

full of tears. I expressed a fear that I was intruding,—he turned and looked upon me with a thoughtful glance, as if he would read my heart,—whether it was my manner or my countenance that reassured him, I knew not, but he replied courteously and did not, as I feared he might have done, move away.

Upon this monument there is a group of Statuary representing the fates, the figures a little larger than life (as it is commonly seen in the female form) and very finely imagined. Clotho and Atropos have a fearful sublimity of aspect. The foot of Clotho is resting on a skull, and presses upon it firmly as on a foot-stool. Her hair in thick braids sits close to the face, and meets beneath the chin. A fillet is bound about her head; the expression of the countenance is solemn and cold; with a calm action she winds off the thread of human life. By her side is Atropos, over whose whole figure and face the sculptor has thrown a rugged and severe indifference. Her hair is loose, massive and snaky in its folds,—in a masculine and careless attitude, she holds the fatal scissors, ready to clip the thread of life,—impassive, merciless,—though it should be twined with youth or love, or worth or fame, or brightest hopes or best affections. Upon these two figures the genius of Roubiliac seems to have exhausted itself,—for that of Lachesis is detached, the attitude unmeaning, the countenance inexpressive, nor does it aid the fancy of the spectator.

I gazed for some time with intense interest, upon the horrid form of Atropos, while my mind was busied by natural associations, with painful recollections, and gloomy thoughts. I turned suddenly to the stranger, to break these dark reflections by the sound of my own voice: when the paleness of his face, and the dew upon his forehead alarmed me with the fear that he was about to faint. I caught him by the arm, and he sank down upon his knees,—and lifting up his face with closed eyes, upon the lashes of which tears quivered, he asked me if I did not know him, and if I could bear to look upon and speak to him.

‘The earth does not contain,’ said I, ‘a single being, upon whom I dare disdain to look, or to whom I could not desire to speak with charity; but, to one, whom I found engaged as you were, when I entered, and from whose lips I heard the hymn you have just ended, I would speak at once as to a brother in the best of bonds.’ ‘Alas! replied the stranger—but I am not a Christian,—I am without that hope; yet it is a mournful pastime to me to repeat that lovely song. I do it often,—constantly; it operates like a lullaby to my tossed mind, as a mere opiate; and while I listen to my own mournful voice, I am tranquilized, and pleased, and forget that I am—a murderer!’

‘I certainly started—I was for a short moment struck mute; till, as I looked upon his sad penitent form—he had fallen upon his knees—I intreated him to rise, and come into the open air, that he might recover himself. I helped to raise him up, saying ‘you cannot be a mere murderer: whatever you have done, I look upon you more in pity than in anger. Confession of your offence is a duty, it is the only reparation, which you can make to the broken laws of man. To the violated law of a High Power you can make none: but there is yet room for repentance.’ He slowly rose, and I led him out, and seated him on a tomb in the shade. ‘No,’ said he, ‘I am no common murderer—for it was mine own familiar friend that I slew; and though the law of Heaven was broken, those laws called the laws of honour were not; and I am free, and have been these twenty years.’

‘Misery travels free
Through the whole earth.’

‘I understand you,’ I replied, ‘it was in a Duel that you killed your friend.’ ‘Even so,’ he answered, ‘you shall hear my story—if you are a sorrowful man I shall make your sorrow light by comparison, if you are happy, it will acquaint you with grave sad thoughts, which it may not harm you to entertain.’

‘Arthur Hill and myself were school-fellows—friends, we lived in the same county, within a few miles of each other; and our intimacy sprang up from our travelling to and fro to school in the same chaise: moreover, we were of like age, like taste, and read in the same class,—we were both younger sons, and though receiving a general education, were both designed for the army. Hill in compliance with his own choice, and I, because my mother was promised a commission for me, and desired it.

At sixteen we both received our appointments, and I shall not forget, till I die, the glad and affectionate expression of Hill’s countenance, when he brought me the Gazette, and I found that our commissions were dated on the same day, and were in the same regiment.

The corps to which we were attached was stationed at Sandown Fort, in the Isle of Wight—we were joined together in the early spring of 18—. The friendship we had formed at school strengthened every hour: and those officers who were our seniors in rank and life, never wanted some pleasant or kind word for us. ‘The boys,’ we were called, as though there had been none other in the regiment or the world: ‘my boys,’ said the commandant—‘our boys,’ said the officers: and the men caught it—and the good people of the small town nearly all knew ‘the boys,’ who were generally together—never far apart. Hill was the handsomest youth in the corps, and though every way his inferior, I was not without promise to the eye.

It was upon a hot sultry evening in the month of August, that a small group of the junior officers were idling upon the sands near the Fort, and Hill and myself were of the party. Hill had got on a new foraging cap, which was very becoming to him, and I was quizzing him upon his vanity,—from which, of a truth, never was a youth more free, as I well knew. I was in exuberant spirits, and only joking—but, others being present, perhaps made the joke unpleasant to him. He coloured and looked grave, and I thought that he was a little out of humour, and deserved to be shamed into a better temper. Reckoning on my frequent experience at school, I made sure that I should soon bring back his handsome smile; accordingly I went bantering on; I was in a foolish mind—uttered many absurdities—and laughed all the while convulsively.

‘Woe to the light hearts—they still forerun our fall.’ At last finding my words had not produced the effect I intended, I caught him playfully about the waist, and lifting my hand to the back of his head, tipped off his cap, which fell upon the sand. He released himself from my grasp petulently, and stooping for his cap, bade me not do it again, in a manner rough; and as I thought, rude I had never seen him in such a touchy mood before—a circumstance, which, if I had had one moment’s reflection,

would have made me stop my folly—for I well knew his fine disposition, his real generous and loving nature, but I was beside myself, I laughed louder than ever, stole again behind him, and again pushed off his cap. Whether it was the heat caused by stooping that wound up his anger, or some more mysterious impulse, I know not, but as he raised himself his face was red, and his eyes shot fire, and observing that he did not like practical jokes, he dared me to do the like again. The menace did not open my eyes, though it was plain I was going too far, but it was not pleasant to me to be checked by a threat before so many of the officers, and not dreaming of any thing beyond a trip up or a wrestle and a fall, such as we had often given each other at school, I went up to him once more, and jerked off his cap again. He did not stoop, but aiming a straight and violent blow at my breast, for which I was wholly unprepared, he knocked me down.

I was instantly picked up by a tall vulgar young man, who had lately joined the regiment by exchange, in consequence of some affair of honor, in which he had been engaged with his captain, and who was a ready agent of mischief. ‘This business,’ said he, ‘can only be settled in one way, and the sooner the better.’

I cast my eyes round to look for Hill, he had caught up his cap and was walking away bareheaded, and two brother ensigns following him—one of whom I knew had a pair of duelling pistols. A little fellow, who had only joined a few days, and was not more than fifteen, and to whom we had both been kind, came to me, ‘O Vernon,’ said he, ‘run after him, make all up; it was all foolishness: why it was only play till he got vexed; and that was your fault, I am sure he is sorry—let us all agree to say nothing about it at mess—and to keep it from the Colonel.’

Such was the thought of the artless boy. Oh! that he had had man’s wisdom, I mean not that of such men as were with us then; for my tall friend called him a young blockhead, and bade him hold his nonsense; and remember that officers were not school-boys. To think that of the seven persons present there was but one peace-maker, and he a child! Had he but gone to the Colonel or any of the senior officers—there would not have been wanting some worth and wisdom to stand between ‘the boys’ and their calamity. As it was we were both in the hands of wicked and unreasonable men,—both the dull and passive slaves of a cruel custom.

My tall friend went home with me to my barrack room, and wrote a challenge, which I copied, scarce knowing what I did. He carried it himself and was long away—how busy were my hopes during that interval—he will make an apology methought, he will do any thing rather than meet me. The mischief-maker at last returned—he brought no note—a verbal consent to meet me. ‘I never saw such a fellow,’ said the wretch, who had volunteered to be my second ‘knock a man down and then offer him an apology—why you would both be turned out of the service—he for offering, and you for accepting it.’ ‘I would give my life,’ I replied, ‘to avoid this meeting if it were possible.’ ‘Well,’ said my second, ‘it is not possible: however it is a pleasant and safe duel for you, for after receiving your shot, he’ll of course fire in the air and make his apology; but go to the ground he must; and you need not be uneasy, perhaps you may miss him!’ ‘Perhaps I may miss him!’ said I; ‘why I would not fire at him, or hurt a hair of his head for the universe.’ ‘As to that,’ replied my mentor—‘aim at him you must—you are the challenger,—you must not call out a man and make a fool of him, and a mockery on a duel; and expect a couple of Gentlemen to stand looking on as seconds, at such a piece of chicken-hearted child’s play. No—no—that will never do: I feel for you, my dear fellow, but your honour is at stake. It is a sad annoyance, but it can’t be helped—I am engaged out to supper, and I shall not go to bed all night, so I shall be with you in time. Five is the hour—you need not worry about any thing, I have got pistols.’

The heartless wretch left me—alone—troubled—bewildered—almost out of my senses. I walked about my room: I sat down: I lay down on my bed, I was in a sad confusion of thought. I fell asleep—I awoke at four o’clock, and got a light, washed and dressed myself. My servant, whom I had roused, stared at me, and asked if I was unwell. I said ‘a little so.’ ‘Might he fetch the doctor then?’—‘No.’

The only comfort I could find or make was in the resolution to fire wide of the mark—the only prayer my heart could breathe was the fervent wish that I might manage it well. ‘All’s well that ends well,’ said I to myself—we shall be friends again at breakfast as if nothing had happened. Arthur loves me, and I him, better than all others.

It wanted some minutes to five, when my odious second arrived, with his pistols wrapped in a silk handkerchief. We exchanged but a very few words. But as we walked to the ground, he said unfeelingly, ‘this will not be a pistols for two—coffee for one, kind of a duel, but a very harmless one, I’ll answer for it, my youngster, so you need not look so pale.’ My blood ran chill as he spoke, and I felt terrified:

—Every crime
Has, in the moment of its perpetration,
Its own avenging angel; dark misgivings,
An ominous sinking at the inmost heart.

We proceeded in silence to the sands. It was a dull misty morning—Hill and his second were already there. Hill’s second joined mine, and they conferred a little together. I hoped that the duel might yet be averted; I longed to run over to Hill where he was walking up and down, about thirty yards from me, and press him to my heart: The delay arose from Hill’s second not choosing that the meeting should actually take place till a Surgeon was in readiness to give any succour that might be needed. The ground was measured, but they did not suffer us to take post till they saw the assistant surgeon about half a mile off, walking towards us. My second had so contrived matters, that this amiable Doctor should know nothing of the Duel until the parties were going forth, and even then, had not informed him who were the principals.

As I found myself opposite the youth whom I best loved, with a pistol in my hand—my eyes swam, and I felt sick and giddy—all the presence of mind I had was intent upon making sure to miss him. I heard the words, ‘ready,’—‘present.’ I raised my pistol with a careful slowness, and (according to the rules, when I had gotten the aim I designed) I fired. In that moment guilt, remorse, rage, and despair, fell, as it were, upon me; and they have dwelt with me

ever since—for twenty long years they have held me in their hands. My hope shuddered as my finger pulled the fatal trigger. I dared not follow the shot with my eyes, but I heard the fall—and I fainted upon the earth. When I recovered my senses, I was laid by the side of Arthur Hill upon the sand, and he had got my hand in his—and he was looking at me kinder and sadder than I ever saw any body upon earth look, and in a few moments, with a heavy sigh he died. Poor Arthur—I killed him; and I have never been quite well since—not to say quite right. That hymn you heard me speak, was found in Arthur’s desk—copied out in his own hand; and his friends sent it to me, two years ago, to comfort me; and it does for the time—but I am very miserable, good sir—very.

I saw plainly that his reason had been never perfectly restored: but I strove to console him with the only consolation that there is for such a sorrow, or for any other,—and I prayed for him, and walked with him about half a mile, to a house where he lived with his uncle, a country gentleman of small property, who told me that his nephew ranged about the park of Boughton, its neighbouring villages, quite unmolested and harmless. That he seldom spoke to any one, and that he was much surprised at his having related to me the story of his melancholy,—but that it was quite true. He had led the army instantly, and had never been able to settle his mind to any thing since; but was very devout, and very humble and lowly. And nothing never gave him so much comfort as to meet and talk with Christians, when he felt well enough. But he had views as concerning himself that were very gloomy, and which no one had been able to dissipate.

This was the traveller’s story. I will not anticipate the reflections it cannot fail to waken.

SPIRIT OF THE PROVINCIAL JOURNALS.

ST. JOHN OBSERVER.—We are informed that several of our most respectable Merchants, and others, are actively engaged in the necessary measures to procure the establishment of a second Bank in this city, with a capital of about £75,000. Petitions to the Legislature in favour of such an institution, are now in progress. It is intended, we understand, to be similar in principle to the proposed Halifax Bank, and that persons of capital in the country, so disposed, shall partake of its stock.—We are not sufficiently acquainted with the subject to hazard an opinion as to the probable success of the new institution; but we think the growing prosperity of the city and Province, will warrant the attempt, and we hail this as a proof of increasing commercial enterprise among us.

PICTON OBSERVER.—On last Saturday night, a valuable building at the West River Bridge, the property of Hugh M’Kay, merchant, of this place, now in Britain, was totally consumed by fire. The premises were recently let to Mr M’Donald, who occupied them for the purposes of general merchandize. By this unfortunate accident, the house, and the valuable stock of Goods which it contained, were wholly destroyed.

ST. JOHN COURIER.—We have been requested to state that it is the intention of several of our merchants to meet every week day, precisely at 12 o’clock, when the weather will permit, on the Stoop in front of the News-Room, for the discussion and transaction of business generally. This measure, we have no doubt, should it become general, would prove a great accommodation to the mercantile community of this city as well as to traders and others interested in business throughout the county. The increasing trade of St. John has long called for such a step being taken, and we are glad that the commencement of the year has been selected as the most proper time to carry into effect a business-like system, which strangers visiting our shores have often desired to see established. The place chosen, we are aware, will, for the present, be rather uncomfortable; but when the thing is properly set on foot, we do not despair of seeing, at no distant day, a commodious Merchants’ Exchange erected in the Commercial Emporium of New-Brunswick.

FREDERICTON GAZETTE.—At a late meeting of the College Council, another Scholarship of £25 per annum was founded, in addition to the one founded in March last, which is also to be open for competition to all candidates for Matriculation, from any of the Grammar Schools in the Province or elsewhere, without restriction, and will be granted to the Candidates who shall pass the best examination in Mathematical as well as Classical subjects. This scholarship is founded precisely upon the same conditions as the first one above mentioned; which were particularly specified in the Gazette of the 6th April last. And the time appointed for the first competition, for either or both, is the third Saturday in February next. The examination of candidates will be in the first twelve books of Homer’s Iliad, Xenophon’s Cyropaedia, The Odes of Horace, the first four books of Euclid, and the first part of Algebra.

PR. ED. ISLAND GAZETTE.—The congregation in this town in connection with the Established Church