

## LITERATURE, &amp;c.

## THE SCALPEL:

## A TALE FOUNDED ON FACT.

It was in the gloomy month of November, 1827, that a gentleman low in stature, slight in figure, and of rather tawny complexion, with a countenance in which melancholy bore the most remarkable expression, entered the shop of Messrs W—, the eminent cutlers, in the Strand, and, having made choice of various instruments, among which I was numbered, and all being properly adjusted in a case whose velvet pile was particularly adapted to the keeping of our temper, was carried by him through I know not how many streets and alleys, until at length he entered the Theatre of Anatomy of the celebrated Sir B. C. Knowling (I suppose from instinct) that my occupation was to be in a great measure to assist in unravelling the mysteries of nature's most perfect work, and having overheard, from conversations in the shop from which I was taken, that the theatre I was then in, was the most celebrated of its kind in the metropolis, it was highly gratifying to me that my career should commence under so favourable auspices. The gentleman whose property I was, and whose name was Delville, (so I afterwards heard him addressed) then proceeded through various passages, and in an ante-room, in which were piled boxes of all sizes and varieties, took from one of them, to which he had a key, an apron and oil-skin sleeves, with which he speedily decked himself, and now entered what I immediately found to be the scene of my operations—the dissecting room. Having looked on me with great approval and considerable self-complacency, Delville placed me delicately betwixt the fore-finger and thumb of his right hand, and approximated my point towards a—; but, a general rush of all the students in the room being made towards a particular spot, my first incision was prevented, myself being carried, in the more firm grasp of Delville, to the scene of commotion. Good God! what a sight presented itself! There lay the form of the most exquisitely beautiful female the sun had e'er shone upon! There, in the stillness of death, 'mid putrid and mangled fragments of dismembered corpses; the board, too, on which it was placed, streaming with loathsome juices and jellied particles of decomposed human matter—there, met the view, a form of most perfect symmetry and transparent whiteness! Light brown hair flowed in luxuriant tresses o'er the neck and shoulders, and almost concealed, in its silken meshes, features of chiselled loveliness; and yet, methought, there was a slight contraction of that fair brow—an expression as though the last sigh had been one of pain.

Not a word was uttered. All looked on in wondrous admiration, and as if fearful of disturbing the slumbers of the object before them, for scarce a breath was drawn. But suddenly the hand that held me grew relaxed, and the person of Delville lay extended on the floor. In his fall I was thrown out of his hand with considerable force, and penetrated the temple of the object of their contemplation. In an instant twenty hands darted to withdraw my sacrilegious point, and by and by trickled down drops of blackened blood. They flow quicker—quicker still. Now a stream courses down the cheek—and now of brighter hue—a trembling of the heart is felt! That start and convulsive movement terrify the lookers on, and release them from the spells of necromancy which apparently had held them in thrall, for they knew not what they did! A stifled sigh steals on their ear—now deeper—and deeper drawn. The heart acquires its functions—she breathes! Anon, her eyelids relax from the stiffness of death, she gazes wildly around, apparently unconscious of all.

In this time Delville had been recovered from his swooning fit by the attention of his fellow-students, and approaching her whom he had but now seen cold and motionless, started back with fearful exclamation on beholding the eye, which he had thought closed in death, wander on vacancy, and gradually fix on him. Oh, who could describe the emotions which then crowded the soul of Delville! It was enough—that look had reached her wandering intelligence, and, her scarcely animate frame deriving new power, she sat erect. She raised her small and beautiful hand to her eyes, maybe to remove some dread image, for immediately there came o'er that lovely face such an unearthly, soul-harrowing expression, horror itself in every lineament, that might have quailed a demon's heart. Oh, it was most horrible indeed, to view the strife of rekindling passions; awakening, too, in such a place! Delville, who had been paralyzed by the awful exhibition, now seized her in his arms, and hurried her (covered only as she was with the student's apron) out of the room, and just as he gained the adjoining passages, her tongue-strings were unloosed, and uttering one terrific and withering shriek of long-endured agony, she lay powerless in his arms.

Singular as were the consequences attending my first incision, yet, my second cut, in point of interest, must be paramount. After the foregoing adventure, I had been placed on my velvet cushion by some polite gentleman, and locked up in Delville's box, afore-mentioned, which confined situation necessarily excluded me from all knowledge of passing events; consequently, the fate of the lady to whom I had so miraculously given life was long unknown to me. Delville came not near me; and, indeed, I had imagined myself to be utterly forgotten. This desolateness, in a damp situation, naturally tarnished my polished breeding. I grew dull and pointless, and my composition no longer reflected its finely tempered excellence. But my solitary musings were one day abruptly put a stop to by my being somewhat unceremoniously snatched from my prison, and conveyed with the utmost speed to No. —, H—street, Cavendish square, on a dressing table of a chamber of which house I was deposited.

When I had gained a little composure after this sudden tran-

sit, and began to reflect on my new abode, I caught the form of a man, who was stretched on a bed at the further end of the room, and who, I soon perceived, was strapped down and confined to one unchangeable posture. Above his sunken and fevered cheeks the glaring eyes of the maniac protruded themselves. From their now fearful and now softened expression, while his lips moved as though with rapid utterance, he seemed to be holding converse with some aerial being. It was Delville. His friends were about to place him in a private madhouse, and their gathering together all his effects caused me to be brought there to witness the wreck I had conducted to make. For some time, on the day of my arrival, I learnt, he had been quiet. He had spoke not—stirred not. This seeming tranquillity induced his attendants to loosen his manacles, and, in a great measure, to relax their vigilance. The night was fast wearing away: all was hushed, and nought was heard in the chamber of the lunatic save the thick and heavy breathing of his attendant. Presently a sound, as of the rending asunder of bonds, reverberates through the room; but the sound awakes not the slumberer. Yes, Delville had freed himself of his fetters. With stealthy steps he glides by his keeper, and approaches the table where, oh, fatal neglect, I still lay. With a smile of ineffable delight he grasped me in his hand, and then, with joyous speech, exclaimed, 'Oh, my adored, my angelic Viola, soon shall I join thee in your bright sphere; soon shall my spirit wing its flight to thine, wherefore of all earthly dross thou shalt bless and not curse me. Oh, how could'st thou, who first gave me the young and best affections of thy heart—how could'st thou accuse me, who gave back to thee as pure, as deep, and as fervent a love as thine own, of robbing the grave of its prey—that I might dissect thee. And then, while life was fluttering from thy lips, thou cursed'st me. The agony of Delville here appeared to be so great, that no longer could he controul himself, and saying, 'I come, I come,' plunged me into his heart, and, when I felt the gush of warm and generous blood which had nourished his noble nature, I wondered not that his Viola should have loved and cursed him.

## WINTER.

There's not a flower upon the hill,  
There's not a leaf upon the tree;  
The summer-bird has left its bow,  
Bright child of sunshine, singing now  
In spicy lands beyond the sea.

There's stillness in the harvest field,  
And blackness in the mountain glen;  
And cloud that will not pass aw y  
From the hill-tops for many a day,  
And stillness round the homes of men.

The old tree hath an older look;  
The lonely place is yet more dreary;  
They go not now the young and old,  
Slow wandering on by wood and wold,  
The air is damp, the winds are cold,  
And summer paths are wet and weary.

The drooping year is in the wane,  
No longer floats the thistle down;  
The crimson heath is wan and sere,  
The hedge hangs withering by the mere,  
And the broad fern is rent and brown.

The owl sits huddling by himself,  
The cold has pierced his body through;  
The patient cattle hang their head;  
The deer are 'neath their winter shed,  
The ruddy squirrel's in his bed,  
And each small thing within its burrow.

In rich men's halls the fire is piled,  
And furry robes keep out the weather;  
In poor men's huts the fire is low,  
Through broken pains the keen winds blow,  
And old and young are cold together.

Oh, poverty is disconsolate!  
Its pains are many, its foes are strong:  
The rich man in his jovial cheer  
Wishes 'twas Winter thro' the year;  
The poor man 'mid his wants profound,  
With all his little children round,  
Prays God that Winter be not long.

MARY HOWITT.

FROM THE UNITED SERVICE JOURNAL.

## THE DEATH.

I have already stated, that at my leaving the vessel I had a suit of 'Flushing' over my ordinary dress of a jacket and trousers, in addition to which, at the time the boat struck, I was enveloped in a large boat-cloak; the latter I had thrown off my shoulders the instant the danger was apparent; and now that I no longer feared being grappled, my first object was to get rid of the former. I accordingly, with the assistance of the oar, (that supported me while doing so,) stripped off my two jackets and waistcoat; and my two pair of trousers would have followed also, had I not dreaded the probability of the heavy 'Flushing' getting entangled round my ankles in the first place, —and in the second, considered that both them and my shoes would preserve me from being cut by the rocks, should I succeed in reaching them. Thus lightened, and with the oar held fore-and-aft-wise under my left arm, I struck out boldly for the shore; and after remaining—God only knows how long, in the water—for to me it appeared an age,—I got into the wash

of the breakers; and after receiving several heavy blows, and experiencing the good effects of my 'Flushing fenders,' I eventually secured a footing, and scrambled up above the break of the waves.

As I lay on the rock panting, breathless, and nearly insensible, the words—'Save me, save me, I'm sinking!' appeared to rise with the spray that broke over me. At first, stupified with exertion and fatigue as I was, I fancied that the wild shriek that had accompanied the sinking 'death' still rang in my ears; till the repeated cry, with the addition of my own name, aroused me from my state of insensibility, and on glancing my eyes towards the surf, I beheld a man struggling hard to gain the shore. Never shall I forget the sensation of that moment! I can compare it to nothing but the effects of the most dreadful nightmare. I would have run any risk to endeavour to save the unfortunate man; but, if the simple lifting of a finger could have gained me the Indies—the Indies would have been lost to me, so completely was I rivetted to the spot! At this moment, the oar that had saved my life fortunately floated into the exhausted man's hands; and after a hard struggle he appeared to gain a footing;—he lost it!—Again he grasped the rock! The next moment saw him floating at some distance in the foam!—once more he approached and clung to the shore! My anxiety was dreadful!—till rising slowly from the water, and scrambling towards me, the poor fellow's cold embrace informed me I was not the only survivor; while his faltering exclamation of—'The poor fellows are all drowned, sir!' too plainly assured me that we alone were saved!

'Misfortune,' 'tis said, 'makes a man acquainted with strange bed fellows;' and just then I had every reason to acknowledge the truth of the expression; for, whether my shivering comrade thought my commission had gone down with the boat, and, that having been so nearly brought to an equality we had every right to continue on one;—or whether, which is more likely, he wished to abstract any little animal heat I might have had yet remaining in my body, I know not; certain I am, however, that no miss in her teens ever got a closer, or a longer embrace; and expecting to profit by it, I must confess I was not at all coy on the occasion; although, in the state we were in, I believe neither of us derived any great advantage from the experiment. After a time, we recovered sufficiently to gain the use of our legs; and then, what with stamping on the rock, and flapping our arms across our chests, we contrived to knock a little warmth into ourselves; and that point gained, we commenced our attempt to scale the face of the cliff that hung lowering over our heads. By mutual assistance, and with some difficulty, we succeeded in mounting between twenty and thirty feet; and I had just begun to solace myself with the idea, that the undertaking was not altogether so difficult as from appearances I had been led to suppose it was, when, on reaching out my arms, to catch a fresh hold of the rock before me, I found my eyes had deceived me as to its distance, and falling forwards, I with great difficulty saved myself from pitching headlong into a chasm that yawned beneath me, and through which the sea was dashing violently. In fact, the high land had deceived us. *We were only on a rock!!!*

Whoever may take the trouble to read this narrative can form but a very faint idea of the state of my feelings at that moment; for I can safely say that this unexpected discovery—made, too, at the very instant I had begun to entertain hopes of deliverance,—affected me more acutely than anything that had yet taken place. Nature had formed me to wrestle with—not 'grim and bear'—my misfortunes; and now that I saw no alternative but to remain where I was till chance sent a boat to my relief, or death took that office on itself, my heart sank within me. For a few minutes I gazed eagerly around me from the peak of the rock, in hopes of seeing some possible way of extricating myself; when observing nothing but a circle of foam, I descended to the nearest ledge in the deepest despondency, and casting myself alongside my now blubbering companion, sat in silent despair.

I remained in this miserable state only a short time before I discovered that a six years' drilling between the tropics (for I had only recently returned from abroad) had rendered me a very unfit person to remain drying on a rock half a winter's night near the 'Chops of the Channel;' for my shirt clung with icy coldness to my body, and notwithstanding we huddled together as close as possible, my shivering frame plainly told me I was so rapidly losing the little warmth I had acquired through my late exertion,—in fact, I felt assured that, if I remained where I was, daylight would find me a corpse. What, therefore was to be done? To remain was certain death!—Death appeared equally certain should I attempt to leave the rock! still, however, by adopting the latter course, there was a chance in my favour; and drawing I knew from experience on one or two occasions (for when a man has lost his senses I presume he has known the worst) could not be worse than dying by inches where I was.

I therefore resolved to gain the main, or sink in the attempt; but on making my determination known to my fellow-sufferer, and on asking him whether he would accompany me, the poor fellow appeared so thunderstruck at the proposal, so earnestly pointed out the danger of the attempt and his own weakness, and, clinging to me, so pathetically entreated me that I would remain where I was, that we might at least have the consolation of dying together; that I not only ceased from urging him, but appeared to give up the idea of leaving the rock myself. This, however, was done to elude his grasp; for a few minutes after, under the pretence of looking for a more sheltered place, I left him, and descending the rock, reached the edge of the channel that separated me from the main.

There a scene presented itself that plainly pointed out the desperation of the undertaking. The distance across indeed was not very great; but the whole channel was one sheet of yesty foam, along the edges of which appeared the long black