Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

# The Pilgrims of the Rhine

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# Содержание

# Edward Bulwer-Lytton
# The Pilgrims of the Rhine

TO HENRY LYTTON BULWER.

ALLOW me, my dear Brother, to dedicate this Work to you. The greater part of it (namely, the tales which vary and relieve the voyages of Gertrude and Trevylyan) was written in the pleasant excursion we made together some years ago. Among the associations—some sad and some pleasing—connected with the general design, none are so agreeable to me as those that remind me of the friendship subsisting between us, and which, unlike that of near relations in general, has grown stronger and more intimate as our footsteps have receded farther from the fields where we played together in our childhood. I dedicate this Work to you with the more pleasure, not only when I remember that it has always been a favourite with yourself, but when I think that it is one of my writings most liked in foreign countries; and I may possibly, therefore, have found a record destined to endure the affectionate esteem which this Dedication is intended to convey.

*Yours, etc.*
*E. L. B. LONDON, April 23, 1840.*

# ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION

COULD I prescribe to the critic and to the public, I would wish that this work might be tried by the rules rather of poetry than prose, for according to those rules have been both its conception and its execution; and I feel that something of sympathy with the author's design is requisite to win indulgence for the superstitions he has incorporated with his tale, for the floridity of his style, and the redundance of his descriptions. Perhaps, indeed, it would be impossible, in attempting to paint the scenery and embody some of the Legends of the Rhine, not to give (it may be, too loosely) the reins to the imagination, or to escape the influence of that wild German spirit which I have sought to transfer to a colder tongue.

I have made the experiment of selecting for the main interest of my work the simplest materials, and weaving upon them the ornaments given chiefly to subjects of a more fanciful nature. I know not how far I have succeeded, but various reasons have conspired to make this the work, above all others that I have written, which has given me the most delight (though not unmixed with melancholy) in producing, and in which my mind for the time has been the most completely absorbed. But the ardour of composition is often disproportioned to the merit of the

work; and the public sometimes, nor unjustly, avenges itself for that forgetfulness of its existence which makes the chief charm of an author's solitude,—and the happiest, if not the wisest, inspiration of his dreams.

# PREFACE

WITH the younger class of my readers this work has had the good fortune to find especial favour; perhaps because it is in itself a collection of the thoughts and sentiments that constitute the Romance of youth. It has little to do with the positive truths of our actual life, and does not pretend to deal with the larger passions and more stirring interests of our kind. It is but an episode out of the graver epic of human destinies. It requires no explanation of its purpose, and no analysis of its story; the one is evident, the other simple,—the first seeks but to illustrate visible nature through the poetry of the affections; the other is but the narrative of the most real of mortal sorrows, which the Author attempts to take out of the region of pain by various accessories from the Ideal. The connecting tale itself is but the string that binds into a garland the wild-flowers cast upon a grave.

The descriptions of the Rhine have been considered by Germans sufficiently faithful to render this tribute to their land and their legends one of the popular guide-books along the course it illustrates,—especially to such tourists as wish not only to take in with the eye the inventory of the river, but to seize the peculiar spirit which invests the wave and the bank with a beauty that can only be made visible by reflection. He little comprehends the true charm of the Rhine who gazes on the vines on the hill-tops without a thought of the imaginary world

with which their recesses have been peopled by the graceful credulity of old; who surveys the steep ruins that overshadow the water, untouched by one lesson from the pensive morality of Time. Everywhere around us is the evidence of perished opinions and departed races; everywhere around us, also, the rejoicing fertility of unconquerable Nature, and the calm progress of Man himself through the infinite cycles of decay. He who would judge adequately of a landscape must regard it not only with the painter's eye, but with the poet's. The feelings which the sight of any scene in Nature conveys to the mind—more especially of any scene on which history or fiction has left its trace—must depend upon our sympathy with those associations which make up what may be called the spiritual character of the spot. If indifferent to those associations, we should see only hedgerows and ploughed land in the battle-field of Bannockburn; and the traveller would but look on a dreary waste, whether he stood amidst the piles of the Druid on Salisbury plain, or trod his bewildered way over the broad expanse on which the Chaldaean first learned to number the stars.

To the former editions of this tale was prefixed a poem on "The Ideal," which had all the worst faults of the author's earliest compositions in verse. The present poem (with the exception of a very few lines) has been entirely rewritten, and has at least the comparative merit of being less vague in the thought, and less unpolished in the diction, than that which it replaces.

# THE IDEAL WORLD

## I

## THE IDEAL WORLD,—ITS REALM IS EVERYWHERE AROUND US; ITS INHABITANTS ARE

## THE IMMORTAL PERSONIFICATIONS OF ALL BEAUTIFUL THOUGHTS; TO THAT WORLD WE

## ATTAIN BY THE REPOSE OF THE SENSES

AROUND “this visible diurnal sphere”
  There floats a World that girds us like the space;
On wandering clouds and gliding beams career
  Its ever-moving murmurous Populace.
There, all the lovelier thoughts conceived below

Ascending live, and in celestial shapes.
To that bright World, O Mortal, wouldst thou go?
Bind but thy senses, and thy soul escapes:
To care, to sin, to passion close thine eyes;
Sleep in the flesh, and see the Dreamland rise!
Hark to the gush of golden waterfalls,
Or knightly tromps at Archimagian Walls!
In the green hush of Dorian Valleys mark
The River Maid her amber tresses knitting;
When glow-worms twinkle under coverts dark,
And silver clouds o'er summer stars are flitting,
With jocund elves invade "the Moone's sphere,
Or hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear;"[1]
Or, list! what time the roseate urns of dawn
Scatter fresh dews, and the first skylark weaves
Joy into song, the blithe Arcadian Faun
Piping to wood-nymphs under Bromian leaves,
While slowly gleaming through the purple glade
Come Evian's panther car, and the pale Naxian Maid.

Such, O Ideal World, thy habitants!
All the fair children of creative creeds,
All the lost tribes of Fantasy are thine,—
From antique Saturn in Dodonian haunts,
Or Pan's first music waked from shepherd reeds,
To the last sprite when Heaven's pale lamps decline,
Heard wailing soft along the solemn Rhine.

[1] "Midsummer Night's Dream."

## II

## OUR DREAMS BELONG TO THE IDEAL.—THE DIVINER LOVE FOR WHICH YOUTH SIGHS

## NOT ATTAINABLE IN LIFE, BUT THE PURSUIT OF THAT LOVE BEYOND THE WORLD OF

## THE SENSES PURIFIES THE SOUL AND AWAKES THE GENIUS.—PETRARCH.—DANTE

Thine are the Dreams that pass the Ivory Gates,
  With prophet shadows haunting poet eyes!
Thine the belov'd illusions youth creates
  From the dim haze of its own happy skies.
In vain we pine; we yearn on earth to win
  The being of the heart, our boyhood's dream.
The Psyche and the Eros ne'er have been,
  Save in Olympus, wedded!  As a stream
Glasses a star, so life the ideal love;
Restless the stream below, serene the orb above!

Ever the soul the senses shall deceive;
Here custom chill, there kinder fate bereave:
For mortal lips unmeet eternal vows!
And Eden's flowers for Adam's mournful brows!
We seek to make the moment's angel guest
The household dweller at a human hearth;
We chase the bird of Paradise, whose nest
Was never found amid the bowers of earth.[2]

Yet loftier joys the vain pursuit may bring,
Than sate the senses with the boons of time;
The bird of Heaven hath still an upward wing,
The steps it lures are still the steps that climb;
And in the ascent although the soil be bare,
More clear the daylight and more pure the air.
Let Petrarch's heart the human mistress lose,
He mourns the Laura but to win the Muse.
Could all the charms which Georgian maids combine
Delight the soul of the dark Florentine,
Like one chaste dream of childlike Beatrice
Awaiting Hell's dark pilgrim in the skies,
Snatched from below to be the guide above,
And clothe Religion in the form of Love?*

* It is supposed by many of the commentators on Dante, that in the form of his lost Beatrice, who guides him in his Vision

[2] According to a belief in the East, which is associated with one of the loveliest and most familiar of Oriental superstitions, the bird of Paradise is never seen to rest upon the earth, and its nest is never to be found.

of Heaven, he allegorizes Religious Faith.

# III

## GENIUS, LIFTING ITS LIFE TO THE IDEAL, BECOMES ITSELF A PURE IDEA: IT

## MUST COMPREHEND ALL EXISTENCE, ALL HUMAN SINS AND SUFFERINGS; BUT IN

## COMPREHENDING, IT TRANSMUTES THEM. —THE POET IN HIS TWO-FOLD BEING,—THE

## ACTUAL AND THE IDEAL.—THE INFLUENCE OF GENIUS OVER THE STERNEST

## REALITIES OF EARTH; OVER OUR PASSIONS; WARS AND SUPERSTITIONS.—ITS

## IDENTITY IS WITH HUMAN PROGRESS.—ITS

Oh, thou true Iris! sporting on thy bow
  Of tears and smiles! Jove's herald, Poetry,
Thou reflex image of all joy and woe,
  *Both* fused in light by thy dear fantasy!
Lo! from the clay how Genius lifts its life,
  And grows one pure Idea, one calm soul!
True, its own clearness must reflect our strife;
  True, its completeness must comprise our whole;
But as the sun transmutes the sullen hues
  Of marsh-grown vapours into vermeil dyes,
And melts them later into twilight dews,
  Shedding on flowers the baptism of the skies;
So glows the Ideal in the air we breathe,
  So from the fumes of sorrow and of sin,
Doth its warm light in rosy colours wreathe
  Its playful cloudland, storing balms within.

Survey the Poet in his mortal mould,
  Man, amongst men, descended from his throne!
The moth that chased the star now frets the fold,
  Our cares, our faults, our follies are his own.
Passions as idle, and desires as vain,
Vex the wild heart, and dupe the erring brain.
From Freedom's field the recreant Horace flies
To kiss the hand by which his country dies;
From Mary's grave the mighty Peasant turns,
And hoarse with orgies rings the laugh of Burns.
While Rousseau's lips a lackey's vices own,—
Lips that could draw the thunder on a throne!

But when from Life the Actual GENIUS springs,
When, self-transformed by its own magic rod,
It snaps the fetters and expands the wings,
And drops the fleshly garb that veiled the god,
How the mists vanish as the form ascends!
How in its aureole every sunbeam blends!
By the Arch-Brightener of Creation seen,
How dim the crowns on perishable brows!
The snows of Atlas melt beneath the sheen,
Through Thebaid caves the rushing splendour flows.
Cimmerian glooms with Asian beams are bright,
And Earth reposes in a belt of light.
Now stern as Vengeance shines the awful form,
Armed with the bolt and glowing through the storm;
Sets the great deeps of human passion free,
And whelms the bulwarks that would breast the sea.
Roused by its voice the ghastly Wars arise,
Mars reddens earth, the Valkyrs pale the skies;
Dim Superstition from her hell escapes,
With all her shadowy brood of monster shapes;
Here life itself the scowl of Typhon[3] takes;
There Conscience shudders at Alecto's snakes;
From Gothic graves at midnight yawning wide,
In gory cerements gibbering spectres glide;
And where o'er blasted heaths the lightnings flame,
Black secret hags "do deeds without a name!"

[3] The gloomy Typhon of Egypt assumes many of the mystic attributes of the Principle of Life which, in the Grecian Apotheosis of the Indian Bacchus, is represented in so genial a character of exuberant joy and everlasting youth.

Yet through its direst agencies of awe,
Light marks its presence and pervades its law,
And, like Orion when the storms are loud,
It links creation while it gilds a cloud.
By ruthless Thor, free Thought, frank Honour stand,
Fame's grand desire, and zeal for Fatherland.
The grim Religion of Barbarian Fear
With some Hereafter still connects the Here,
Lifts the gross sense to some spiritual source,
And thrones some Jove above the Titan Force,
Till, love completing what in awe began,
From the rude savage dawns the thoughtful man.

Then, oh, behold the Glorious comforter!
Still bright'ning worlds but gladd'ning now the hearth,
Or like the lustre of our nearest star,
Fused in the common atmosphere of earth.
It sports like hope upon the captive's chain;
Descends in dreams upon the couch of pain;
To wonder's realm allures the earnest child;
To the chaste love refines the instinct wild;
And as in waters the reflected beam,
Still where we turn, glides with us up the stream,
And while in truth the whole expanse is bright,
Yields to each eye its own fond path of light,—
So over life the rays of Genius fall,
Give each his track because illuming all.

# IV

## FORGIVENESS TO THE ERRORS OF OUR BENEFACTORS

Hence is that secret pardon we bestow
  In the true instinct of the grateful heart,
Upon the Sons of Song.  The good they do
  In the clear world of their Uranian art
Endures forever; while the evil done
  In the poor drama of their mortal scene,
Is but a passing cloud before the sun;
  Space hath no record where the mist hath been.
Boots it to us if Shakspeare erred like man?
  Why idly question that most mystic life?
Eno' the giver in his gifts to scan;
  To bless the sheaves with which thy fields are rife,
Nor, blundering, guess through what obstructive clay
The glorious corn-seed struggled up to day.

# V

## THE IDEAL IS NOT CONFINED TO POETS.— ALGERNON SIDNEY RECOGNIZES HIS IDEAL

## IN LIBERTY, AND BELIEVES IN ITS TRIUMPH WHERE THE MERE PRACTICAL MAN

## COULD BEHOLD BUT ITS RUINS; YET LIBERTY IN THIS WORLD MUST EVER BE AN

## IDEAL, AND THE LAND THAT IT PROMISES CAN BE FOUND BUT IN DEATH

But not to you alone, O Sons Of Song,
The wings that float the loftier airs along.
Whoever lifts us from the dust we are,
  Beyond the sensual to spiritual goals;
Who from the MOMENT and the SELF afar

By deathless deeds allures reluctant souls,
Gives the warm life to what the Limner draws,—
Plato but thought what godlike Cato was.[4]
Recall the Wars of England's giant-born,
Is Elyot's voice, is Hampden's death in vain?
Have all the meteors of the vernal morn
But wasted light upon a frozen main?
Where is that child of Carnage, Freedom, flown?
The Sybarite lolls upon the martyr's throne.
Lewd, ribald jests succeed to solemn zeal;
And things of silk to Cromwell's men of steel.
Cold are the hosts the tromps of Ireton thrilled,
And hushed the senates Vane's large presence filled.
In what strong heart doth the old manhood dwell?
Where art thou, Freedom? Look! in Sidney's cell!
There still as stately stands the living Truth,
Smiling on age as it had smiled on youth.
Her forts dismantled, and her shrines o'erthrown,
The headsman's block her last dread altar-stone,
No sanction left to Reason's vulgar hope,
Far from the wrecks expands her prophet's scope.
Millennial morns the tombs of Kedron gild,
The hands of saints the glorious walls rebuild,—
Till each foundation garnished with its gem,
High o'er Gehenna flames Jerusalem!
O thou blood-stained Ideal of the free,
Whose breath is heard in clarions,—Liberty!
Sublimer for thy grand illusions past,

[4] What Plato thought, and godlike Cato was.—POPE.

Thou spring'st to Heaven,—Religion at the last.
Alike below, or commonwealths or thrones,
Where'er men gather some crushed victim groans;
Only in death thy real form we see,
All life is bondage,—souls alone are free.
Thus through the waste the wandering Hebrews went,
Fire on the march, but cloud upon the tent.
At last on Pisgah see the prophet stand,
Before his vision spreads the PROMISED LAND;
But where revealed the Canaan to his eye?—
Upon the mountain he ascends to die.

## VI

## YET ALL HAVE TWO ESCAPES INTO THE IDEAL WORLD; NAMELY, MEMORY AND

## HOPE.—EXAMPLE OF HOPE IN YOUTH, HOWEVER EXCLUDED FROM ACTION AND

## DESIRE.—NAPOLEON'S SON

Yet whatsoever be our bondage here,
All have two portals to the phantom sphere.
What hath not glided through those gates that ope
Beyond the Hour, to MEMORY or to HOPE!
Give Youth the Garden,—still it soars above,
Seeks some far glory, some diviner love.
Place Age amidst the Golgotha,—its eyes
Still quit the graves, to rest upon the skies;
And while the dust, unheeded, moulders there,
Track some lost angel through cerulean air.

Lo! where the Austrian binds, with formal chain,
The crownless son of earth's last Charlemagne,—
Him, at whose birth laughed all the violet vales
(While yet unfallen stood thy sovereign star,
O Lucifer of nations). Hark, the gales
Swell with the shout from all the hosts, whose war
Rended the Alps, and crimsoned Memphian Nile,—
"Way for the coming of the Conqueror's Son:
Woe to the Merchant-Carthage of the Isle!
Woe to the Scythian ice-world of the Don!
O Thunder Lord, thy Lemnian bolts prepare,
The Eagle's eyry hath its eagle heir!"
Hark, at that shout from north to south, gray Power
Quails on its weak, hereditary thrones;
And widowed mothers prophesy the hour
Of future carnage to their cradled sons.
What! shall our race to blood be thus consigned,
And Ate claim an heirloom in mankind?
Are these red lots unshaken in the urn?
Years pass; approach, pale Questioner, and learn
Chained to his rock, with brows that vainly frown,
The fallen Titan sinks in darkness down!
And sadly gazing through his gilded grate,
Behold the child whose birth was as a fate!
Far from the land in which his life began;
Walled from the healthful air of hardy man;
Reared by cold hearts, and watched by jealous eyes,
His guardians jailers, and his comrades spies.
Each trite convention courtly fears inspire

To stint experience and to dwarf desire;
Narrows the action to a puppet stage,
And trains the eaglet to the starling's cage.
On the dejected brow and smileless cheek,
What weary thought the languid lines bespeak;
Till drop by drop, from jaded day to day,
The sickly life-streams ooze themselves away.
Yet oft in HOPE a boundless realm was thine,
  That vaguest Infinite,—the Dream of Fame;
Son of the sword that first made kings divine,
  Heir to man's grandest royalty,—a Name!
Then didst thou burst upon the startled world,
And keep the glorious promise of thy birth;
Then were the wings that bear the bolt unfurled,
  A monarch's voice cried, "Place upon the earth!"
 A new Philippi gained a second Rome,
And the Son's sword avenged the greater Caesar's doom.

# VII

## EXAMPLE OF MEMORY AS LEADING TO THE IDEAL,—AMIDST LIFE HOWEVER HUMBLE, AND IN A MIND HOWEVER IGNORANT.—THE VILLAGE WIDOW

But turn the eye to life's sequestered vale
  And lowly roofs remote in hamlets green.
Oft in my boyhood where the moss-grown pale
  Fenced quiet graves, a female form was seen;
Each eve she sought the melancholy ground,
And lingering paused, and wistful looked around.
If yet some footstep rustled through the grass,
Timorous she shrunk, and watched the shadow pass;
Then, when the spot lay lone amidst the gloom,
Crept to one grave too humble for a tomb,
There silent bowed her face above the dead,
For, if in prayer, the prayer was inly said;
Still as the moonbeam, paused her quiet shade,
Still as the moonbeam, through the yews to fade.
Whose dust thus hallowed by so fond a care?
What the grave saith not, let the heart declare.
  On yonder green two orphan children played;

By yonder rill two plighted lovers strayed;
In yonder shrine two lives were blent in one,
And joy-bells chimed beneath a summer sun.
Poor was their lot, their bread in labour found;
No parent blessed them, and no kindred owned;
They smiled to hear the wise their choice condemn;
They loved—they loved—and love was wealth to them!
Hark—one short week—again the holy bell!
Still shone the sun; but dirge like boomed the knell,—
The icy hand had severed breast from breast;
Left life to toil, and summoned Death to rest.
Full fifty years since then have passed away,
Her cheek is furrowed, and her hair is gray.
Yet, when she speaks of *him* (the times are rare),
Hear in her voice how youth still trembles there.
The very name of that young life that died
Still heaves the bosom, and recalls the bride.
Lone o'er the widow's hearth those years have fled,
The daily toil still wins the daily bread;
No books deck sorrow with fantastic dyes;
Her fond romance her woman heart supplies;
And, haply in the few still moments given,
(Day's taskwork done), to memory, death, and heaven,
To that unuttered poem may belong
Thoughts of such pathos as had beggared song.

# VIII

## HENCE IN HOPE, MEMORY, AND PRAYER, ALL OF US ARE POETS

Yes, while thou hopest, music fills the air,
  While thou rememberest, life reclothes the clod;
While thou canst feel the electric chain of prayer,
  Breathe but a thought, and be a soul with God!
Let not these forms of matter bound thine eye.
  He who the vanishing point of Human things
Lifts from the landscape, lost amidst the sky,
  Has found the Ideal which the poet sings,
Has pierced the pall around the senses thrown,
And is himself a poet, though unknown.

# IX

## APPLICATION OF THE POEM TO THE TALE TO WHICH IT IS PREFIXED.—THE RHINE,—ITS IDEAL CHARACTER IN ITS HISTORICAL AND LEGENDARY ASSOCIATIONS

Eno'!—my song is closing, and to thee,
Land of the North, I dedicate its lay;
As I have done the simple tale to be
The drama of this prelude!
Faraway
Rolls the swift Rhine beneath the starry ray;
But to my ear its haunted waters sigh;
Its moonlight mountains glimmer on my eye;
On wave, on marge, as on a wizard's glass,
Imperial ghosts in dim procession pass;
Lords of the wild, the first great Father-men,
Their fane the hill-top, and their home the glen;
Frowning they fade; a bridge of steel appears

With frank-eyed Caesar smiling through the spears;
The march moves onwards, and the mirror brings
The Gothic crowns of Carlovingian kings
Vanished alike! The Hermit rears his Cross,
And barbs neigh shrill, and plumes in tumult toss,
While (knighthood's sole sweet conquest from the Moor)
Sings to Arabian lutes the Tourbadour.
Not yet, not yet; still glide some lingering shades,
Still breathe some murmurs as the starlight fades,
Still from her rock I hear the Siren call,
And see the tender ghost in Roland's mouldering hall!

## X

## APPLICATION OF THE POEM CONTINUED. —THE IDEAL LENDS ITS AID TO THE MOST FAMILIAR AND THE MOST ACTUAL SORROW OF LIFE.—FICTION COMPARED TO SLEEP, —IT STRENGTHENS WHILE IT SOOTHES

Trite were the tale I tell of love and doom,
(Whose life hath loved not, whose not mourned a tomb?)
But fiction draws a poetry from grief,
As art its healing from the withered leaf.

Play thou, sweet Fancy, round the sombre truth,
  Crown the sad Genius ere it lower the torch!
When death the altar and the victim youth,
  Flutes fill the air, and garlands deck the porch.
As down the river drifts the Pilgrim sail,
Clothe the rude hill-tops, lull the Northern gale;
With childlike lore the fatal course beguile,
And brighten death with Love's untiring smile.
Along the banks let fairy forms be seen
"By fountain clear, or spangled starlike sheen."[5]
Let sound and shape to which the sense is dull
Haunt the soul opening on the Beautiful.
And when at length, the symbol voyage done,
Surviving Grief shrinks lonely from the sun,
By tender types show Grief what memories bloom
From lost delight, what fairies guard the tomb.
Scorn not the dream, O world-worn; pause a while,
New strength shall nerve thee as the dreams beguile,
Stung by the rest, less far shall seem the goal!
As sleep to life, so fiction to the soul.

[5] "Midsummer Night's Dream."

# THE PILGRIMS OF THE RHINE

## CHAPTER I. IN WHICH THE READER IS INTRODUCED TO QUEEN NYMPHALIN

IN one of those green woods which belong so peculiarly to our island (for the Continent has its forests, but England its woods) there lived, a short time ago, a charming little fairy called Nymphalin. I believe she is descended from a younger branch of the house of Mab; but perhaps that may only be a genealogical fable, for your fairies are very susceptible to the pride of ancestry, and it is impossible to deny that they fall somewhat reluctantly into the liberal opinions so much in vogue at the present day.

However that may be, it is quite certain that all the courtiers in Nymphalin's domain (for she was a queen fairy) made a point of asserting her right to this illustrious descent; and accordingly she quartered the Mab arms with her own,—three acorns vert, with a grasshopper rampant. It was as merry a little court as could possibly be conceived, and on a fine midsummer night it would have been worth while attending the queen's balls; that is to say, if you could have got a ticket, a favour not obtained without great interest.

But, unhappily, until both men and fairies adopt Mr. Owen's proposition, and live in parallelograms, they will always be the victims of *ennui*. And Nymphalin, who had been disappointed in love, and was still unmarried, had for the last five or six months been exceedingly tired even of giving balls. She yawned very frequently, and consequently yawning became a fashion.

"But why don't we have some new dances, my Pipalee?" said Nymphalin to her favourite maid of honour; "these waltzes are very old-fashioned."

"Very old-fashioned," said Pipalee.

The queen gaped, and Pipalee did the same.

It was a gala night; the court was held in a lone and beautiful hollow, with the wild brake closing round it on every side, so that no human step could easily gain the spot. Wherever the shadows fell upon the brake a glow-worm made a point of exhibiting itself, and the bright August moon sailed slowly above, pleased to look down upon so charming a scene of merriment; for they wrong the moon who assert that she has an objection to mirth,—with the mirth of fairies she has all possible sympathy. Here and there in the thicket the scarce honeysuckles—in August honeysuckles are somewhat out of season—hung their rich festoons, and at that moment they were crowded with the elderly fairies, who had given up dancing and taken to scandal. Besides the honeysuckle you might see the hawkweed and the white convolvulus, varying the soft verdure of the thicket; and mushrooms in abundance had sprung up in the circle, glittering in the silver moonlight, and

acceptable beyond measure to the dancers: every one knows how agreeable a thing tents are in a *fete champetre*! I was mistaken in saying that the brake closed the circle entirely round; for there was one gap, scarcely apparent to mortals, through which a fairy at least might catch a view of a brook that was close at hand, rippling in the stars, and checkered at intervals by the rich weeds floating on the surface, interspersed with the delicate arrowhead and the silver water-lily. Then the trees themselves, in their prodigal variety of hues,—the blue, the purple, the yellowing tint, the tender and silvery verdure, and the deep mass of shade frowning into black; the willow, the elm, the ash, the fir, and the lime, "and, best of all, Old England's haunted oak;" these hues were broken again into a thousand minor and subtler shades as the twinkling stars pierced the foliage, or the moon slept with a richer light upon some favoured glade.

It was a gala night; the elderly fairies, as I said before, were chatting among the honeysuckles; the young were flirting, and dancing, and making love; the middle-aged talked politics under the mushrooms; and the queen herself and half-a-dozen of her favourites were yawning their pleasure from a little mound covered with the thickest moss.

"It has been very dull, madam, ever since Prince Fayzenheim left us," said the fairy Nip.

The queen sighed.

"How handsome the prince is!" said Pipalee.

The queen blushed.

"He wore the prettiest dress in the world; and what a mustache!" cried Pipalee, fanning herself with her left wing.

"He was a coxcomb," said the lord treasurer, sourly. The lord treasurer was the honestest and most disagreeable fairy at court; he was an admirable husband, brother, son, cousin, uncle, and godfather,—it was these virtues that had made him a lord treasurer. Unfortunately they had not made him a sensible fairy. He was like Charles the Second in one respect, for he never did a wise thing; but he was not like him in another, for he very often said a foolish one.

The queen frowned.

"A young prince is not the worse for that," retorted Pipalee. "Heigho! does your Majesty think his Highness likely to return?"

"Don't tease me," said Nymphalin, pettishly.

The lord treasurer, by way of giving the conversation an agreeable turn, reminded her Majesty that there was a prodigious accumulation of business to see to, especially that difficult affair about the emmet-wasp loan. Her Majesty rose; and leaning on Pipalee's arm, walked down to the supper tent.

"Pray," said the fairy Trip to the fairy Nip, "what is all this talk about Prince Fayzenheim? Excuse my ignorance; I am only just out, you know."

"Why," answered Nip, a young courtier, not a marrying fairy, but very seductive, "the story runs thus: Last summer a foreigner visited us, calling himself Prince Fayzenheim: one of your German fairies, I fancy; no great things, but an excellent waltzer.

He wore long spurs, made out of the stings of the horse-flies in the Black Forest; his cap sat on one side, and his mustachios curled like the lip of the dragon-flower. He was on his travels, and amused himself by making love to the queen. You can't fancy, dear Trip, how fond she was of hearing him tell stories about the strange creatures of Germany,—about wild huntsmen, water-sprites, and a pack of such stuff," added Nip, contemptuously, for Nip was a freethinker.

"In short?" said Trip.

"In short, she loved," cried Nip, with a theatrical air.

"And the prince?"

"Packed up his clothes, and sent on his travelling-carriage, in order that he might go at his ease on the top of a stage-pigeon; in short—as you say—in short, he deserted the queen, and ever since she has set the fashion of yawning."

"It was very naughty in him," said the gentle Trip.

"Ah, my dear creature," cried Nip, "if it had been you to whom he had paid his addresses!"

Trip simpered, and the old fairies from their seats in the honeysuckles observed she was "sadly conducted;" but the Trips had never been too respectable.

Meanwhile the queen, leaning on Pipalee, said, after a short pause, "Do you know I have formed a plan!"

"How delightful!" cried Pipalee. "Another gala!"

"Pooh, surely even you must be tired with such levities: the spirit of the age is no longer frivolous; and I dare say as the

march of gravity proceeds, we shall get rid of galas altogether." The queen said this with an air of inconceivable wisdom, for the "Society for the Diffusion of General Stupefaction" had been recently established among the fairies, and its tracts had driven all the light reading out of the market. "The Penny Proser" had contributed greatly to the increase of knowledge and yawning, so visibly progressive among the courtiers.

"No," continued Nymphalin; "I have thought of something better than galas. Let us travel!"

Pipalee clasped her hands in ecstasy.

"Where shall we travel?"

"Let us go up the Rhine," said the queen, turning away her head. "We shall be amazingly welcomed; there are fairies without number all the way by its banks, and various distant connections of ours whose nature and properties will afford interest and instruction to a philosophical mind."

"Number Nip, for instance," cried the gay Pipalee.

"The Red Man!" said the graver Nymphalin.

"Oh, my queen, what an excellent scheme!" and Pipalee was so lively during the rest of the night that the old fairies in the honeysuckle insinuated that the lady of honour had drunk a buttercup too much of the Maydew.

# CHAPTER II. THE LOVERS

I WISH only for such readers as give themselves heart and soul up to me,—if they begin to cavil I have done with them; their fancy should put itself entirely under my management; and, after all, ought they not to be too glad to get out of this hackneyed and melancholy world, to be run away with by an author who promises them something new?

From the heights of Bruges, a Mortal and his betrothed gazed upon the scene below. They saw the sun set slowly amongst purple masses of cloud, and the lover turned to his mistress and sighed deeply; for her cheek was delicate in its blended roses, beyond the beauty that belongs to the hues of health; and when he saw the sun sinking from the world, the thought came upon him that *she* was his sun, and the glory that she shed over his life might soon pass away into the bosom of the "ever-during Dark." But against the clouds rose one of the many spires that characterize the town of Bruges; and on that spire, tapering into heaven, rested the eyes of Gertrude Vane. The different objects that caught the gaze of each was emblematic both of the different channel of their thoughts and the different elements of their nature: he thought of the sorrow, she of the consolation; his heart prophesied of the passing away from earth, hers of the ascension into heaven. The lower part of the landscape was wrapped in shade; but just where the bank curved round in a mimic bay,

the waters caught the sun's parting smile, and rippled against the herbage that clothed the shore, with a scarcely noticeable wave. There are two of the numerous mills which are so picturesque a feature of that country, standing at a distance from each other on the rising banks, their sails perfectly still in the cool silence of the evening, and adding to the rustic tranquillity which breathed around. For to me there is something in the still sails of one of those inventions of man's industry peculiarly eloquent of repose: the rest seems typical of the repose of our own passions, short and uncertain, contrary to their natural ordination; and doubly impressive from the feeling which admonishes us how precarious is the stillness, how utterly dependent on every wind rising at any moment and from any quarter of the heavens! They saw before them no living forms, save of one or two peasants yet lingering by the water-side.

Trevylyan drew closer to his Gertrude; for his love was inexpressibly tender, and his vigilant anxiety for her made his stern frame feel the first coolness of the evening even before she felt it herself.

"Dearest, let me draw your mantle closer round you."

Gertrude smiled her thanks.

"I feel better than I have done for weeks," said she; "and when once we get into the Rhine, you will see me grow so strong as to shock all your interest for me."

"Ah, would to Heaven my interest for you may be put to such an ordeal!" said Trevylyan; and they turned slowly to the inn,

where Gertrude's father already awaited them.

Trevylyan was of a wild, a resolute, and an active nature. Thrown on the world at the age of sixteen, he had passed his youth in alternate pleasure, travel, and solitary study. At the age in which manhood is least susceptible to caprice, and most perhaps to passion, he fell in love with the loveliest person that ever dawned upon a poet's vision. I say this without exaggeration, for Gertrude Vane's was indeed the beauty, but the perishable beauty, of a dream. It happened most singularly to Trevylyan (but he was a singular man), that being naturally one whose affections it was very difficult to excite, he should have fallen in love at first sight with a person whose disease, already declared, would have deterred any other heart from risking its treasures on a bark so utterly unfitted for the voyage of life. Consumption, but consumption in its most beautiful shape, had set its seal upon Gertrude Vane, when Trevylyan first saw her, and at once loved. He knew the danger of the disease; he did not, except at intervals, deceive himself; he wrestled against the new passion: but, stern as his nature was, he could not conquer it. He loved, he confessed his love, and Gertrude returned it.

In a love like this, there is something ineffably beautiful,—it is essentially the poetry of passion. Desire grows hallowed by fear, and, scarce permitted to indulge its vent in the common channel of the senses, breaks forth into those vague yearnings, those lofty aspirations, which pine for the Bright, the Far, the Unattained. It is "the desire of the moth for the star;" it is the love of the soul!

Gertrude was advised by the faculty to try a southern climate; but Gertrude was the daughter of a German mother, and her young fancy had been nursed in all the wild legends and the alluring visions that belong to the children of the Rhine. Her imagination, more romantic than classic, yearned for the vine-clad hills and haunted forests which are so fertile in their spells to those who have once drunk, even sparingly, of the Literature of the North. Her desire strongly expressed, her declared conviction that if any change of scene could yet arrest the progress of her malady it would be the shores of the river she had so longed to visit, prevailed with her physicians and her father, and they consented to that pilgrimage along the Rhine on which Gertrude, her father, and her lover were now bound.

It was by the green curve of the banks which the lovers saw from the heights of Bruges that our fairy travellers met. They were reclining on the water-side, playing at dominos with eye-bright and the black specks of the trefoil; namely, Pipalee, Nip, Trip, and the lord treasurer (for that was all the party selected by the queen for her travelling *cortege*), and waiting for her Majesty, who, being a curious little elf, had gone round the town to reconnoitre.

"Bless me!" said the lord treasurer; "what a mad freak is this! Crossing that immense pond of water! And was there ever such bad grass as this? One may see that the fairies thrive ill here."

"You are always discontented, my lord," said Pipalee; "but then you are somewhat too old to travel,—at least, unless you go

in your nutshell and four."

The lord treasurer did not like this remark, so he muttered a peevish pshaw, and took a pinch of honeysuckle dust to console himself for being forced to put up with so much frivolity.

At this moment, ere the moon was yet at her middest height, Nymphalin joined her subjects.

"I have just returned," said she, with a melancholy expression on her countenance, "from a scene that has almost renewed in me that sympathy with human beings which of late years our race has well-nigh relinquished.

"I hurried through the town without noticing much food for adventure. I paused for a moment on a fat citizen's pillow, and bade him dream of love. He woke in a fright, and ran down to see that his cheeses were safe. I swept with a light wing over a politician's eyes, and straightway he dreamed of theatres and music. I caught an undertaker in his first nap, and I have left him whirled into a waltz. For what would be sleep if it did not contrast life? Then I came to a solitary chamber, in which a girl, in her tenderest youth, knelt by the bedside in prayer, and I saw that the death-spirit had passed over her, and the blight was on the leaves of the rose. The room was still and hushed, the angel of Purity kept watch there. Her heart was full of love, and yet of holy thoughts, and I bade her dream of the long life denied to her, —of a happy home, of the kisses of her young lover, of eternal faith, and unwaning tenderness. Let her at least enjoy in dreams what Fate has refused to Truth! And, passing from the room,

I found her lover stretched in his cloak beside the door; for he reads with a feverish and desperate prophecy the doom that waits her; and so loves he the very air she breathes, the very ground she treads, that when she has left his sight he creeps, silently and unknown to her, to the nearest spot hallowed by her presence, anxious that while yet she is on earth not an hour, not a moment, should be wasted upon other thoughts than those that belong to her; and feeling a security, a fearful joy, in lessening the distance that *now* only momentarily divides them. And that love seemed to me not as the love of the common world, and I stayed my wings and looked upon it as a thing that centuries might pass and bring no parallel to, in its beauty and its melancholy truth. But I kept away the sleep from the lover's eyes, for well I knew that sleep was a tyrant, that shortened the brief time of waking tenderness for the living, yet spared him; and one sad, anxious thought of her was sweeter, in spite of its sorrow, than the brightest of fairy dreams. So I left him awake, and watching there through the long night, and felt that the children of earth have still something that unites them to the spirits of a finer race, so long as they retain amongst them the presence of real love!"

And oh! is there not a truth also in our fictions of the Unseen World? Are there not yet bright lingerers by the forest and the stream? Do the moon and the soft stars look out on no delicate and winged forms bathing in their light? Are the fairies and the invisible hosts but the children of our dreams, and not their inspiration? Is that all a delusion which speaks from the golden

page? And is the world only given to harsh and anxious travellers that walk to and fro in pursuit of no gentle shadows? Are the chimeras of the passions the sole spirits of the universe? No! while my remembrance treasures in its deepest cell the image of one no more,—one who was "not of the earth, earthy;" one in whom love was the essence of thoughts divine; one whose shape and mould, whose heart and genius, would, had Poesy never before dreamed it, have called forth the first notion of spirits resembling mortals, but not of them,—no, Gertrude! while I remember you, the faith, the trust in brighter shapes and fairer natures than the world knows of, comes clinging to my heart; and still will I think that Fairies might have watched over your sleep and Spirits have ministered to your dreams.

# CHAPTER III. FEELINGS

GERTRUDE and her companions proceeded by slow and, to her, delightful stages to Rotterdam. Trevylyan sat by her side, and her hand was ever in his; and when her delicate frame became sensible of fatigue, her head drooped on his shoulder as its natural resting-place. Her father was a man who had lived long enough to have encountered many reverses of fortune, and they had left him, as I am apt to believe long adversity usually does leave its prey, somewhat chilled and somewhat hardened to affection; passive and quiet of hope, resigned to the worst as to the common order of events, and expecting little from the best, as an unlooked-for incident in the regularity of human afflictions. He was insensible of his daughter's danger, for he was not one whom the fear of love endows with prophetic vision; and he lived tranquilly in the present, without asking what new misfortune awaited him in the future. Yet he loved his child, his only child, with whatever of affection was left him by the many shocks his heart had received; and in her approaching connection with one rich and noble as Trevylyan, he felt even something bordering upon pleasure. Lapped in the apathetic indifference of his nature, he leaned back in the carriage, enjoying the bright weather that attended their journey, and sensible—for he was one of fine and cultivated taste—of whatever beauties of nature or remains of art varied their course. A companion of this sort

was the most agreeable that two persons never needing a third could desire; he left them undisturbed to the intoxication of their mutual presence; he marked not the interchange of glances; he listened not to the whisper, the low delicious whisper, with which the heart speaks its sympathy to heart. He broke not that charmed silence which falls over us when the thoughts are full, and words leave nothing to explain; that repose of feeling; that certainty that we are understood without the effort of words, which makes the real luxury of intercourse and the true enchantment of travel. What a memory hours like these bequeath, after we have settled down into the calm occupation of common life! How beautiful, through the vista of years, seems that brief moonlight track upon the waters of our youth!

And Trevylyan's nature, which, as I have said before, was naturally hard and stern, which was hot, irritable, ambitious, and prematurely tinctured with the policy and lessons of the world, seemed utterly changed by the peculiarities of his love. Every hour, every moment was full of incident to him; every look of Gertrude's was entered in the tablets of his heart; so that his love knew no languor, it required no change: he was absorbed in it, —*it was himself*! And he was soft, and watchful as the step of a mother by the couch of her sick child; the lion within him was tamed by indomitable love; the sadness, the presentiment, that was mixed with all his passion for Gertrude, filled him too with that poetry of feeling which is the result of thoughts weighing upon us, and not to be expressed by ordinary language. In this

part of their journey, as I find by the date, were the following lines written; they are to be judged as the lines of one in whom emotion and truth were the only inspiration:—

I. As leaves left darkling in the flush of day,
When glints the glad sun checkering o'er the tree,
I see the green earth brightening in the ray,
Which only casts a shadow upon me!
II. What are the beams, the flowers, the glory, all
Life's glow and gloss, the music and the bloom,
When every sun but speeds the Eternal Pall,
And Time is Death that dallies with the Tomb?
III. And yet—oh yet, so young, so pure!—the while
Fresh laugh the rose-hues round youth's morning sky,
That voice, those eyes, the deep love of that smile,
Are they not soul—*all* soul—and *can* they die?
IV. Are there the words "NO MORE" for thoughts like ours?
Must the bark sink upon so soft a wave?
Hath the short summer of thy life no flowers
But those which bloom above thine early grave?
V. O God! and what is life, that I should live?
(Hath not the world enow of common clay?)
And she—the Rose—whose life a soul could give
To the void desert, sigh its sweets away?
VI. And I that love thee thus, to whom the air,
Blest by thy breath, makes heaven where'er it be,
Watch thy cheek wane, and smile away despair,
Lest it should dim one hour yet left to Thee.

VII. Still let me conquer self; oh, still conceal
By the smooth brow the snake that coils below;
Break, break my heart! it comforts yet to feel
That *she* dreams on, unwakened by my woe!
VIII. Hushed, where the Star's soft angel loves to keep
Watch o'er their tide, the morning waters roll;
So glides my spirit,—darkness in the deep,
But o'er the wave the presence of thy soul!

Gertrude had not as yet the presentiments that filled the soul of Trevylyan. She thought too little of herself to know her danger, and those hours to her were hours of unmingled sweetness. Sometimes, indeed, the exhaustion of her disease tinged her spirits with a vague sadness, an abstraction came over her, and a languor she vainly struggled against. These fits of dejection and gloom touched Trevylyan to the quick; his eye never ceased to watch them, nor his heart to soothe. Often when he marked them, he sought to attract her attention from what he fancied, though erringly, a sympathy with his own forebodings, and to lead her young and romantic imagination through the temporary beguilements of fiction; for Gertrude was yet in the first bloom of youth, and all the dews of beautiful childhood sparkled freshly from the virgin blossoms of her mind. And Trevylyan, who had passed some of his early years among the students of Leipsic, and was deeply versed in the various world of legendary lore, ransacked his memory for such tales as seemed to him most likely to win her interest; and often with false smiles entered into the

playful tale, or oftener, with more faithful interest, into the graver legend of trials that warned yet beguiled them from their own. Of such tales I have selected but a few; I know not that they are the least unworthy of repetition,—they are those which many recollections induce me to repeat the most willingly. Gertrude loved these stories, for she had not yet lost, by the coldness of the world, one leaf from that soft and wild romance which belonged to her beautiful mind; and, more than all, she loved the sound of a voice which every day became more and more musical to her ear. "Shall I tell you," said Trevylyan, one morning, as he observed her gloomier mood stealing over the face of Gertrude,—"shall I tell you, ere yet we pass into the dull land of Holland, a story of Malines, whose spires we shall shortly see?" Gertrude's face brightened at once, and as she leaned back in the carriage as it whirled rapidly along, and fixed her deep blue eyes on Trevylyan, he began the following tale.

# CHAPTER IV. THE MAID OF MALINES

IT was noonday in the town of Malines, or Mechlin, as the English usually term it; the Sabbath bell had summoned the inhabitants to divine worship; and the crowd that had loitered round the Church of St. Rembauld had gradually emptied itself within the spacious aisles of the sacred edifice.

A young man was standing in the street, with his eyes bent on the ground, and apparently listening for some sound; for without raising his looks from the rude pavement, he turned to every corner of it with an intent and anxious expression of countenance. He held in one hand a staff, in the other a long slender cord, the end of which trailed on the ground; every now and then he called, with a plaintive voice, "Fido, Fido, come back! Why hast thou deserted me?" Fido returned not; the dog, wearied of confinement, had slipped from the string, and was at play with his kind in a distant quarter of the town, leaving the blind man to seek his way as he might to his solitary inn.

By and by a light step passed through the street, and the young stranger's face brightened.

"Pardon me," said he, turning to the spot where his quick ear had caught the sound, "and direct me, if you are not much pressed for a few moments' time, to the hotel 'Mortier d'Or.'"

It was a young woman, whose dress betokened that she

belonged to the middling class of life, whom he thus addressed. “It is some distance hence, sir,” said she; “but if you continue your way straight on for about a hundred yards, and then take the second turn to your right hand—”

“Alas!” interrupted the stranger, with a melancholy smile, “your direction will avail me little; my dog has deserted me, and I am blind!”

There was something in these words, and in the stranger’s voice, which went irresistibly to the heart of the young woman. “Pray forgive me,” she said, almost with tears in her eyes, “I did not perceive your—” misfortune, she was about to say, but she checked herself with an instinctive delicacy. “Lean upon me, I will conduct you to the door; nay, sir,” observing that he hesitated, “I have time enough to spare, I assure you.”

The stranger placed his hand on the young woman’s arm; and though Lucille was naturally so bashful that even her mother would laughingly reproach her for the excess of a maiden virtue, she felt not the least pang of shame, as she found herself thus suddenly walking through the streets of Malines along with a young stranger, whose dress and air betokened him of rank superior to her own.

“Your voice is very gentle,” said he, after a pause; “and that,” he added, with a slight sigh, “is the only criterion by which I know the young and the beautiful!” Lucille now blushed, and with a slight mixture of pain in the blush, for she knew well that to beauty she had no pretension. “Are you a native of this town?”

continued he.

"Yes, sir; my father holds a small office in the customs, and my mother and I eke out his salary by making lace. We are called poor, but we do not feel it, sir."

"You are fortunate! there is no wealth like the heart's wealth,—content," answered the blind man, mournfully.

"And, monsieur," said Lucille, feeling angry with herself that she had awakened a natural envy in the stranger's mind, and anxious to change the subject—"and, monsieur, has he been long at Malines?"

"But yesterday. I am passing through the Low Countries on a tour; perhaps you smile at the tour of a blind man, but it is wearisome even to the blind to rest always in the same place. I thought during church-time, when the streets were empty, that I might, by the help of my dog, enjoy safely at least the air, if not the sight of the town; but there are some persons, methinks, who cannot have even a dog for a friend!"

The blind man spoke bitterly,—the desertion of his dog had touched him to the core. Lucille wiped her eyes. "And does Monsieur travel then alone?" said she; and looking at his face more attentively than she had yet ventured to do, she saw that he was scarcely above two-and-twenty. "His father, and his *mother*," she added, with an emphasis on the last word, "are they not with him?"

"I am an orphan!" answered the stranger; "and I have neither brother nor sister."

The desolate condition of the blind man quite melted Lucille; never had she been so strongly affected. She felt a strange flutter at the heart, a secret and earnest sympathy, that attracted her at once towards him. She wished that Heaven had suffered her to be his sister!

The contrast between the youth and the form of the stranger, and the affliction which took hope from the one and activity from the other, increased the compassion he excited. His features were remarkably regular, and had a certain nobleness in their outline; and his frame was gracefully and firmly knit, though he moved cautiously and with no cheerful step.

They had now passed into a narrow street leading towards the hotel, when they heard behind them the clatter of hoofs; and Lucille, looking hastily back, saw that a troop of the Belgian horse was passing through the town.

She drew her charge close by the wall, and trembling with fear for him, she stationed herself by his side. The troop passed at a full trot through the street; and at the sound of their clanging arms, and the ringing hoofs of their heavy chargers, Lucille might have seen, had she looked at the blind man's face, that its sad features kindled with enthusiasm, and his head was raised proudly from its wonted and melancholy bend. "Thank Heaven!" she said, as the troop had nearly passed them, "the danger is over!" Not so. One of the last two soldiers who rode abreast was unfortunately mounted on a young and unmanageable horse. The rider's oaths and digging spur only increased the fire and

impatience of the charger; it plunged from side to side of the narrow street.

"Look to yourselves!" cried the horseman, as he was borne on to the place where Lucille and the stranger stood against the wall. "Are ye mad? Why do you not run?"

"For Heaven's sake, for mercy's sake, he is blind!" cried Lucille, clinging to the stranger's side.

"Save yourself, my kind guide!" said the stranger. But Lucille dreamed not of such desertion. The trooper wrested the horse's head from the spot where they stood; with a snort, as it felt the spur, the enraged animal lashed out with its hind-legs; and Lucille, unable to save *both*, threw herself before the blind man, and received the shock directed against him; her slight and delicate arm fell broken by her side, the horseman was borne onward. "Thank God, *you* are saved!" was poor Lucille's exclamation; and she fell, overcome with pain and terror, into the arms which the stranger mechanically opened to receive her.

"My guide! my friend!" cried he, "you are hurt, you—"

"No, sir," interrupted Lucille, faintly, "I am better, I am well. *This* arm, if you please,—we are not far from your hotel now."

But the stranger's ear, tutored to every inflection of voice, told him at once of the pain she suffered. He drew from her by degrees the confession of the injury she had sustained; but the generous girl did not tell him it had been incurred solely in his protection. He now insisted on reversing their duties, and accompanying *her* to her home; and Lucille, almost fainting with pain, and

hardly able to move, was forced to consent. But a few steps down the next turning stood the humble mansion of her father. They reached it; and Lucille scarcely crossed the threshold, before she sank down, and for some minutes was insensible to pain. It was left to the stranger to explain, and to beseech them immediately to send for a surgeon, "the most skilful, the most practised in the town," said he. "See, I am rich, and this is the least I can do to atone to your generous daughter, for not forsaking even a stranger in peril."

He held out his purse as he spoke, but the father refused the offer; and it saved the blind man some shame, that he could not see the blush of honest resentment with which so poor a species of renumeration was put aside.

The young man stayed till the surgeon arrived, till the arm was set; nor did he depart until he had obtained a promise from the mother that he should learn the next morning how the sufferer had passed the night.

The next morning, indeed, he had intended to quit a town that offers but little temptation to the traveller; but he tarried day after day, until Lucille herself accompanied her mother, to assure him of her recovery.

You know, at least I do, dearest Gertrude, that there is such a thing as love at the first meeting,—a secret, an unaccountable affinity between persons (strangers before) which draws them irresistibly together,—as if there were truth in Plato's beautiful fantasy, that our souls were a portion of the stars, and that spirits,

thus attracted to each other, have drawn their original light from the same orb, and yearn for a renewal of their former union. Yet without recurring to such fanciful solutions of a daily mystery, it was but natural that one in the forlorn and desolate condition of Eugene St. Amand should have felt a certain tenderness for a person who had so generously suffered for his sake.

The darkness to which he was condemned did not shut from his mind's eye the haunting images of Ideal beauty; rather, on the contrary, in his perpetual and unoccupied solitude, he fed the reveries of an imagination naturally warm, and a heart eager for sympathy and commune.

He had said rightly that his only test of beauty was in the melody of voice; and never had a softer or more thrilling tone than that of the young maiden touched upon his ear. Her exclamation, so beautifully denying self, so devoted in its charity, "Thank God, *you* are saved!" uttered too in the moment of her own suffering, rang constantly upon his soul, and he yielded, without precisely defining their nature, to vague and delicious sentiments, that his youth had never awakened to till then. And Lucille—the very accident that had happened to her on his behalf only deepened the interest she had already conceived for one who, in the first flush of youth, was thus cut off from the glad objects of life, and left to a night of years desolate and alone. There is, to your beautiful and kindly sex, a natural inclination to *protect*. This makes them the angels of sickness, the comforters of age, the fosterers of childhood; and this feeling,

in Lucille peculiarly developed, had already inexpressibly linked her compassionate nature to the lot of the unfortunate traveller. With ardent affections, and with thoughts beyond her station and her years, she was not without that modest vanity which made her painfully susceptible to her own deficiencies in beauty. Instinctively conscious of how deeply she herself could love, she believed it impossible that she could ever be so loved in return. The stranger, so superior in her eyes to all she had yet seen, was the first who had ever addressed her in that voice which by tones, not words, speaks that admiration most dear to a woman's heart. To *him* she was beautiful, and her lovely mind spoke out, undimmed by the imperfections of her face. Not, indeed, that Lucille was wholly without personal attraction; her light step and graceful form were elastic with the freshness of youth, and her mouth and smile had so gentle and tender an expression, that there were moments when it would not have been the blind only who would have mistaken her to be beautiful. Her early childhood had indeed given the promise of attractions, which the smallpox, that then fearful malady, had inexorably marred. It had not only seared the smooth skin and brilliant hues, but utterly changed even the character of the features. It so happened that Lucille's family were celebrated for beauty, and vain of that celebrity; and so bitterly had her parents deplored the effects of the cruel malady, that poor Lucille had been early taught to consider them far more grievous than they really were, and to exaggerate the advantages of that beauty, the loss of which was

considered by her parents so heavy a misfortune. Lucille, too, had a cousin named Julie, who was the wonder of all Malines for her personal perfections; and as the cousins were much together, the contrast was too striking not to occasion frequent mortification to Lucille. But every misfortune has something of a counterpoise; and the consciousness of personal inferiority had meekened, without souring, her temper, had given gentleness to a spirit that otherwise might have been too high, and humility to a mind that was naturally strong, impassioned, and energetic.

And yet Lucille had long conquered the one disadvantage she most dreaded in the want of beauty. Lucille was never known but to be loved. Wherever came her presence, her bright and soft mind diffused a certain inexpressible charm; and where she was not, a something was absent from the scene which not even Julie's beauty could replace.

"I propose," said St. Amand to Madame le Tisseur, Lucille's mother, as he sat in her little salon,—for he had already contracted that acquaintance with the family which permitted him to be led to their house, to return the visits Madame le Tisseur had made him, and his dog, once more returned a penitent to his master, always conducted his steps to the humble abode, and stopped instinctively at the door,—"I propose," said St. Amand, after a pause, and with some embarrassment, "to stay a little while longer at Malines; the air agrees with me, and I like the quiet of the place; but you are aware, madam, that at a hotel among strangers, I feel my situation somewhat cheerless.

I have been thinking"—St. Amand paused again—"I have been thinking that if I could persuade some agreeable family to receive me as a lodger, I would fix myself here for some weeks. I am easily pleased."

"Doubtless there are many in Malines who would be too happy to receive such a lodger."

"Will you receive me?" asked St. Amand, abruptly. "It was of *your* family I thought."

"Of us? Monsieur is too flattering. But we have scarcely a room good enough for you."

"What difference between one room and another can there be to me? That is the best apartment to my choice in which the human voice sounds most kindly."

The arrangement was made, and St. Amand came now to reside beneath the same roof as Lucille. And was she not happy that *he* wanted so constant an attendance; was she not happy that she was ever of use? St. Amand was passionately fond of music; he played himself with a skill that was only surpassed by the exquisite melody of his voice, and was not Lucille happy when she sat mute and listening to such sounds as in Malines were never heard before? Was she not happy in gazing on a face to whose melancholy aspect her voice instantly summoned the smile? Was she not happy when the music ceased, and St. Amand called "Lucille"? Did not her own name uttered by that voice seem to her even sweeter than the music? Was she not happy when they walked out in the still evenings of summer, and her

arm thrilled beneath the light touch of one to whom she was so necessary? Was she not proud in her happiness, and was there not something like worship in the gratitude she felt to him for raising her humble spirit to the luxury of feeling herself beloved?

St. Amand's parents were French. They had resided in the neighbourhood of Amiens, where they had inherited a competent property, to which he had succeeded about two years previous to the date of my story.

He had been blind from the age of three years. "I know not," said he, as he related these particulars to Lucille one evening when they were alone,—"I know not what the earth may be like, or the heaven, or the rivers whose voice at least I can hear, for I have no recollection beyond that of a confused but delicious blending of a thousand glorious colours, a bright and quick sense of joy, A VISIBLE MUSIC. But it is only since my childhood closed that I have mourned, as I now unceasingly mourn, for the light of day. My boyhood passed in a quiet cheerfulness; the least trifle then could please and occupy the vacancies of my mind; but it was as I took delight in being read to, as I listened to the vivid descriptions of Poetry, as I glowed at the recital of great deeds, as I was made acquainted by books with the energy, the action, the heat, the fervour, the pomp, the enthusiasm of life, that I gradually opened to the sense of all I was forever denied. I felt that I existed, not lived; and that, in the midst of the Universal Liberty, I was sentenced to a prison, from whose blank walls there was no escape. Still, however, while my parents

lived, I had something of consolation; at least I was not alone. They died, and a sudden and dread solitude, a vast and empty dreariness, settled upon my dungeon. One old servant only, who had attended me from my childhood, who had known me in my short privilege of light, by whose recollections my mind could grope back its way through the dark and narrow passages of memory to faint glimpses of the sun, was all that remained to me of human sympathies. It did not suffice, however, to content me with a home where my father and my mother's kind voice were *not*. A restless impatience, an anxiety to move, possessed me, and I set out from my home, journeying whither I cared not, so that at least I could change an air that weighed upon me like a palpable burden. I took only this old attendant as my companion; he too died three months since at Bruxelles, worn out with years. Alas! I had forgotten that he was old, for I saw not his progress to decay; and now, save my faithless dog, I was utterly alone, till I came hither and found *thee*."

Lucille stooped down to caress the dog; she blessed the desertion that had led him to a friend who never could desert.

But however much, and however gratefully, St. Amand loved Lucille, her power availed not to chase the melancholy from his brow, and to reconcile him to his forlorn condition.

"Ah, would that I could see thee! would that I could look upon a face that my heart vainly endeavours to delineate!"

"If thou couldst," sighed Lucille, "thou wouldst cease to love me."

"Impossible!" cried St. Amand, passionately. "However the world may find thee, *thou* wouldst become my standard of beauty; and I should judge not of thee by others, but of others by thee."

He loved to hear Lucille read to him, and mostly he loved the descriptions of war, of travel, of wild adventure, and yet they occasioned him the most pain. Often she paused from the page as she heard him sigh, and felt that she would even have renounced the bliss of being loved by him, if she could have restored to him that blessing, the desire for which haunted him as a spectre.

Lucille's family were Catholic, and, like most in their station, they possessed the superstitions, as well as the devotion of the faith. Sometimes they amused themselves of an evening by the various legends and imaginary miracles of their calendar; and once, as they were thus conversing with two or three of their neighbours, "The Tomb of the Three Kings of Cologne" became the main topic of their wondering recitals. However strong was the sense of Lucille, she was, as you will readily conceive, naturally influenced by the belief of those with whom she had been brought up from her cradle, and she listened to tale after tale of the miracles wrought at the consecrated tomb, as earnestly and undoubtingly as the rest.

And the Kings of the East were no ordinary saints; to the relics of the Three Magi, who followed the Star of Bethlehem, and were the first potentates of the earth who adored its Saviour, well might the pious Catholic suppose that a peculiar power and

a healing sanctity would belong. Each of the circle (St. Amand, who had been more than usually silent, and even gloomy during the day, had retired to his own apartment, for there were some moments when, in the sadness of his thoughts, he sought that solitude which he so impatiently fled from at others)—each of the circle had some story to relate equally veracious and indisputable, of an infirmity cured, or a prayer accorded, or a sin atoned for at the foot of the holy tomb. One story peculiarly affected Lucille; the narrator, a venerable old man with gray locks, solemnly declared himself a witness of its truth.

A woman at Anvers had given birth to a son, the offspring of an illicit connection, who came into the world deaf and dumb. The unfortunate mother believed the calamity a punishment for her own sin. "Ah, would," said she, "that the affliction had fallen only upon me! Wretch that I am, my innocent child is punished for my offence!" This, idea haunted her night and day; she pined and could not be comforted. As the child grew up, and wound himself more and more round her heart, his caresses added new pangs to her remorse; and at length (continued the narrator) hearing perpetually of the holy fame of the Tomb of Cologne, she resolved upon a pilgrimage barefoot to the shrine. "God is merciful," said she; "and He who called Magdalene his sister may take the mother's curse from the child." She then went to Cologne; she poured her tears, her penitence, and her prayers at the sacred tomb. When she returned to her native town, what was her dismay as she approached her cottage to behold it a heap

of ruins! Its blackened rafters and yawning casements betokened the ravages of fire. The poor woman sank upon the ground utterly overpowered. Had her son perished? At that moment she heard the cry of a child's voice, and, lo! her child rushed to her arms, and called her "mother!"

He had been saved from the fire, which had broken out seven days before; but in the terror he had suffered, the string that tied his tongue had been loosened; he had uttered articulate sounds of distress; the curse was removed, and one word at least the kind neighbours had already taught him to welcome his mother's return. What cared she now that her substance was gone, that her roof was ashes? She bowed in grateful submission to so mild a stroke; her prayer had been heard, and the sin of the mother was visited no longer on the child.

I have said, dear Gertrude, that this story made a deep impression upon Lucille. A misfortune so nearly akin to that of St. Amand removed by the prayer of another filled her with devoted thoughts and a beautiful hope. "Is not the tomb still standing?" thought she. "Is not God still in heaven?—He who heard the guilty, may He not hear the guiltless? Is He not the God of love? Are not the affections the offerings that please Him best? And what though the child's mediator was his mother, can even a mother love her child more tenderly than I love Eugene? But if, Lucille, thy prayer be granted, if he recover his sight, *thy* charm is gone, he will love thee no longer. No matter! be it so, —I shall at least have made him happy!"

Such were the thoughts that filled the mind of Lucille; she cherished them till they settled into resolution, and she secretly vowed to perform her pilgrimage of love. She told neither St. Amand nor her parents of her intention; she knew the obstacles such an announcement would create. Fortunately she had an aunt settled at Bruxelles, to whom she had been accustomed once in every year to pay a month's visit, and at that time she generally took with her the work of a twelvemonths' industry, which found a readier sale at Bruxelles than at Malines. Lucille and St. Amand were already betrothed; their wedding was shortly to take place; and the custom of the country leading parents, however poor, to nourish the honourable ambition of giving some dowry with their daughters, Lucille found it easy to hide the object of her departure, under the pretence of taking the lace to Bruxelles, which had been the year's labour of her mother and herself,—it would sell for sufficient, at least, to defray the preparations for the wedding.

"Thou art ever right, child," said Madame le Tisseur; "the richer St. Amand is, why, the less oughtest thou to go a beggar to his house."

In fact, the honest ambition of the good people was excited; their pride had been hurt by the envy of the town and the current congratulations on so advantageous a marriage; and they employed themselves in counting up the fortune they should be able to give to their only child, and flattering their pardonable vanity with the notion that there would be no such great

disproportion in the connection after all. They were right, but not in their own view of the estimate; the wealth that Lucille brought was what fate could not lessen, reverse could not reach; the ungracious seasons could not blight its sweet harvest; imprudence could not dissipate, fraud could not steal, one grain from its abundant coffers! Like the purse in the Fairy Tale, its use was hourly, its treasure inexhaustible.

St. Amand alone was not to be won to her departure; he chafed at the notion of a dowry; he was not appeased even by Lucille's representation that it was only to gratify and not to impoverish her parents. "And *thou*, too, canst leave me!" he said, in that plaintive voice which had made his first charm to Lucille's heart. "It is a double blindness!"

"But for a few days; a fortnight at most, dearest Eugene."

"A fortnight! you do not reckon time as the blind do," said St. Amand, bitterly.

"But listen, listen, dear Eugene," said Lucille, weeping.

The sound of her sobs restored him to a sense of his ingratitude. Alas, he knew not how much he had to be grateful for! He held out his arms to her. "Forgive me," said he. "Those who can see Nature know not how terrible it is to be alone."

"But my mother will not leave you."

"She is not you!"

"And Julie," said Lucille, hesitatingly.

"What is Julie to me?"

"Ah, you are the only one, save my parents, who could think

of me in her presence."

"And why, Lucille?"

"Why! She is more beautiful than a dream."

"Say not so. Would I could see, that I might prove to the world how much more beautiful thou art! There is no music in her voice."

The evening before Lucille departed she sat up late with St. Amand and her mother. They conversed on the future; they made plans; in the wide sterility of the world they laid out the garden of household love, and filled it with flowers, forgetful of the wind that scatters and the frost that kills. And when, leaning on Lucille's arm, St. Amand sought his chamber, and they parted at his door, which closed upon her, she fell down on her knees at the threshold, and poured out the fulness of her heart in a prayer for his safety and the fulfilment of her timid hope.

At daybreak she was consigned to the conveyance that performed the short journey from Malines to Bruxelles. When she entered the town, instead of seeking her aunt, she rested at an *auberge* in the suburbs, and confiding her little basket of lace to the care of its hostess, she set out alone, and on foot, upon the errand of her heart's lovely superstition. And erring though it was, her faith redeemed its weakness, her affection made it even sacred; and well may we believe that the Eye which reads all secrets scarce looked reprovingly on that fanaticism whose only infirmity was love.

So fearful was she lest, by rendering the task too easy, she

might impair the effect, that she scarcely allowed herself rest or food. Sometimes, in the heat of noon, she wandered a little from the roadside, and under the spreading lime-tree surrendered her mind to its sweet and bitter thoughts; but ever the restlessness of her enterprise urged her on, and faint, weary, and with bleeding feet, she started up and continued her way. At length she reached the ancient city, where a holier age has scarce worn from the habits and aspects of men the Roman trace. She prostrated herself at the tomb of the Magi; she proffered her ardent but humble prayer to Him before whose Son those fleshless heads (yet to faith at least preserved) had, eighteen centuries ago, bowed in adoration. Twice every day, for a whole week, she sought the same spot, and poured forth the same prayer. The last day an old priest, who, hovering in the church, had observed her constantly at devotion, with that fatherly interest which the better ministers of the Catholic sect (that sect which has covered the earth with the mansions of charity) feel for the unhappy, approached her as she was retiring with moist and downcast eyes, and saluting her, assumed the privilege of his order to inquire if there was aught in which his advice or aid could serve. There was something in the venerable air of the old man which encouraged Lucille; she opened her heart to him; she told him all. The good priest was much moved by her simplicity and earnestness. He questioned her minutely as to the peculiar species of blindness with which St. Amand was afflicted; and after musing a little while, he said, "Daughter, God is great and merciful; we must

trust in His power, but we must not forget that He mostly works by mortal agents. As you pass through Louvain in your way home, fail not to see there a certain physician, named Le Kain. He is celebrated through Flanders for the cures he has wrought among the blind, and his advice is sought by all classes from far and near. He lives hard by the Hotel de Ville, but any one will inform you of his residence. Stay, my child, you shall take him a note from me; he is a benevolent and kindly man, and you shall tell him exactly the same story (and with the same voice) you have told to me."

So saying the priest made Lucille accompany him to his home, and forcing her to refresh herself less sparingly than she had yet done since she had left Malines, he gave her his blessing, and a letter to Le Kain, which he rightly judged would insure her a patient hearing from the physician. Well known among all men of science was the name of the priest, and a word of recommendation from him went further, where virtue and wisdom were honoured, than the longest letter from the haughtiest sieur in Flanders.

With a patient and hopeful spirit, the young pilgrim turned her back on the Roman Cologne; and now about to rejoin St. Amand, she felt neither the heat of the sun nor the weariness of the road. It was one day at noon that she again passed through Louvain, and she soon found herself by the noble edifice of the Hotel de Ville. Proud rose its spires against the sky, and the sun shone bright on its rich tracery and Gothic casements; the broad open street

was crowded with persons of all classes, and it was with some modest alarm that Lucille lowered her veil and mingled with the throng. It was easy, as the priest had said, to find the house of Le Kain; she bade the servant take the priest's letter to his master, and she was not long kept waiting before she was admitted to the physician's presence. He was a spare, tall man, with a bald front, and a calm and friendly countenance. He was not less touched than the priest had been by the manner in which she narrated her story, described the affliction of her betrothed, and the hope that had inspired the pilgrimage she had just made.

"Well," said he, encouragingly, "we must see our patient. You can bring him hither to me."

"Ah, sir, I had hoped—" Lucille stopped suddenly.

"What, my young friend?"

"That I might have had the triumph of bringing you to Malines. I know, sir, what you are about to say, and I know, sir, your time must be very valuable; but I am not so poor as I seem, and Eugene, that is, M. St. Amand, is very rich, and—and I have at Bruxelles what I am sure is a large sum; it was to have provided for the wedding, but it is most heartily at your service, sir."

Le Kain smiled; he was one of those men who love to read the human heart when its leaves are fair and undefiled; and, in the benevolence of science, he would have gone a longer journey than from Louvain to Malines to give sight to the blind, even had St. Amand been a beggar.

"Well, well," said he, "but you forget that M. St. Amand is

not the only one in the world who wants me. I must look at my notebook, and see if I can be spared for a day or two."

So saying, he glanced at his memoranda. Everything smiled on Lucille; he had no engagements that his partner could not fulfil, for some days; he consented to accompany Lucille to Malines.

Meanwhile, cheerless and dull had passed the time to St. Amand. He was perpetually asking Madame le Tisseur what hour it was,—it was almost his only question. There seemed to him no sun in the heavens, no freshness in the air, and he even forbore his favourite music; the instrument had lost its sweetness since Lucille was not by to listen.

It was natural that the gossips of Malines should feel some envy at the marriage Lucille was about to make with one whose competence report had exaggerated into prodigal wealth, whose birth had been elevated from the respectable to the noble, and whose handsome person was clothed, by the interest excited by his misfortune, with the beauty of Antinous. Even that misfortune, which ought to have levelled all distinctions, was not sufficient to check the general envy; perhaps to some of the damsels of Malines blindness in a husband would not have seemed an unwelcome infirmity! But there was one in whom this envy rankled with a peculiar sting: it was the beautiful, the all-conquering Julie! That the humble, the neglected Lucille should be preferred to her; that Lucille, whose existence was well-nigh forgot beside Julie's, should become thus suddenly of importance; that there should be one person in the world, and

that person young, rich, handsome, to whom she was less than nothing, when weighed in the balance with Lucille, mortified to the quick a vanity that had never till then received a wound. "It is well," she would say with a bitter jest, "that Lucille's lover is blind. To be the one it is necessary to be the other!"

During Lucille's absence she had been constantly in Madame le Tisseur's house; indeed, Lucille had prayed her to be so. She had sought, with an industry that astonished herself, to supply Lucille's place; and among the strange contradictions of human nature, she had learned during her efforts to please, to love the object of those efforts,—as much at least as she was capable of loving.

She conceived a positive hatred to Lucille; she persisted in imagining that nothing but the accident of first acquaintance had deprived her of a conquest with which she persuaded herself her happiness had become connected. Had St. Amand never loved Lucille and proposed to Julie, his misfortune would have made her reject him, despite his wealth and his youth; but to be Lucille's lover, and a conquest to be won from Lucille, raised him instantly to an importance not his own. Safe, however, in his affliction, the arts and beauty of Julie fell harmless on the fidelity of St. Amand. Nay, he liked her less than ever, for it seemed an impertinence in any one to counterfeit the anxiety and watchfulness of Lucille.

"It is time, surely it is time, Madame le Tisseur, that Lucille should return? She might have sold all the lace in Malines by this

time," said St. Amand, one day, peevishly.

"Patience, my dear friend, patience; perhaps she may return to-morrow."

"To-morrow! let me see, it is only six o'clock,—only six, you are sure?"

"Just five, dear Eugene. Shall I read to you? This is a new book from Paris; it has made a great noise," said Julie.

"You are very kind, but I will not trouble you."

"It is anything but trouble."

"In a word, then, I would rather not."

"Oh, that he could see!" thought Julie; "would I not punish him for this!"

"I hear carriage wheels; who can be passing this way? Surely it is the *voiturier* from Bruxelles," said St. Amand, starting up; "it is his day,—his hour, too. No, no, it is a lighter vehicle," and he sank down listlessly on his seat.

Nearer and nearer rolled the wheels; they turned the corner; they stopped at the lowly door; and, overcome, overjoyed, Lucille was clasped to the bosom of St. Amand.

"Stay," said she, blushing, as she recovered her self-possession, and turned to Le Kain; "pray pardon me, sir. Dear Eugene, I have brought with me one who, by God's blessing, may yet restore you to sight."

"We must not be sanguine, my child," said Le Kain; "anything is better than disappointment."

To close this part of my story, dear Gertrude, Le Kain

examined St. Amand, and the result of the examination was a confident belief in the probability of a cure. St. Amand gladly consented to the experiment of an operation; it succeeded, the blind man saw! Oh, what were Lucille's feelings, what her emotion, what her joy, when she found the object of her pilgrimage, of her prayers, fulfilled! That joy was so intense that in the eternal alternations of human life she might have foretold from its excess how bitter the sorrows fated to ensue.

As soon as by degrees the patient's new sense became reconciled to the light, his first, his only demand was for Lucille. "No, let me not see her alone; let me see her in the midst of you all, that I may convince you that the heart never is mistaken in its instincts." With a fearful, a sinking presentiment, Lucille yielded to the request, to which the impetuous St. Amand would hear indeed no denial. The father, the mother, Julie, Lucille, Julie's younger sisters, assembled in the little parlour; the door opened, and St. Amand stood hesitating on the threshold. One look around sufficed to him; his face brightened, he uttered a cry of joy. "Lucille! Lucille!" he exclaimed, "it is you, I know it, *you* only!" He sprang forward *and fell at the feet of Julie*!

Flushed, elated, triumphant, Julie bent upon him her sparkling eyes; *she* did not undeceive him.

"You are wrong, you mistake," said Madame le Tisseur, in confusion; "that is her cousin Julie,—this is your Lucille."

St. Amand rose, turned, saw Lucille, and at that moment she wished herself in her grave. Surprise, mortification,

disappointment, almost dismay, were depicted in his gaze. He had been haunting his prison-house with dreams, and now, set free, he felt how unlike they were to the truth. Too new to observation to read the woe, the despair, the lapse and shrinking of the whole frame, that his look occasioned Lucille, he yet felt, when the first shock of his surprise was over, that it was not thus he should thank her who had restored him to sight. He hastened to redeem his error—ah! how could it be redeemed?

From that hour all Lucille's happiness was at an end; her fairy palace was shattered in the dust; the magician's wand was broken up; the Ariel was given to the winds; and the bright enchantment no longer distinguished the land she lived in from the rest of the barren world. It is true that St. Amand's words were kind; it is true that he remembered with the deepest gratitude all she had done in his behalf; it is true that he forced himself again and again to say, "She is my betrothed, my benefactress!" and he cursed himself to think that the feelings he had entertained for her were fled. Where was the passion of his words; where the ardour of his tone; where that play and light of countenance which her step, her voice, could formerly call forth? When they were alone he was embarrassed and constrained, and almost cold; his hand no longer sought hers, his soul no longer missed her if she was absent a moment from his side. When in their household circle he seemed visibly more at ease; but did his eyes fasten upon her who had opened them to the day; did they not wander at every interval with a too eloquent admiration to the blushing and

radiant face of the exulting Julie? This was not, you will believe, suddenly perceptible in one day or one week, but every day it was perceptible more and more. Yet still—bewitched, ensnared, as St. Amand was he never perhaps would have been guilty of an infidelity that he strove with the keenest remorse to wrestle against, had it not been for the fatal contrast, at the first moment of his gushing enthusiasm, which Julie had presented to Lucille; but for that he would have formed no previous idea of real and living beauty to aid the disappointment of his imaginings and his dreams. He would have seen Lucille young and graceful, and with eyes beaming affection, contrasted only by the wrinkled countenance and bended frame of her parents, and she would have completed her conquest over him before he had discovered that she was less beautiful than others; nay, more,—that infidelity never could have lasted above the first few days, if the vain and heartless object of it had not exerted every art, all the power and witchery of her beauty, to cement and continue it. The unfortunate Lucille—so susceptible to the slightest change in those she loved, so diffident of herself, so proud too in that diffidence—no longer necessary, no longer missed, no longer loved, could not bear to endure the galling comparison between the past and the present. She fled uncomplainingly to her chamber to indulge her tears, and thus, unhappily, absent as her father generally was during the day, and busied as her mother was either at work or in household matters, she left Julie a thousand opportunities to complete the power she had begun

to wield over—no, not the heart!—the *senses* of St. Amand! Yet, still not suspecting, in the open generosity of her mind, the whole extent of her affliction, poor Lucille buoyed herself at times with the hope that when once married, when, once in that intimacy of friendship, the unspeakable love she felt for him could disclose itself with less restraint than at present,—she would perhaps regain a heart which had been so devotedly hers, that she could not think that without a fault it was irrevocably gone: on that hope she anchored all the little happiness that remained to her. And still St. Amand pressed their marriage, but in what different tones! In fact, he wished to preclude from himself the possibility of a deeper ingratitude than that which he had incurred already. He vainly thought that the broken reed of love might be bound up and strengthened by the ties of duty; and at least he was anxious that his hand, his fortune, his esteem, his gratitude, should give to Lucille the only recompense it was now in his power to bestow. Meanwhile, left alone so often with Julie, and Julie bent on achieving the last triumph over his heart, St. Amand was gradually preparing a far different reward, a far different return, for her to whom he owed so incalculable a debt.

There was a garden, behind the house, in which there was a small arbour, where often in the summer evenings Eugene and Lucille had sat together,—hours never to return! One day she heard from her own chamber, where she sat mourning, the sound of St. Amand's flute swelling gently from that beloved and consecrated bower. She wept as she heard it, and the memories

that the music bore softening and endearing his image, she began to reproach herself that she had yielded so often to the impulse of her wounded feelings; that chilled by *his* coldness, she had left him so often to himself, and had not sufficiently dared to tell him of that affection which, in her modest self-depreciation, constituted her only pretension to his love. "Perhaps he is alone now," she thought; "the air too is one which he knows that I love;" and with her heart in her step, she stole from the house and sought the arbour. She had scarce turned from her chamber when the flute ceased; as she neared the arbour she heard voices,—Julie's voice in grief, St. Amand's in consolation. A dread foreboding seized her; her feet clung rooted to the earth.

"Yes, marry her, forget me," said Julie; "in a few days you will be another's, and I—I—forgive me, Eugene, forgive me that I have disturbed your happiness. I am punished sufficiently; my heart will break, but it will break in loving you." Sobs choked Julie's voice.

"Oh, speak not thus," said St. Amand. "I, *I* only am to blame, —I, false to both, to both ungrateful. Oh, from the hour that these eyes opened upon you I drank in a new life; the sun itself to me was less wonderful than your beauty. But—but—let me forget that hour. What do I not owe to Lucille? I shall be wretched,—I shall deserve to be so; for shall I not think, Julie, that I have embittered your life with our ill-fated love? But all that I can give —my hand, my home, my plighted faith—must be hers. Nay, Julie, nay—why that look? Could I act otherwise? Can I dream

otherwise? Whatever the sacrifice, *must* I not render it? Ah, what do I owe to Lucille, were it only for the thought that but for her I might never have seen thee!"

Lucille stayed to hear no more; with the same soft step as that which had borne her within hearing of these fatal words, she turned back once more to her desolate chamber.

That evening, as St. Amand was sitting alone in his apartment, he heard a gentle knock at the door. "Come in," he said, and Lucille entered. He started in some confusion, and would have taken her hand, but she gently repulsed him. She took a seat opposite to him, and looking down, thus addressed him:—

"My dear Eugene, that is, Monsieur St. Amand, I have something on my mind that I think it better to speak at once; and if I do not exactly express what I would wish to say, you must not be offended with Lucille: it is not an easy matter to put into words what one feels deeply." Colouring, and suspecting something of the truth, St. Amand would have broken in upon her here; but she with a gentle impatience motioned him to be silent, and continued:—

"You know that when you once loved me, I used to tell you that you would cease to do so could you see how undeserving I was of your attachment. I did not deceive myself, Eugene; I always felt assured that such would be the case, that your love for me necessarily rested on your affliction. But for all that I never at least had a dream or a desire but for your happiness; and God knows, that if again, by walking barefooted, not to Cologne,

but to Rome—to the end of the world—I could save you from a much less misfortune than that of blindness, I would cheerfully do it; yes, even though I might foretell all the while that, on my return, you would speak to me coldly, think of me lightly, and that the penalty to me would—would be—what it has been!" Here Lucille wiped a few natural tears from her eyes. St. Amand, struck to the heart, covered his face with his hands, without the courage to interrupt her. Lucille continued:—

"That which I foresaw has come to pass; I am no longer to you what I once was, when you could clothe this poor form and this homely face with a beauty they did not possess. You would wed me still, it is true; but I am proud, Eugene, and cannot stoop to gratitude where I once had love. I am not so unjust as to blame you; the change was natural, was inevitable. I should have steeled myself more against it; but I am now resigned. We must part; you love Julie—that too is natural—and *she* loves you; ah! what also more in the probable course of events? Julie loves you, not yet, perhaps, so much as I did; but then she has not known you as I have, and she whose whole life has been triumph cannot feel the gratitude that I felt at fancying myself loved; but this will come—God grant it! Farewell, then, forever, dear Eugene; I leave you when you no longer want me; you are now independent of Lucille; wherever you go, a thousand hereafter can supply my place. Farewell!"

She rose, as she said this, to leave the room; but St. Amand seizing her hand, which she in vain endeavoured to withdraw

from his clasp, poured forth incoherently, passionately, his reproaches on himself, his eloquent persuasion against her resolution.

"I confess," said he, "that I have been allured for a moment; I confess that Julie's beauty made me less sensible to your stronger, your holier, oh! far, far holier title to my love! But forgive me, dearest Lucille; already I return to you, to all I once felt for you; make me not curse the blessing of sight that I owe to you. You must not leave me; never can we two part. Try me, only try me, and if ever hereafter my heart wander from you, *then*, Lucille, leave me to my remorse!"

Even at that moment Lucille did not yield; she felt that his prayer was but the enthusiasm of the hour; she felt that there was a virtue in her pride,—that to leave him was a duty to herself. In vain he pleaded; in vain were his embraces, his prayers; in vain he reminded her of their plighted troth, of her aged parents, whose happiness had become wrapped in her union with him: "How,—even were it as you wrongly believe,—how, in honour to them, can I desert you, can I wed another?"

"Trust that, trust all, to me," answered Lucille; "your honour shall be my care, none shall blame *you*; only do not let your marriage with Julie be celebrated here before their eyes: that is all I ask, all they can expect. God bless you! do not fancy I shall be unhappy, for whatever happiness the world gives you, shall I not have contributed to bestow it? and with that thought I am above compassion."

She glided from his arms, and left him to a solitude more bitter even than that of blindness. That very night Lucille sought her mother; to her she confided all. I pass over the reasons she urged, the arguments she overcame; she conquered rather than convinced, and leaving to Madame le Tisseur the painful task of breaking to her father her unalterable resolution, she quitted Malines the next morning, and with a heart too honest to be utterly without comfort, paid that visit to her aunt which had been so long deferred.

The pride of Lucille's parents prevented them from reproaching St. Amand. He could not bear, however, their cold and altered looks; he left their house; and though for several days he would not even see Julie, yet her beauty and her art gradually resumed their empire over him. They were married at Courtroi, and to the joy of the vain Julie departed to the gay metropolis of France. But, before their departure, before his marriage, St. Amand endeavoured to appease his conscience by obtaining for M. le Tisseur a much more lucrative and honourable office than that he now held. Rightly judging that Malines could no longer be a pleasant residence for them, and much less for Lucille, the duties of the post were to be fulfilled in another town; and knowing that M. le Tisseur's delicacy would revolt at receiving such a favour from his hands, he kept the nature of his negotiation a close secret, and suffered the honest citizen to believe that his own merits alone had entitled him to so unexpected a promotion.

Time went on. This quiet and simple history of humble

affections took its date in a stormy epoch of the world,—the dawning Revolution of France. The family of Lucille had been little more than a year settled in their new residence when Dumouriez led his army into the Netherlands. But how meanwhile had that year passed for Lucille? I have said that her spirit was naturally high; that though so tender, she was not weak. Her very pilgrimage to Cologne alone, and at the timid age of seventeen, proved that there was a strength in her nature no less than a devotion in her love. The sacrifice she had made brought its own reward. She believed St. Amand was happy, and she would not give way to the selfishness of grief; she had still duties to perform; she could still comfort her parents and cheer their age; she could still be all the world to them: she felt this, and was consoled. Only once during the year had she heard of Julie; she had been seen by a mutual friend at Paris, gay, brilliant, courted, and admired; of St. Amand she heard nothing.

My tale, dear Gertrude, does not lead me through the harsh scenes of war. I do not tell you of the slaughter and the siege, and the blood that inundated those fair lands,—the great battlefield of Europe. The people of the Netherlands in general were with the cause of Dumouriez, but the town in which Le Tisseur dwelt offered some faint resistance to his arms. Le Tisseur himself, despite his age, girded on his sword; the town was carried, and the fierce and licentious troops of the conqueror poured, flushed with their easy victory, through its streets. Le Tisseur's house was filled with drunken and rude troopers; Lucille herself trembled

in the fierce gripe of one of those dissolute soldiers, more bandit than soldier, whom the subtle Dumouriez had united to his army, and by whose blood he so often saved that of his nobler band. Her shrieks, her cries, were vain, when suddenly the troopers gave way. "The Captain! brave Captain!" was shouted forth; the insolent soldier, felled by a powerful arm, sank senseless at the feet of Lucille, and a glorious form, towering above its fellows,—even through its glittering garb, even in that dreadful hour, remembered at a glance by Lucille,—stood at her side; her protector, her guardian! Thus once more she beheld St. Amand!

The house was cleared in an instant, the door barred. Shouts, groans, wild snatches of exulting song, the clang of arms, the tramp of horses, the hurrying footsteps, the deep music sounded loud, and blended terribly without. Lucille heard them not,—she was on that breast which never should have deserted her.

Effectually to protect his friends, St. Amand took up his quarters at their house; and for two days he was once more under the same roof as Lucille. He never recurred voluntarily to Julie; he answered Lucille's timid inquiry after her health briefly, and with coldness, but he spoke with all the enthusiasm of a long-pent and ardent spirit of the new profession he had embraced. Glory seemed now to be his only mistress; and the vivid delusion of the first bright dreams of the Revolution filled his mind, broke from his tongue, and lighted up those dark eyes which Lucille had redeemed to day.

She saw him depart at the head of his troops; she saw his proud

crest glancing in the sun; she saw his steed winding through the narrow street; she saw that his last glance reverted to her, where she stood at the door; and, as he waved his adieu, she fancied that there was on his face that look of deep and grateful tenderness which reminded her of the one bright epoch of her life.

She was right; St. Amand had long since in bitterness repented of a transient infatuation, had long since distinguished the true Florimel from the false, and felt that, in Julie, Lucille's wrongs were avenged. But in the hurry and heat of war he plunged that regret—the keenest of all—which embodies the bitter words, "TOO LATE!"

Years passed away, and in the resumed tranquillity of Lucille's life the brilliant apparition of St. Amand appeared as something dreamed of, not seen. The star of Napoleon had risen above the horizon; the romance of his early career had commenced; and the campaign of Egypt had been the herald of those brilliant and meteoric successes which flashed forth from the gloom of the Revolution of France.

You are aware, dear Gertrude, how many in the French as well as the English troops returned home from Egypt blinded with the ophthalmia of that arid soil. Some of the young men in Lucille's town, who had joined Napoleon's army, came back darkened by that fearful affliction, and Lucille's alms and Lucille's aid and Lucille's sweet voice were ever at hand for those poor sufferers, whose common misfortune touched so thrilling a chord of her heart.

Her father was now dead, and she had only her mother to cheer amidst the ills of age. As one evening they sat at work together, Madame le Tisseur said, after a pause,—

"I wish, dear Lucille, thou couldst be persuaded to marry Justin; he loves thee well, and now that thou art yet young, and hast many years before thee, thou shouldst remember that when I die thou wilt be alone."

"Ah, cease, dearest mother, I never can marry now; and as for love—once taught in the bitter school in which I have learned the knowledge of myself—I cannot be deceived again."

"My Lucille, you do not know yourself. Never was woman loved if Justin does not love you; and never did lover feel with more real warmth how worthily he loved."

And this was true; and not of Justin alone, for Lucille's modest virtues, her kindly temper, and a certain undulating and feminine grace, which accompanied all her movements, had secured her as many conquests as if she had been beautiful. She had rejected all offers of marriage with a shudder; without even the throb of a flattered vanity. One memory, sadder, was also dearer to her than all things; and something sacred in its recollections made her deem it even a crime to think of effacing the past by a new affection.

"I believe," continued Madame le Tisseur, angrily, "that thou still thinkest fondly of him from whom only in the world thou couldst have experienced ingratitude."

"Nay, Mother," said Lucille, with a blush and a slight sigh,

"Eugene is married to another."

While thus conversing, they heard a gentle and timid knock at the door; the latch was lifted. "This," said the rough voice of a *commissionaire* of the town, "this, monsieur, is the house of Madame le Tisseur, and *voila mademoiselle*!" A tall figure, with a shade over his eyes, and wrapped in a long military cloak, stood in the room. A thrill shot across Lucille's heart. He stretched out his arms. "Lucille," said that melancholy voice, which had made the music of her first youth, "where art thou, Lucille? Alas! she does not recognize St. Amand."

Thus was it indeed. By a singular fatality, the burning suns and the sharp dust of the plains of Egypt had smitten the young soldier, in the flush of his career, with a second—and this time with an irremediable—blindness! He had returned to France to find his hearth lonely. Julie was no more,—a sudden fever had cut her off in the midst of youth; and he had sought his way to Lucille's house, to see if one hope yet remained to him in the world!

And when, days afterwards, humbly and sadly he re-urged a former suit, did Lucille shut her heart to its prayer? Did her pride remember its wound; did she revert to his desertion; did she reply to the whisper of her yearning love, "*Thou hast been before forsaken*"? That voice and those darkened eyes pleaded to her with a pathos not to be resisted. "I am once more necessary to him," was all her thought; "if I reject him who will tend him?" In that thought was the motive of her conduct; in that

thought gushed back upon her soul all the springs of checked but unconquered, unconquerable love! In that thought, she stood beside him at the altar, and pledged, with a yet holier devotion than she might have felt of yore, the vow of her imperishable truth.

And Lucille found, in the future, a reward, which the common world could never comprehend. With his blindness returned all the feelings she had first awakened in St. Amand's solitary heart; again he yearned for her step, again he missed even a moment's absence from his side, again her voice chased the shadow from his brow, and in her presence was a sense of shelter and of sunshine. He no longer sighed for the blessing he had lost; he reconciled himself to fate, and entered into that serenity of mood which mostly characterizes the blind.

Perhaps after we have seen the actual world, and experienced its hollow pleasures, we can resign ourselves the better to its exclusion; and as the cloister, which repels the ardour of our hope, is sweet to our remembrance, so the darkness loses its terror when experience has wearied us with the glare and travail of the day. It was something, too, as they advanced in life, to feel the chains that bound him to Lucille strengthening daily, and to cherish in his overflowing heart the sweetness of increasing gratitude; it was something that he could not see years wrinkle that open brow, or dim the tenderness of that touching smile; it was something that to him she was beyond the reach of time, and preserved to the verge of a grave (which received them

both within a few days of each other) in all the bloom of her unwithering affection, in all the freshness of a heart that never could grow old!

Gertrude, who had broken in upon Trevylyan's story by a thousand anxious interruptions, and a thousand pretty apologies for interrupting, was charmed with a tale in which true love was made happy at last, although she did not forgive St. Amand his ingratitude, and although she declared, with a critical shake of the head, that "it was very unnatural that the mere beauty of Julie, or the mere want of it in Lucille, should have produced such an effect upon him, if he had ever *really* loved Lucille in his blindness."

As they passed through Malines, the town assumed an interest in Gertrude's eyes to which it scarcely of itself was entitled. She looked wistfully at the broad market-place, at a corner of which was one of those out-of-door groups of quiet and noiseless revellers, which Dutch art has raised from the Familiar to the Picturesque; and then glancing to the tower of St. Rembauld, she fancied, amidst the silence of noon, that she yet heard the plaintive cry of the blind orphan, "Fido, Fido, why hast thou deserted me?"

# CHAPTER V. ROTTERDAM.—THE CHARACTER OF THE DUTCH. —THEIR RESEMBLANCE TO

THE GERMANS.—A DISPUTE BETWEEN VANE AND TREVYLYAN, AFTER THE MANNER OF THE ANCIENT NOVELISTS, AS TO WHICH IS PREFERABLE, THE LIFE OF ACTION OR THE LIFE OF REPOSE.—TREVYLYAN'S CONTRAST BETWEEN LITERARY AMBITION AND THE AMBITION OF PUBLIC LIFE.

OUR travellers arrived at Rotterdam on a bright and sunny day. There is a cheerfulness about the operations of Commerce, —a life, a bustle, an action which always exhilarate the spirits at the first glance. Afterwards they fatigue us; we get too soon behind the scenes, and find the base and troublous passions which move the puppets and conduct the drama.

But Gertrude, in whom ill health had not destroyed the vividness of impression that belongs to the inexperienced, was delighted at the cheeriness of all around her. As she leaned lightly on Trevylyan's arm, he listened with a forgetful joy to her questions and exclamations at the stir and liveliness of a city from which was to commence their pilgrimage along the Rhine. And indeed the scene was rife with the spirit of that people at once

so active and so patient, so daring on the sea, so cautious on the land. Industry was visible everywhere; the vessels in the harbour, the crowded boat putting off to land, the throng on the quay,—all looked bustling and spoke of commerce. The city itself, on which the skies shone fairly through light and fleecy clouds, wore a cheerful aspect. The church of St. Lawrence rising above the clean, neat houses, and on one side trees thickly grouped, gayly contrasted at once the waters and the city.

"I like this place," said Gertrude's father, quietly; "it has an air of comfort."

"And an absence of grandeur," said Trevylyan.

"A commercial people are one great middle-class in their habits and train of mind," replied Vane; "and grandeur belongs to the extremes,—an impoverished population and a wealthy despot."

They went to see the statue of Erasmus, and the house in which he was born. Vane had a certain admiration for Erasmus which his companions did not share; he liked the quiet irony of the sage, and his knowledge of the world; and, besides, Vane was at that time of life when philosophers become objects of interest. At first they are teachers; secondly, friends; and it is only a few who arrive at the third stage, and find them deceivers. The Dutch are a singular people. Their literature is neglected, but it has some of the German vein in its strata,—the patience, the learning, the homely delineation, and even some traces of the mixture of the humorous and the terrible which form that

genius for the grotesque so especially German—you find this in their legends and ghost-stories. But in Holland activity destroys, in Germany indolence nourishes, romance.

They stayed a day or two at Rotterdam, and then proceeded up the Rhine to Gorcum. The banks were flat and tame, and nothing could be less impressive of its native majesty than this part of the course of the great river.

"I never felt before," whispered Gertrude, tenderly, "how much there was of consolation in your presence; for here I am at last on the Rhine,—the blue Rhine, and how disappointed I should be if you were not by my side!"

"But, my Gertrude, you must wait till we have passed Cologne, before the *glories* of the Rhine burst upon you."

"It reverses life, my child," said the moralizing Vane; "and the stream flows through dulness at first, reserving its poetry for our perseverance."

"I will not allow your doctrine," said Trevylyan, as the ambitious ardour of his native disposition stirred within him. "Life has always action; it is our own fault if it ever be dull: youth has its enterprise, manhood its schemes; and even if infirmity creep upon age, the mind, the mind still triumphs over the mortal clay, and in the quiet hermitage, among books, and from thoughts, keeps the great wheel within everlastingly in motion. No, the better class of spirits have always an antidote to the insipidity of a common career, they have ever energy at will—"

"And never happiness!" answered Vane, after a pause, as he

gazed on the proud countenance of Trevylyan, with that kind of calm, half-pitying interest which belonged to a character deeply imbued with the philosophy of a sad experience acting upon an unimpassioned heart. “And in truth, Trevylyan, it would please me if I could but teach you the folly of preferring the exercise of that energy of which you speak to the golden luxuries of REST. What ambition can ever bring an adequate reward? Not, surely, the ambition of letters, the desire of intellectual renown!”

“True,” said Trevylyan, quietly; “that dream I have long renounced; there is nothing palpable in literary fame,—it scarcely perhaps soothes the vain, it assuredly chafes the proud. In my earlier years I attempted some works which gained what the world, perhaps rightly, deemed a sufficient need of reputation; yet it was not sufficient to recompense myself for the fresh hours I had consumed, for the sacrifices of pleasure I had made. The subtle aims that had inspired me were not perceived; the thoughts that had seemed new and beautiful to me fell flat and lustreless on the soul of others. If I was approved, it was often for what I condemned myself; and I found that the trite commonplace and the false wit charmed, while the truth fatigued, and the enthusiasm revolted. For men of that genius to which I make no pretension, who have dwelt apart in the obscurity of their own thoughts, gazing upon stars that shine not for the dull sleepers of the world, it must be a keen sting to find the product of their labour confounded with a class, and to be mingled up in men’s judgment with the faults

or merits of a tribe. Every great genius must deem himself original and alone in his conceptions. It is not enough for him that these conceptions should be approved as good, unless they are admitted as inventive, if they mix him with the herd he has shunned, not separate him in fame as he has been separated in soul. Some Frenchman, the oracle of his circle, said of the poet of the 'Phedre,' 'Racine and the other imitators of Corneille;' and Racine, in his wrath, nearly forswore tragedy forever. It is in vain to tell the author that the public is the judge of his works. The author believes himself above the public, or he would never have written; and," continued Trevylyan, with enthusiasm, "he *is* above them; their fiat may crush his glory, but never his self-esteem. He stands alone and haughty amidst the wrecks of the temple he imagined he had raised 'To THE FUTURE,' and retaliates neglect with scorn. But is this, the life of scorn, a pleasurable state of existence? Is it one to be cherished? Does even the moment of fame counterbalance the years of mortification? And what is there in literary fame itself present and palpable to its heir? His work is a pebble thrown into the deep; the stir lasts for a moment, and the wave closes up, to be susceptible no more to the same impression. The circle may widen to other lands and other ages, but around *him*

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.