

## LITERATURE, &amp;c.

## MY LAST PUPIL.

BY A. PICKEN, AUTHOR OF THE 'DOMINIE'S LEGACY.'

It was before I became a real gentleman and independent portioner of Balgownie Brae, in the west of Scotland, and when I was nothing but an obscure Dominie (although a licensed minister of the kirk of Scotland,) and earning my bit of bread by communicating the rudiments of that learning, which never was the making of my own fortune, to young men for the making of theirs, that the first part of my experience was obtained in the ways of this wicked world.

At that time, the obtaining of a good and respectable pupil who could pay the school wages punctually at the quarter's end—or even the half year—was, as may be supposed always a pleasant and comforting event to me; and I not only laboured diligently to prepare the minds of my young friends for the mighty world, with whose they were one day destined to grapple—but it was my way to follow them, after I had dispensed them from my hands, with eyes of interest and affection, wherever I could trace them throughout the various prosperities and adversities which it is the lot of man to encounter on this side of time. If I were to tell all the stories that I could narrate of my pupils—and how the world tossed them to and fro, during my own life—and how some of them became good, and some declined into evil, notwithstanding all the godly precepts that I delivered to them—the world would be much instructed thereby. But as the world cares little for instruction, but only for pleasure and amusement, I will withhold them all, excepting only the history of my last pupil; in whose fate, indeed, it is quite likely that no one will take half so much interest as myself.

Well—one long afternoon when my head was quite moidered with the weary din of the school, I was so confused and stupefied, that I never so much as heard the noise of a carriage, which, with prancing horses and a real postilion, actually stopped at my poor door. Down went the steps with a clatter that made all my scholars run to the windows in spite of my utmost authority, and out came a fine lady and an elderly gentleman; and after them a smart lad hopped from the coach, whom native sagacity at once led me to apprehend to be my own trusted pupil.

The preliminaries were settled between the parents and myself in five minutes after we had been all convened in my best apartment. But, with the mere pounds and particulars, my business was not quite ended; and I began to look in the face of the pupil and of those who accompanied him. I was not so ignorant of this world's vanity as not to know that there must have been some other reason besides the fame of my character and qualifications that should bring such grand people to my country domicile. My surmise was justified by further appearances. There is something painful to the eye in all incongruities. The lady was not yet more than five and twenty, and I scarce ever had seen a prettier woman. The gentleman bordered on fifty, but his look indicated a mixture of sensuality, Scottish greed, good-nature, and imbecility. Yet though the lady was pretty, even to fascination I could not say that she commended herself wholly to my approval. I knew not then whether it were natural levity, or a sort of broken-hearted recklessness, that influenced her, as if from the habitual consciousness of having thrown away, by one act all life's happiness, and most of its virtue: but the manner in which she handed over her child to my care, though affectionate to extravagance, was not such as I should expect from a staid and sensible parent. With all this, there was, even about the carriage of the lady's habiliments, something that bespoke the motives which had chiefly brought them to my obscure seminary, and that without indicating what ought to have accompanied them. As for the boy, Henry, I was not wrong in judging him to be the best of the group. He was pretty as his mother, and more manly than his father—what need I dwell on particulars? he became my pride, and the pride of my school.

How I instructed my dear and interesting pupil, Henry Fairly, for the several years that he sojourned in my humble dwelling, and how I taught him all manner of heathen learning—as is the fashion—and delivered to him many counsels regarding the affairs of the world into which he was about to enter as is *not* the fashion—and how I talked with him in the field and by the way of all that men should aim at in the perplexities of this world, and all that they should eschew in the midst of its temptation, and how the thoughtful youth hung upon my words and reciprocated my inferences—it is not for me with any boasting to detail. But before he had quite finished his time with me, behold a letter came hastily to my hands ordering him home with all speed, for that all things there were in great disorder, and his mother in a dying state. I saw that the

time was now come when he was to go forth, into the world, being the real prop and hope of his family, and that all my counsels were to be put to the proof. What need I tell how we parted, or with what blessings I blessed him at the little green end before my door? My pupils have always been to me the promised seed of my pains-taking and my purposes, and even, I may say, of the wishes of my heart—albeit, that I ne'er had a child of my own.

It did not fall in my way to learn aught authentically of Henry Fairly for some considerable time. At length I journeyed to the city where he had gone to live, but the house to which I had been directed was all shut up and altered. I could hear nothing regarding him such as I wanted to know, and just as I was stepping into the coach to leave the town, a broken-down-looking man, in deep mourning, passed me, leading two pale girls in the same sombre dress, the former of whom I scarcely recognized as the gentleman, who, with a beautiful young wife by his side had visited me in his own carriage not five years before. What had happened to cut off so light-hearted a creature, I knew not; but she was now above a year dead: every thing had gone wrong—yet in the meantime, Henry Fairly, from the abilities he had shown, had been sent out a midshipman in a king's ship to bring home a fortune for his father and sisters.

Time still passed on, and nought was heard of Henry or his ship, nor did the world take any notice of the sorrows of his eldest sister Eliza, who silently bore the weight of her father's afflictions and her own, as she mourned the absence of the hope and prop of the family at the desolate fire-side. But the truth soon came out; for, it being then war-time, while men were slaughtering each other abroad and rejoicing for it at home, Henry Fairly's ship had been taken on the high seas, and he was then lying in a French prison.

I now heard something more of the history of this unfortunate family. Henry's mother was the daughter of a man of good family, and, when she first came to this part of the country, was counted one of the prettiest women that had ever stepped on Scottish ground. Being instructed, as most daughters are, that to obtain a rich husband is to obtain everything, she consented to become the wife of Mr. Fairly; and he, with corresponding folly, imagining that the sweet notes of love nay, at any time, be sung by a golden bird, and that congenial happiness may be bargained for, and bought by the mammon of unrighteousness, threw his long-saved gains into the lap of beauty, and dissipated his fortune without a day's satisfaction. Domestic dispeace, evil report, and jealousy, complete the tale—family ruin, broken-down feelings, and premature death, complete the tragedy.

But the family were to be renovated and raised up by the energy and abilities of young Henry. At least, so said many—and I said it too, in the simplicity of my heart, until I began to bethink me of what materials the world was made—although I could not deny, but that blocks may be cut with razors, by that long perseverance which blunts away the instrument, until its original character is lost and gone. And so I heard with joy that Henry had come home, and was already with his orphan sisters, in the old fashioned borough of Netherton. With haste and pleasure I arose, and went forth to see him after all his adventures; for the message I had received was mysterious and unsatisfactory.

When I arrived at the door of the solitary house in which his father now dwelt, my admission within was not less invested with a silent and ominous mystery. At length I was permitted entrance into a dark back apartment, where sat Henry's father, having a small stoup of liquor before him, and apparently tipping by himself, with the maudlin enjoyment of that imbecile sort of misery, which, too far gone for common energy seeks with infantile eagerness this wretched relief from its own thoughts. The smile of pleasure—as if insensible to his own degradation—with which this ruin of a man recognized me, was to me more shocking than the most intense expression of despair; as I contrasted it with the wan look of frigid melancholy which sat upon the countenance of the tallest of the growing girls, who covered by themselves in a corner near the window.

'Where is Henry?' I inquired in anxious disappointment.

No answer was given me for a moment; and the father looked at the daughter as if each wished the other to answer the question—while I now heard distinctly a foot go tramp tramp on the floor over our heads.

'Take a glass with me,' said Mr. Fairly—pushing, with a silly expression, a glass towards me; 'and we will talk of Henry afterwards.'

'Is he not here? Where is he?'—said I, refusing the liquor.

'My father does not like to speak of poor Henry'—said the eldest girl—and silence again allowed the

same tramp tramp to sound with painful monotony over our heads.

'No—there are many things that your father does not like to speak of, my poor child,' said the old man, his look of joyous excitement subsiding into pathetic sadness, as he looked upon his daughter and was reminded of his wife.

'For God's sake, inform me,' said I, 'who that is, that keeps walking about above us in this strange manner.'

The eldest girl now arose, and, with a look of broken-hearted melancholy led the way upstairs. Heavens! what I felt, when the door was opened, and Henry Fairly, my clever and handsome former pupil stood before me. He fixed his hollow death-like eyes upon me for a moment, and without uttering a word threw himself into my arms.

'What this—Henry?' said I. 'Why that changed, that ominous look? Why remain by yourself in this solitary apartment? Why this appearance of affecting desolation?'

'Desolation, indeed! my dear, my more than father,' said the youth. 'Little did I think, when I went a hopeful boy to sea, that my career was so soon to terminate. But yet I am resigned—I am almost happy—if I could only hope that when I was gone, God would provide a protector for my poor orphan sisters.'

I soon learned the whole truth—that, in the cold damps of the French prison, where my spirited Henry had lain a whole winter, he had caught a terrible inward disease, that had been slowly eating into his frame; that the only relief he had from his pain was by constantly keeping on his feet, as long as his strength sustained him; and that, in short, in a desolate home, and with all his earthly hopes blasted, the poor youth was fast walking to his death. I do not remember of ever having met with a severer trial of my feelings, than what was presented to me at this painful moment. The very sense and manliness with which the youth spoke—of the unfortunate end of all his hopes for the renovating of his family, of the state in which he should be forced to leave his beloved sisters, and of his sad, sad feelings, on his return home, on finding his father not only reduced to poverty, but his mind so perfectly broken up, as to be unable to protect his own children—while I looked upon it with pride as evidencing, that the good seed I had sown in his mind was not sown to the winds, affected me the more deeply for his melancholy situation.

'And why do you not go below, Henry,' I said, 'instead of wearing out your solitary hours in this naked apartment?'

'My father cannot bear to see me, sir,' he said, 'for I remind him so much of my mother that's gone; and I would not vex my unhappy parent for the few days I have to live—and so I just walk here in this lonely room—and sometimes I almost think that my own sisters neglect me. But grief, you know, sir, is indolent, and I will bear up as I can—for the girls will have enough to suffer when I am dead.'

There was something awful in the manliness of this resignation, as in the terrible expression of mortality contending with warm-blooded youth, that appeared in the sunken face of my dying pupil; and as he ever and anon pressed my hand, and thanked me for my former instruction, which, as he said, placed earth and heaven in its true light before him. But when I came to say something of his diseased mother, he grasped my arm almost to pain, and said—'My friend! my more than father!—if ever you would do that good in your generation which I shall never live to do—raise your voice whenever you can, concerning the miseries that are caused by unequal marriages for filthy lucre's sake. My mother was fitted to adorn the world—my father was a wise and a worthy man with his class. You know what has happened—yet you know but in part, for the world will never know, as it ought, what miseries the folly of parents entail upon their children!'

Why need I tell what followed between myself and Henry—or with what distress we parted, never to meet in life—or how I prayed over his still beautiful remains, when, on coming next to Netherton, I found him a stretched corpse—or how his father was hardly able to attend him to the grave?—What shall I add more? the old man is dead, and the orphans, beautiful as their mother, are little minded by any, except myself—for it is not the way of the world to care for the unfortunate.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF LONDON.—The British capital has been called a province covered with houses; the chief causeway of the world; the great estuary of the tide of human existence; the empress of all cities, with whose same the nations "ring from side to side;" the Babylon of the west, which in wealth and population may claim precedence of contemporary realms. There is but one London; and, take it for all in all, it is at this day a more interesting object of contempla-