye! your prisoner will escape."

Gerald instinctively turned his head to the old tower behind him, as he stepped down again from the stone bench, with somewhat of that tail-between-the-legs look, which a spaniel wears when repulsed from his mistress's lap. But there was no one stirring. He shook his head reproachfully at the laughing girl.

"Nay! I did but remind you of your duty," said Mildred; "and you know my father sets much store by the capture of this prisoner, whom he supposes to be some one of rank and note; a fugitive from the dispersed army of the malignants; perhaps a friend of the young King of Scots, and, as such, aware of his retreat."

"I saw him as they brought him hither, after capturing him in an attempt to gain the coast," replied the young soldier. "He is an old cavalier, of a stately and goodly presence, although cast down by his ill fortune. But enough of this. Tell me, Mildred" – But here the ears of the young couple caught the sound of a distant bell as it came booming over the water of the broad.

"Hush! It is the curfew from the town," said Mildred. "The watch will now be changed. Back! back! They will be here

directly. I must away."

"Already," cried Gerald with vexation. "But another word, Mildred – but one – some token of your love until we meet again."

"Impossible!" replied the fair girl. "How can you ask me for a token? It were very wrong in me to give you such. You ask too much." Then, as she was about to close the window, she exclaimed again, "This poor rose wants trimming sadly. Alack! these early frosts destroy all my poor plants;" and taking up her scissors, which hung from her girdle, she snipped at a withered leaf. Perhaps Mildred's pretty little hand trembled, for of course it was an accident – the unfortunate scissors, instead of cutting the withered leaf; closed upon the very prettiest rose upon the little tree – that rose happened to hang over the edge of the balcony, and so it came to pass that it fell at Gerald's feet.

Gerald seized it and pressed it, like all true lovers from time immemorial, to his lips.

"Thanks! darling girl," he cried.

"Thanks! for what?" rejoined Mistress Mildred, putting on a very lamentable air. "Now, don't suppose I have done this purposely. My poor rose! how you crush it and tumble it in your hand. How could I be so awkward!" and with these words the window was wholly closed.

Gerald still stood with his eyes fixed upon the window, when a noise, as if a sharp rustling among leaves, startled him. Immediately upon the alert, he looked cautiously around; but

there was no one in the court. He walked hastily to the parapet wall and bent over it – all was still except the boat of the fisherman, which he had before observed. It had apparently been rowed to another part of the river about the mansion, as a better place for fishing, without having been observed by the inattentive sentinel, for it was now floating down the stream towards the opening into the broad. The fisherman again lay motionless at the bottom of the boat. Suddenly a thought seemed to cross the young soldier's brain, for he sprang to the bushes still left growing near the parapet wall, and searched hastily among the leaves. From the ground beneath their thick shelter he raised a small packet. His musket was already jerked into his right arm to fire an alarm, in order that the fisherman might be pursued, as suspected of attempting to establish a communication with the prisoner, when his eye fell upon the superscription of the packet. He stared for one moment with surprise; and then his colour changed, and he grew deadly pale. His eye hurried rapidly to the tower – an exclamation of bitter grief burst from his lips – and he stood aghast. At this moment the steps of the soldiers coming to relieve guard resounded along the vaulted passage communicating between the court and other parts of the mansion. At the sound the blood rushed back into Gerald's face, until it covered forehead and temples. He hastily replaced the packet in the hiding-place where he had discovered it, and stood with musket in arm, and in a state of ill-repressed agitation, awaiting the corporal and guard.

The young soldier who was now brought to relieve him from his post, was the same Mark Maywood of whom he had expressed his jealous doubts.

The usual ceremony of relieving guard was gone through; but although the words of order were few, these few words were communicated by Gerald in a brief angry tone, and received by the other young soldier with a cold frowning air. Between the two young men there appeared to exist feelings of an instinctive repulsion.

As he turned to leave the court, Gerald gave another anxious, eager look at the old tower, and glanced askance at the leafy hiding-place of the packet. Another troubled sigh burst from his heart; but whatever thoughts occupied him before passing under the vaulted passage, he raised his eyes to the well-known chamber casement, which was close by. He could evidently perceive Mildred's graceful form partly ensconced behind a hanging to her window. Was she watching his departure? No. It seemed to him as if her eyes were turned in the direction of the handsome young recruit – that detested Maywood. And he? Gerald looked round once more. He felt convinced that the young sentinel's eyes were fixed upon pretty Mistress Mildred's window. It was in a high state of agitation – a new fit of raging jealousy mingling with other painful and harassing emotions, that Gerald followed the corporal and soldiers from the court.

Chapter II

"O, 'tis your son!
I know him not.
I'll be no father to so vile a son."

Rowley, (Woman Never Vexed.)

"Yet I have comfort, if by any means
I get a blessing from my father's hands."

Idem.

Gerald sat with a troubled and moody air upon one of the stone benches of the low hall, which, formerly intended, perhaps, as a sort of waiting-room for the domestics of the establishment, was now used as the guard-room. Although his thoughts were not upon the objects around him, he seemed to be assiduously employed in cleaning and arranging his accoutrements – for in spite of his birth and the fortune bequeathed to him by his uncle, he was still left to fulfil the very humblest and most irksome duties of a military life.

It had been part of the severe Colonel Lyle's system of education to inure his adopted son to every toil and privation that might give health and hardihood to mind as well as body; and upon the same principle, when he had enrolled the boy as a

volunteer in his own troop, he had compelled him to serve as a common soldier. The colonel's strict and somewhat overwrought sense of justice, as well as his peculiar political opinions, had led him, moreover, to declare, that whatever the artificial position of his adopted son in the supposed scale of society, it should be by merit only that the young volunteer should rise from the ranks through the various grades of military distinction; and upon his deathbed he had urged his friend Seaman to pursue the same system, as long as Gerald should feel disposed to follow under him the career of arms. Although received, therefore, with certain reservations, upon an equality of footing into the family of Colonel Seaman, and in some measure looked upon as the accepted lover and future husband of the colonel's fair daughter, young Gerald found himself condemned to go through all the inferior duties and occupations of a common soldier.

Long accustomed, however, by his uncle's strict and unbending system of training, to hardships little regarded by a roughly-nurtured youth of his years, he never thought of murmuring against this harsh probation; and if, now, he pursued his occupation with a troubled brow, it was far other thoughts that caused that look of doubt and uneasiness.

The vaguest suspicions of his mistress's fickleness were sufficient to excite the jealous temperament of a youth like Gerald, whose naturally ardent and passionate disposition, whose hot Clynton blood had been only subdued, not quenched, by the strict education of his severe, cold uncle Lyle. But there were

thoughts and feelings of a far more momentous and harassing nature which now assailed him. The packet which he had discovered among the bushes growing close upon the parapet wall, and which had evidently been conveyed by stealth within the precincts of the fortress, had borne the following superscription: – "For the Lord Clynton – these."

It was Lord Clynton, then – it was his own father, who was a prisoner within those walls.

Under sad auspices were his filial affections now first awakened. He was aware of the danger that must attend his unhappy parent should he be discovered to be, as was probably the case, one of those obstinate malignants, as they were termed, who, after having made reluctant submission when the fate of arms proved fatal to Charles I., had again joined the royalist troops when the standard was raised for the young prince, and fought in his cause, until the final overthrow at Worcester forced them into flight from the country. It was in an attempt of this kind that the prisoner had been taken. Gerald knew how almost certain would be the old cavalier's condemnation under such circumstances. But there were evidently hopes of saving him. Communications, it was clear, had been established with the prisoner by persons outside the walls of the fortress. It was known probably, that, by permission of the commander, the prisoner was allowed to take the air for a certain time daily, in the small court beneath the walls of the tower in which he was confined; and this opportunity was watched, it would seem,

for the conveyance of the communication into the hand of the prisoner.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.