



LITERATURE.

YOUTH AND AGE.

From the "Etonian," a periodical commenced some twenty years since, by the youth of Eton College, England.

I often think each tottering form
That limps along in life's decline,
Once bore a heart as young, as warm,
As full of idol thoughts as mine;
And each has had its dream of joy,
His own unequalled, pure romance;
Commencing when the blushing boy
First thrill'd at lovely woman's glance.

And each—could tell his tale of youth,
Would think its scenes of love evince
More passion, more unearthly truth,
Than any tale before or since.
Yes! they could tell of tender lays,
At midnight penned in classic shades,
Of days more bright than modern days—
And maids more fair than modern maids.

Of whispers in a willing ear,
Of kisses on a blushing cheek,
Each kiss, each whisper, far too dear,
For modern lips to give or speak;
Of passions too intimately crossed;
Or passions slighted or betrayed—
Of kindred spirits early lost,
And buds that blossom but to fade.

Of beaming eyes and tresses gay,
Elastic form and noble brow,
And forms that all have passed away,
And left them what we see them now.
And is it thus—is human love,
So very light and frail a thing?
And must youth's brightest visions more
Forever on Time's restless wing?

Must all the eyes that still are bright,
And all the lips that talk of bliss,
And all the forms so fair to sight,
Hereafter only come to this;
Then what are earth's best visions worth,
If we at length must lose them thus?
If all we value most on earth
Ere long must fade away from us?

MARY OF ELTHAM.

EARLY in the month of June, 1610, the attention of several of the inhabitants of the quiet village of Eltham was fixed in rather a marked manner on three strangers, who were observed wandering up and down the place as if disposed to tarry there, yet making enquiry for no one.—That they had business did not appear; but it was impossible to look upon them and suppose that the object of their coming was pleasure.

One was an aged man, whose dress at once indicated poverty and negligence. His white neglected hair waved in the breeze round his care-worn face. He was covered with dust, as were his companions; and any casual observer would have judged that they had performed a long pedestrian journey, yet still the usual indications of fatigue were not visible in any of the three. The old man plodded on absorbed in thought, and careless how much further he advanced, or to what annoyance he was subjected. A sort of dogged indifference was expressed in his countenance, as if he held life and suffering to be identical; and that for the short time he could retain the former, it mattered little how much he might know of the latter.

The female who hung on his arm, and had nearly counted as many years as himself, had evidently suffered from the effort she had made, but still was not disposed to rest. She frequently turned round with an air of wild animation, which, to a superficial observer, might seem to betray apprehension of pursuit. A more careful scrutiny would have satisfied the bystander that her enquiring looks were not to satisfy herself that she was in no immediate danger, but rather to seek for something she had lost, though she might have no hope of recovering that, whatever it might be, which occupied her thoughts. It was, in fact, a movement of nervous excitement which caused every now and then a throbbing start. Her eyes were glassy, but no tears fell from them. The ordinary sluices of sorrow seemed to have been exhausted, but ever and anon the exclamation "*Mon fils—mon garçon—Ah! mon pauvre François,*" burst from her white and quivering lips.

A young man of good exterior accompanied them. His face was sun-burnt, and but for the deep dejection which sat upon it, would have been pronounced to be handsome. Melancholy had on him done the work of time, and furrows unnatural to five-and-twenty, indented his countenance, and imparted to it a gloomy determination which almost shocked the beholder. He advanced with a firm but solemn step, alternately regarding his companions with anxious care and tenderness. He sometimes applied

himself to soothe the female, and repeatedly admonished her to subdue, or at all events to moderate the expression of her grief.

They appeared to have come from the coast, and had nearly passed through the village when they reached the lane which leads to the ancient palace. It was not then the ruinous barn it has since become, and when the travellers saw its noble proportions and its magnificent grounds, they shrunk from the spectacle of unlooked-for grandeur, as if it revived most painful recollections. The female started, and threw her eyes around with more wildness than before; her venerable companion made a sudden halt; and the young man, eager to retrace his steps, remarked to them that they had mistaken their road.

"What might you be looking for?" enquired a farmer who had been observing the strangers for some time.—"What place do you want to go to?"

"We do not know one of the inhabitants," replied the young man in a foreign accent. "We are strangers."

"I know that monseer, but I thought you might have been directed to some house or inn here. That was the reason I asked, I hope no offence."

The young man courteously intimated that he considered the enquiry had been kindly made. The old folks looked on, apparently at a loss to comprehend what was passing.

The farmer was walking away, when it seemed to strike the foreigner, that he might obtain from him information that would be of value to his companions.

"Stay sir, you are very kind," he said, "and perhaps you will tell me, can I find for two or three days, a hotel, or part of a dwelling?"

"Do you mean at an inn?"

"An inn—inn," he repeated, as if he hardly understood the word, then suddenly recollecting himself, and comprehending what was meant, he added—"It is not that *exactement*, exactly. My parents are not well, and do not like the noise—the noise of a public establishment. Can they have no choice?"

"Why the truth is, here in Eltham we are rather shy of foreigners, some queer people come this way at times."

"No doubt," said the Frenchman. "Such is the case in all the world. Well, we must go where we can."

"Could not you, father, spare a room or two for a few days?" enquired Mary Brown, his daughter, who had come up in time to hear the latter part of their conversation. Mary was a fine rosy-faced girl, and a strong expression of sympathy sat on her good-natured countenance, while she looked at the pale, worn, dejected old man, and the nervous, disordered companion of his journeyings.

"Why as to that, I don't do anything of the kind in a common way," he replied.

"But these are wanderers who have lost their way."

"Perhaps the best thing we can do, is to put them in their right road." "First resting them," said Mary.

"We are not without the means of paying any reasonable charges," said the foreigner, "if the accommodation we want can be obtained."

Though farmer Brown was not particularly sordid, there is something so interesting in words which convey a promise to pay, that they make their way to the understanding of the most obtuse, to the heart of the most callous, and on his ear they were not lost.

"Why there are two rooms to be sure, such as they be, for sleeping, if that will do, and for meals they may sit down with us if they like it."

The Frenchman was gratified at hearing that his parents would be allowed to repose themselves in a private residence, and the farmer, the more he thought of it, felt less reluctant to meet his wishes. Such being the case, the negotiation went on successfully, and soon came to a prosperous issue. The old folks were now informed by their companion, of what had been decided upon. The father made no reply, but seemed to assent with perfect indifference; the mother was slow to comprehend the arrangement announced, and the son perceiving this, was obliged to tell the story a second time. He paused for a reply. She looked steadfastly at him, shook her head, and softly breathed with a deep sigh her former exclamation: "*Mon pauvre François.*"

They were conducted by the farmer and his daughter to their dwelling. It was a humble, thatched residence, but sufficiently capacious to accommodate comfortably his own family, and the guests so unexpectedly introduced. The new comers were not particular about their fare, and shewed themselves, in no respect, other than satisfied. But to the farmer there was something in the aspect or deportment of each of the new inmates, which he could not understand. On the first night too, he was for a time under an apprehension that a fire had broken out in the chamber, where the father and mother went to sleep. He heard a loud scream from the female, and then the voices of her husband and son were raised to soothe and silence her, but without success, till she had more than once ejaculated as before, "*Mon pauvre François.*"

The strangers were punctual in their payments, and respectful in their carriage. When eight days were past, they did not propose to withdraw. To the farmer this was rather a gratifying circumstance, but still it was alloyed by doubts which arose in his mind, as to the quality of his lodgers. Nor did these abate when they had lengthened their stay by a fortnight. The men were sad and silent, save when they were engaged in calming the transports of their fellow mourner, who, restless, and wretched, whether sitting or standing, reclining on her bed, or walking in the garden or the village, continued for all answer to whatever was addressed to her, to breathe most piteously the pensive exclamation: "*Mon pauvre François.*"

Her companions would lead her to the neighbouring meadows, and try to direct her attention to the gay foliage, and verdant crops now waving around them, but to her the beauties of nature had lost all their charms. The bright sun, the cloudless sky, the clear stream, could not for a moment cheer the pallid sufferer. A moss-rose was presented to her by Mary. She looked at it as if to her eye, it wore the appearance of an object once known—once loved, but of which she no longer comprehended the value. Mechanically she inhaled its fragrance, but could

not appreciate it, and it was heedlessly resigned with the exclamation: "*Mon pauvre François.*"

But sometimes, from heavy musing listlessness, she would start on a sudden in all the wildness of ungovernable emotions, her eyes would glare with the fury of a tigress, and fearful maledictions would fall from her tongue.

Charles Gamaches, a French Curé, had about two years before, taken up his abode at farmer Brown's for a whole summer. Mary, then a fine child, had attracted his notice, and he had taught her something of the French language. She could understand many of the words which fell from Madame Rossiter, for that was the name by which they knew their mysterious inmate, and these were awful in the extreme. She evidently, from all Mary could collect, had her mind occupied with the torments of another world, and furies, fiends, fire and brimstone, were most familiar to her imagination, in these waking dreams, coupled with frantic adjurations, and vehement denunciations of those she seemed to behold. But all her rage uniformly subsided into despondency, and she evermore finished with: "*Mon pauvre François.*"

In most country villages, the gossiping residents, however full their hands may be with their own affairs, attend very closely to those of other people who may chance to come among them. So it was with the neighbours of farmer Brown. Who was M. Rossiter the elder? who was M. Rossiter the younger? and who was Madame Rossiter? Where did they come from, and what induced them to remain in Eltham? They had no relations there—they expected none, and they had no business engagements to detain them. It was further remarked that nobody visited them, no one corresponded with them, and they sought the acquaintance of no one. Hence it was whispered that concealment—concealment alone must be their object.

This was in fact admitted by the younger Rossiter. He would occasionally retain his seat at the farmer's table when the friends of the latter dropped in, and once when some of these spoke of the gossips of London and wondered that he, a foreigner, did not journey thither to participate in them, he answered with a sigh that for him such scenes could yield no enjoyment. He desired not to be exposed to the public gaze, and young as he was, had no wish but to be buried alive in some such sequestered retreat as that.

"Perhaps," said Mary, "ere long you will grow weary of the sameness."

"I think not," said he, "as I feel no wish for variety. To rest in peace here till I am called to another state of being, is all I could pray for."

"That," Master Wilkins, a person recently from London, remarked, "is marvellous to me. What is life without animated pleasure? That youth should prefer dull seclusion to joyous meetings of merry faces, amazes.—Where age is soured by disappointment, this may be expected, but otherwise methinks none could so choose but under circumstances wholly out of the common way?"

"What circumstances," asked the Frenchman, "would you judge likely to make such a choice rational?"

"Why I should say a sense of danger from going about in public. Guy Fawkes now, or Digby, could they have made their way here, might have been well disposed to sojourn in Eltham for many a long day."

Though the young Rossiter had a good knowledge of English, and rapidly improved in speaking as well as understanding it in conversation, the names just mentioned were so pronounced, that he did not recollect to have ever heard them before, and he asked, who the parties were, and what their condition who were supposed to be capable of enduring Eltham.

"Marry," replied Wilkins, "and is it so soon that our great Powder Plot is forgotten? What! have you not heard how Guy and his friends wanted to blow up King and Parliament with gunpowder? You should have been in London then, my master, that was the time for sights."

"What sights?" enquired Rossiter, "could grow out of what you name?"

"What sights? Why the grand doings in the Palace-Yard. O that was rare work. The racking."

"The racking!" exclaimed Rossiter. "I understand you not, you spoke of grand sights."

"Aye so they were deemed, to see so many properly-made men, and in goodly attire, go to their arraignment, some of them taking their tobacco as though hanging were to them little else than pastime."

"Or as if they looked for acquittal and enlargement?"

"And if they did look for enlargement, they looked in vain. Some were taken to Paul's and had their deserts on the Thursday, as those reserved for Palace-Yard, surely got their's on the day following, Friday being no bad day for finishing a work, whatever it may be accounted for the beginning of one. The preparation and pageantry for the trial, and just punishment of these horrible conspirators, furnished many memorable spectacles and grand sights. And were they not grand sights? The racking to be sure was not as of right it ought to have been, open to the public but were the hangings, and the embowellings nothing?" Rossiter shuddered.

"Then the quartering!"

"The quartering!" exclaimed the foreigner with a start, at the same time fixing a steadfast and severely scrutinizing eye on the speaker.

"Aye monseer," Wilkins proceeded, "the quartering. You look surprised. I suppose you don't know what that is. Well, as you are a stranger I will describe it. You see they bring four horses—"

"I understand. You need tell no more. I remember all." "They bring four horses, I was saying. I was present myself, and stood on a small stool, which by the way, cost me two-pence, in St. Margaret's Church-yard, close to Westminster Abbey. Truly it is a grand sight, when a rascal Papist has tried to kill an English king to please the Pope." Rossiter rose from his seat.

"They put the horses, one to each limb, and then you would have liked to see it."

"No more," exclaimed the Frenchman, and he staggered across the room, breathless and trembling in every joint.

[To be continued.]