



LITERATURE.

A MOMENT.

'Tis the breath of a moment—which no one regardeth—
That holdeth the key to each secret of life;
'Tis a "moment" that oft our long watching rewardeth,
And calms the dark waters of sorrow and strife;
Its breath may seem nothing—and yet 'tis extending
A power the sublimist our being can know,
A moment may yield us a bliss without ending—
A moment consign us to darkness and woe!

Its circle may blush with beauty that ages
May crown as immortal, and hallow its birth;
A moment may question the wisdom of sages,
And change the whole system and science of earth.
A moment—the soul of the painter can feel it—
It thrills through his frame with a spirit-like fire;
A moment—oh! once let the gifted reveal it,
And Heaven is short of the height 't would aspire.

Go, ask of the hero when victory soundeth,
What glory a moment of time may command;
Ask the home-seeking sailor, when fast his heart boundeth,
How sweet is the moment he views his own land;
Ask the lover when whisper to whisper replieth
In accents that tremble lest lips be overheard;
And oh! they will tell you each moment that dieth
Hath crowded eternity oft in a word!

THE TWO BROTHERS.

BY MRS. WARD.

ALMOST all of us bear in our hearts the impress of some event from which we date even our first consciousness of existence; and strange it is that, while important circumstances, occurring in our riper years, leave comparatively little impression, the incidents in youth, with which our minds have little or no connection, are often fairly stereotyped on our brain, we know not how or why.

But I remember no trifling incidents. The one great event of my life cast all else into oblivion, for truly it brought an undying sorrow upon our house, and caused my heart to "wax old as doth a garment" within my boyish breast.

Even now, mother, I see at times thy fair, thy gentle, and loving face; I hear in my dreams thy low, sweet, earnest voice, echoing like mournful music; and my father, with his high, proud brow, his beautiful but rare smile, is often at my side when I am alone and pondering on old times under the shadow of dark memories.

Sometimes he comes in another guise and as I last saw him, but of that anon.

Some years ago, my mother, my father, my young brother and myself, were one morning assembled in the little oriel library at home, when the old butler brought in the letterbag. My father had taken down a book, and my mother, leaning on his shoulder, was reading some sweet passages aloud. The bag lay, till she had ceased, upon the table, and then my father, handing me the key, desired me to open it.

"Let me, let me," said Harry, and I permitted him to draw the letters forth.

I think I see my father lay his book hurriedly aside, and my mother bend anxiously over him, as he tears open one, the seal and edges of which proclaimed it the herald of death's doings. Mother! mother! how pale you look!—What despair is painted in your countenance!

Whence arose all this sorrow I knew not. At the time I was scarcely capable of comprehending the nature of it, for, although twelve years of age, I had no intimate associates but my brother. I had never seen anything of the world beyond the boundaries of the village near which we lived.

The letter announced the death of my father's first cousin and his only son; they had perished off the Isle of Wight while bathing. The father it was supposed in his endeavours to save his son, had failed in the rescue, and was sacrificed himself. My father was now, therefore, the Earl of Wallingford. He did not announce it to us, but I gathered it from his conversation with my mother. I heard him bitterly regretting it; I saw her sit with her hands rigidly clasped in agony before her; I saw her lips turn pale, her eyes close, and then she fell heavily down at her husband's feet. I can remember his telling us to leave the room and send in old Wilnot and his daughter, my mother's maid. My brother and I went out upon the sunny lawn to play. He, rejoicing in the beauty of the day soon forgot the scene we had witnessed, and called to me to join him in his gambols, while I, half puzzled at my father's and mother's distress, sat down under the shadows of some limes, heeding him not. His merry laugh, his bounding step, however, were checked by Wilnot coming to us, and bidding us go round to the back of the house, where my mother could not hear our voices.

Where my mother could not hear our voices! She, whose life had seemed to depend on our lightest look or word; who had been children—tenderly—but still children by my father, for her reluctance in allowing us to spend our

mornings at Dr. Mitford's, the good rector, for the purpose of receiving his instructions!

The peaceful period of my life was over; the next scene enacted in the drama of that life was a tragical one. My father, leaving my mother to the care of Wilnot and his daughter, was observed to dart through the open window of the oriel without his hat. My mother after a long swoon was borne to her bed, and when I next saw her she was a widow. My father had himself sought a watery grave in the small lake in the grounds at M—. I can remember the silence of the house, the whispers of the servants on the staircase, in the lobbies, and empty rooms, and Wilnot forbidding us to leave the house, especially desiring us not to approach the lodge.

I—spoiled boy as I was—I disobeyed him. In the dusk of the summer's evening I crept out of the very window through which my unhappy father had last passed alive, and making my way under cover of the shrubs that fringed the sloping lawn, I hurried to the lodge. Wilnot's caution against going there convinced me that my father had been carried thither, instead of being brought home, as we were informed by the servants he had been. There were lights streaming through the closed shutters of one window. I climbed over the little pailing near it, and looked through a crevice into the apartment. Was it a vision that met my eyes? Unaccustomed as they were to aught but the beautiful in this world, I could scarcely bear to look on what I saw. Was I in a dream? What was that cloud of white stretched forth upon two common deal tables placed together? There was the outline of a human form, there was a sound of lamentation in the narrow room, the lodgekeeper's wife mourning the dead thing laid there in its shroud.

Wilnot himself was there arranging sconces round the dull walls, and the number of chairs placed uniformly together, gave me some idea of an inquest having been held there. My first impulse was to call Wilnot, but my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth. I lingered long, spell bound; and when I had seen the little room lighted, I was about to retrace my steps, when I saw Wilnot raise the white covering from the corpse.

I remember but my father's dead face, livid, yet so little distorted as to bear the appearance of being in a deep sleep; then a choking sensation in the throat arrested the scream on its passage from my heart to my lips; and all was blank till I found myself on a sofa in my mother's bed-room. In spite of all her agony at my father's loss, she had missed me. She would have me brought to her. My young brother was there too. Worn out with his bewildered sorrow, his toys lay idly scattered about the room, and he, with his arm stretched across me, his long curls sweeping my cold clammy face, lay fast asleep beside me. In that chamber of anguish and desolation he seemed the only link between heaven and my mother, for what was I to her now but a heavy curse!

She—poor, pale, haggard creature—was sitting up in her bed watching us. The good rector, Doctor Mitford, sat by her with the Book of Comfort before him. Still she looked distracted. All at once she broke into a passion of tears, and, weeping long and bitterly, became calmer at last, relieved by this natural burst of anguish. It awoke my young brother, who, flying to her, mingled his tears with hers. Weak as I was, scarcely certain of where I was, I insisted on rising; and ere the sun set that night Doctor Mitford explained to my brother and myself, as tenderly as he could, the cause of the late terrible event.

I, the elder, was an outcast on the world with scarce any provision. I was a natural son! My young brother was the heir to title, fortune, honors, power, and the distinction of a high name. I had no prospects. I, the first born, was a curse to myself, my mother, and my self-murdered father. My young brother Harry, was Earl of Wallingford, while I *****

I can remember when my brother was able to comprehend that he was rich and noble, and "that I was something despicable"—for he soon gathered all this—that he was very unhappy. He who had never been separated from me, who had been taught to respect my opinions even in our plays as an elder brother's right—he, whose lessons had been lightened by my sharing them, whose pleasures had been mine, and who had been accustomed to no other companion, could not bear to be thus elevated while I was undeservedly cast down.

I, meanwhile, would not approach my mother. Something of sullenness there was in my temperament on the evening succeeding Dr. Mitford's disclosure, as I sat at the oriel window looking out upon the lawn where I had spent so many unclouded hours. My father's funeral was to take place on the following day. The verdict had been brought in "temporary insanity." God knows it was a correct one, for my unhappy father's brain must have been bewildered with the agony of despair when the consequences of sin burst upon him and my wretched mother.

It were a long story to dwell on her early history. Married young to a man whose savage disposition drove her into the arms of my fine-tempered father, whose elegance of taste and refinement of feeling were strange contrasts to the overbearing tyrant of her home, she had, in a moment of misery, when a blow from her brutal husband shattered the last slender links of duty and propriety into atoms, yielded to my father's passionate entreaties that she would fly with him. Before a divorce could be obtained, and a marriage effected, I was borne. They were united on the death of my mother's husband, and before the birth of my second brother; and as my father had the disposal of his own property, my position, as an illegitimate son, would perhaps never have been made known to me but for the event which gave my father the title and entailed estates of the Earldom of Wallingford.

There sat I then looking out upon the fair face of nature. The peace of the scene before me ill accorded with the turmoil raging at my heart; but some trifling circumstances—the sight of a pointer my father had been fond of, and an old hunter who had been permitted to spend his last days in peaceful idleness—upset me. The groom was taking them past the window, away from the neighbourhood of the lawn, fearing my mother should see them. At sight of the familiar objects a shower of tears relieved

me, and long after I had ceased to cry bitterly the tears still trickled silently down my cheeks. I know not how long I sat there, but I was roused from my sorrowful reverie by perceiving my young brother at my side.

"See," said he, "I have brought you the new fishing-rod Dr. Mitford gave me on my birth-day. You admired it so much that I am sure you will think it worth having! and I have filled my writing-desk, which is newer than yours, with pens and paper and sealing wax, and here it is for you, and my drawing box. You shall have everything of mine, I will give all to you that I can. Brother! dear brother Edward! do not turn away your head, as if you were angry. You cannot think how unhappy I am; this title, they talk so much about, makes me wretched. How can that give me pleasure which has been the cause of my father's death and my mother's misery? Brother Edward," said the boy, looking up as if silently appealing to heaven as a witness of his vow, "I never will be Lord Wallingford as long as you live and are nameless. No one can make me take up the title. I have asked Dr. Mitford all about it; he won't give me any advice at present, but tells me not to decide too hastily. I never shall change my resolution, unless—and who knows but it may be so?—unless you gain a title for yourself?"

Poor child!—little he knew of the worldly price set on such banbles. I answered him by flinging my arms round his neck, and Dr. Mitford found us mingling our tears together. Ah! from what a pure and consecrated fountain did those tears spring! My mother, too ill to bear the least excitement, never mentioned the subject, though we now saw her every day. A settled melancholy had succeeded the first paroxysms of despair.

My resolution was formed before my father's funeral was over. My only companion, besides my brother, had been a midshipman, a relation of Dr. Mitford. I determined on leaving home, and striving to carve out an honourable career for myself. I became at once a man in thought and deed. My brother's docile disposition resembled my mother's; mine had more of my father's sterner metal in it. He was brave, though his last act was one little indicative of it—but then the cause—the disgrace, not of himself, but of his wife and his first-born! What marvel that he wanted courage to stand by and witness that!

Never can I forget the last hour spent as a boy, under the roof to which I had been accustomed from my infancy. My brother and I had always occupied the same room; our little beds stood side by side, with the pictures of our parents hanging between them. Worn out with the sorrows of the past week, Harry had gone to rest before his usual time. He was sleeping peacefully, though a tear lay on his cheek. There lay the Earl of Wallingford—my younger brother!—while I, scarcely knowing by what name to call myself, looked up at my father's and my mother's pictures with mingled feelings of pity and reproach. I had packed up a few clothes by degrees, and poor Harry's gift of the drawing-box (the smallest article) among them. I had resolved on getting to sea under the patronymic of Fitz-Edward. It was the only one to which I felt I had any right.

I pass over the last "good night!" exchanged between my mother and myself. A note found on my pillow, after my departure, explained all. It was in these words—"Rest assured, mother, that I will strive to be an honour to you yet. I leave you in the hope that I have chosen my own path, my beloved brother will assume his rights. Mother and brother, God bless you! Farewell!"

I lingered by my brother's side; he was in deep repose. I knelt down by his bed, and implored God's blessings on his innocent head. Ah! now, as I refer to the past, I feel I can remember the long kiss imprinted on his smooth young brow. I remember, too, sitting down and scanning every nook and corner of our little chamber, and wondering if I should ever see them or Harry again—and gazed long on his beautiful face, his free limbs, his bared arm, flung over his head, radiant with its golden curls—his child-like smile parting his bright lips, the sound of his breathing in his calm sleep; while I, little older than himself, was already old in irremediable sorrow and disgrace.

At eight o'clock the next night, I, who had been so tenderly nurtured, found myself in the coffee-room of a common inn in London, drenched to the skin. I had five pounds in my pocket, and knew not whither to turn for advice or assistance. I had made my way up to town by a coach, on the top of which I had with difficulty obtained a seat, when I was some miles from home. The morning after my arrival I removed to other quarters, fearing my mother would send in search of me in those inns where the coaches from our country put up.

"God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." Fortune favored me by throwing me in the way of Capt. Melton, who had frequently dined at my father's, and whose son was the midshipman I have alluded to. Knowing him well as a man of kindness, generosity, and honour, I at once told him all the circumstances that had led me to my present forlorn situation. He took me himself to one of the lords of the admiralty, Lord Islington, and bade me tell my own story. The nobleman's lip twitched nervously, and his eye dimmed at my narration. When he had heard me out, he gave me over to the care of Capt. Melton, who had just got the command of a frigate. As I left him, the old lord laid his hand upon my head, and blessed me with a solemn voice and an expression of pity. I never forgot that.

Opportunities offered for my distinguishing myself.—Our ship was on the African station. Death and disease among my shipmates gave me, in a short space of time, my promotion. The old lord bore me ever in his mind. My rise to a lieutenant was a complete puzzle to those who did not know my history, and shortly afterwards I was removed from the frigate Capt. Melton had commanded—for he was now an admiral—to the flag-ship on the Cape station. It was not long before I was placed in command of a brig of war, and sent to the western side of Africa.

It were ill-done to recite my "perils by sea and land" on and off that coast, "the grave of Europeans." Despair had made me brave. The resolution to "do or die" was indomitable. My officers and men were, in verity, the