

changed the hair of the negro into a kind of coarse wool.—*St. John's Travels in the Valley of the Nile.*

FROM CHAMBERS'S EDINBURGH JOURNAL.

### THE OUTCAST.

A TALE.

SUCH of our Scottish readers as were personally familiar with the transactions and incidents during the late war, may remember a small building that stood at the end of one of the streets of Leith, at the door of which the union juck was seen flying from morning till night. It was the rendezvous of the "pressgang," whilst employed in their revolting occupation ashore, and where they were regularly locked in every night, to prevent the risk of collision between them and the citizens, to whom they were, as a matter of course, particularly obnoxious.

The commanding officer on the station, at the period of the following incident, was a man peculiarly unfitted, by inclination at least, for the duties imposed on him in the imprisonment proceedings, being of a most humane and kind disposition. He was, besides, a native of Leith, where he resided in a house of his own, unless when his presence was necessarily required on board. He had also a private room in the count house (as it may be termed) above mentioned, where he attended with great punctuality, in order that his presence might prove a check to the brutal and licentious natures of the "press gang"—the most reckless and desperate characters amongst the crew being, as is well known, always selected for the worse than slave-traffic in which they were employed.

In the above room, then, Captain Gillespie was seated one evening, when he was informed that a gentleman desired to speak with him, and, at his desire, the stranger was introduced. He was evidently a mere youth, slightly and elegantly made, and was very fashionably dressed. Captain Gillespie was particularly struck with the handsome, and, as he thought, feminine cast of his features—a peculiarity that corresponded well with the soft and silvery tones of his voice, when, after considerable hesitation, he stated the purpose of his visit. This was no other than to request that he might be taken on board a man-of-war to serve as a common sailor! Captain Gillespie expressed no little astonishment at one of his tender age and elegant appearance having adopted so strange a resolution, and begged to question him as to his motives for so doing—whether he had reflected sufficiently on the consequences of such a step, the hardships he must endure, and so forth. The youth declining giving any explanation on these points, and merely reiterating his determination of entering the navy. The worthy officer was exceedingly moved at the youth's situation. He was evidently of a superior rank in life, had been carefully and delicately brought up; and his replies showed that he knew nothing at all of the world. The captain, however, secretly felt more compassion than surprise at the circumstance. He knew that instances were then of frequent occurrence, of young men of the very best families, whose ardent and untutored imaginations were blown into enthusiasm by the inflated and high-coloured accounts every day put forth of our splendid naval triumphs, and with heads filled with visions of glory, and hearts with patriotism, leaving all the comforts and elegancies of home behind, little dreaming of the rough ordeal they must undergo in the path to eminence or glory.

Such an instance did the kind-hearted officer conclude was now before him; and knowing from experience all the rough realities of his profession, he endeavoured to persuade the young enthusiast to abandon, or at least postpone, his resolution; but finding all his arguments unavailing, he determined to give him a foretaste, at least, of the sort of company he would have to associate with on board. When the junior officer, therefore, came on shore to relieve him for the night, he ordered him to lock the young man in the same apartment with the rascals of the press gang; and directed, also, that he should be brought to his house next morning at breakfast time.

The youth accordingly appeared at the appointed hour, and Captain Gillespie saw, at a glance, that the experiment he had tried had not been without its effect, or rather that it had succeeded much beyond what he intended. In fact, he was shocked at the alteration which he saw in the young man's features since the preceding evening, and almost repented the plan he had put in practice. He shook him kindly by the hand, and then, in as indifferent a tone as he could assume, requested to know if he still adhered to his determination of becoming a sailor. For a while the young man sat mute and rigid as marble, and seemed totally unconscious of the meaning of the words addressed to him, but at last fell on his knees before Captain Gillespie, and in a passion of tears and sobs, so violent as seemed almost to rend his frame, disclosed—what his compassionate hearer had already begun distinctly to suspect—that the unhappy young creature before him was—a female!

Captain Gillespie raised the suppliant before him, and endeavoured to soothe her by all the persuasion he was master of, but it was long before he succeeded. When at length she became composed enough to speak, she frankly told her short and simple tale:—She was the youngest daughter of a gentleman of considerable property in a neighbouring county. About six months previous to the indiscretion of which she had been guilty, a young relative, a lieutenant in the navy, had obtained leave for a short visit to her father's house. The young officer had but lately obtained his commission, was consequently in high spirits, and being quite an enthusiast in his profession, could speak of nothing else but the scenes and battles—for he had already seen a deal of hard fighting—in which he had been engaged, depicting them, of course, in the most glowing colours that a young and ardent imagination could suggest. In these details, although listened to with due attention, and perhaps interest, by the rest of the family, the young sailor found none

who evidently sympathised, as it were, with his own feelings, but the youngest of his cousins, of whom there was four, all daughters. It was natural, therefore, that he should show a preference to her company in comparison with her sisters, although his predilection arose solely from the vain-glorious pleasure of having a ready, a delighted listener. Any thing like love addresses he had never once offered to her (and it afterwards, indeed, appeared that his affections were pre-engaged), but his buoyant spirits, and joyous language—his aspirations after naval fame—his handsome and animated countenance, together with the decided partiality he displayed for her society—all these wrought upon the young and simple girl's imagination, to a degree of which she was not herself conscious until he was gone. It was then, and for the first time, she felt how much her happiness was at the disposal of another, and what a dreary blank the world appeared without his presence. Time, perhaps, might have enabled her to regain her equanimity, but she was subject to distress from other sources. Her father, a cold, austere man, a stern disciplinarian in his family, and who regarded any unbending from that rigid demeanour of stately and ceremonious reserve which was the rule of his own deportment, as alike an infraction of moral propriety and a derogation from his rank—had observed with swelling indignation his daughter's artless admiration of her cousin, and, at the departure of the latter, let loose the full measure of his wrath upon her. Her sisters, too, whose minds were formed on their father's model, and burned, moreover, with spite and jealousy, at the preference shown by any eligible and marriageable man to one younger than themselves, prosecuted her without mercy. The poor girl's life soon became so wretched, between her domestic troubles and her love for her absent cousin, that she at last determined to fly from her father's house, and follow her lover to sea. So ignorant was she of worldly matters, that, hearing that a "frigate of war" was lying in Leith roads, the nature of which she never had heard of except from the lips of her cousin, she simply concluded he must be there, and had accordingly applied, as we have seen, to be accepted as his shipmate.

Such was the simple story of the poor girl, who seemed overwhelmed with shame and remorse at her folly, and with despair at the probable consequences of it. Captain Gillespie said all he could to console her; promised to write to her father for his forgiveness, which he was sure she would obtain; and tried to cheer her, by saying that her foolish prank would soon be forgotten. But her agitation and distress only broke out afresh. She knew, she said, her father too well to think there was any hope of his mercy; and even if he did forgive her, her sisters would break her heart with their taunts and reproaches. No other course, however, was left to her new and kind-hearted friend; and he accordingly wrote off the same day to Mr. Hume (for such was his name), informing him of his daughter's situation, and urging all he could to deprecate his indignation, and palliate his daughter's conduct, which, he assured him, she most deeply repented. He also had the weeping runaway removed immediately to the house of a female relation in the neighbourhood, where every attention was paid her.

Captain Gillespie waited anxiously for a reply to his letter, which he felt quite confident would be in the person of Mr. Hume himself, rejoiced to discover and to take back his erring daughter to his arms. The answer, indeed, came punctually by return of post—his own letter enclosed in a blank cover! Captain Gillespie was thunderstruck. His honest and unsophisticated mind was quite unable to comprehend the possibility of such a thing. It presented human nature to him in a light which was perfectly new to him; and he examined his letter and the envelope more than once, to make sure that the fact was really true. A parent to refuse forgiveness to a penitent child for such a mere act of youthful folly! Was it in the heart of erring man to do it? It was impossible. There must be some mistake—some misconception: he would write again. He wrote again accordingly, repeating what he had stated in his former letter, and adding every thing else he could think of in mitigation of his fair charge's indiscretion. He concluded by remarking—which was the fact—that she seemed fast sinking under her misery; and begged him, as a Christian and a parent, to hasten to her relief, and save her life by pronouncing his forgiveness. It was in vain. His letter was again returned to him as before, with, however, the following laconic note in the envelope:—"Mr. Hume knows no such individual as that referred to in the enclosed, and begs that no more communications may be sent to him regarding that individual." Captain Gillespie was staggered at this epistle, and certain suspicions began to arise in his mind. Could she be an impostor? Was it possible that so young, so modest, and so heart-broken, could be deceiving him with a fabricated story? This he could not bring his mind to believe; but, on the other hand, reckoned it still more improbable that a parent could thus abandon his child to starvation or infamy. Was it that she had been guilty of some worse indiscretion than she had confessed, and was afraid to reveal it to him? He was puzzled for some time what to think or do, but he felt he had proceeded too far to let the matter rest where it was, and he concluded by determining to sift it to the bottom, and that without delay. He immediately made arrangements, therefore, for a day's absence from duty, and set out in a post-chaise for Mr. Hume's residence.

He found that gentleman at home, and was received by him with that cold civility of aspect and manner with which he would have welcomed equally his warmest friend and his bitterest foe.

"My name is Captain Gillespie, of his Majesty's frigate the *Wasp*, stationed at Leith."

"Ah!—pray be seated, sir."

"I have written to you twice within the last week, upon a very painful subject to you, I dare say, Mr. Hume. May I ask if you received my letters?"

"I did, sir." "And pray, sir, may I beg to know what answer you have to make to them?"

"I have already answered them, sir."

"A blank sheet of paper is no answer, Mr. Hume."

"There was something more than that accompanying your last returned epistle, sir."

"Then I am to understand that this young person has been imposing on me, and that you are really not her parent?"

"That I was her father, sir, I grieve to acknowledge; but I now disclaim the title. She is no longer a daughter of mine."

"Sir!—Why, that is strange doctrine, and quite beyond my understanding. Pray, sir, if she was your daughter, how do you make out that she is not so now?"

"Her own conduct, sir, is a sufficient explanation of the paradox." "Then it is her conduct, Mr. Hume, that I wish to get explained. Let us understand one another, sir, on that point, before saying another word, and allow me, in the first place, to relate to you the statement made to me by the unhappy girl herself of the circumstances which induced her to act so indiscreetly as she has done."

The worthy officer then recapitulated faithfully the story told him by Miss Hume, softening nothing that related to her own thoughtlessness or folly, but touching as slightly as possible on her statements respecting her father's severe reproaches for her partiality to her cousin, in order not to irritate his auditor. He concluded by asking if the narrative were true or false.

"It seems to be all very correct, sir," was the cold reply.

"And was there no aggravating circumstances connected with it, previous to her leaving your house?"

"None, sir, that I am aware of."

"Had she not previously been guilty of any flagrant misconduct to call down your anger?"

"Never, sir; she had always behaved as a daughter ought to do." "And, in the name of all that is sacred, do you consider yourself warranted, by this single act of youthful imprudence, to cast off your own child for ever?"

"She cast me off, sir, and may, therefore, find a home and a father where she may. But, sir," continued Mr. Hume, rising from his seat, "I will not submit to have my conduct questioned by any one, far less by a stranger. If your visit had reference to nothing else but this topic, I have to beg that it may terminate."

"Do you not consider yourself bound, sir," pursued Captain Gillespie, also rising, but with a swelling heart and a glowing cheek—"are you not bound, sir, by the ties of nature, by the mere sense of decency, to take back your erring child to your heart? Should you not reflect, sir, that her present folly may perhaps be owing to some neglect on your part in the training of her young mind, and that it is only the more imperative upon you, from what has now happened, to endeavour to instruct her understanding, confirm her principles, and, by parental lenity and kindness, to make her penitence for her error more lasting and salutary? She is yet pure and unspotted as when she left her mother's bosom. Surely, surely, sir, you make some distinction between folly and crime?"

"You have my answer, sir," was the only reply.

"And do you really mean to abandon her thus to the mercy—to the cruelty and villany rather—of the world, without protection, without subsistence?"

"I see every reason for believing," replied the other, in a significant tone, "that she will be at no loss for either."

The honest-hearted sailor started at the insinuation conveyed by these words, as if a shell had exploded at his feet.

"Sir," said he, unable to repress his indignation, "but for these grey hairs I would strike you beneath my feet! But you say right, sir," continued he, recovering himself; "yon poor mourner shall not suffer for the cruelty of her unnatural parent. While it is in my power, she shall neither want assistance nor protection; nor shall it be my fault if she does not cease to forget that she owed her being to so callous-hearted a monster as you have proved yourself to be!"

And he kept his word. Upon his return home, he imparted the result of his interview to the unfortunate girl in as gentle terms as possible, and begged her, at the same time, to look to him as her future parent. The poor outcast could but sob her gratitude.

Captain Gillespie in a few weeks received orders to proceed to a foreign station; and seeing the daily decreasing health of his charge, he sought out a residence for her in a respectable family in a country town not many miles from the metropolis; and, at the same time, aware of the uncertainty of life in a profession like his, he deposited sufficient funds to secure the unfortunate maintenance for life. He set sail, and never saw her more, having, subsequently to his return from abroad, married, and settled in England. The object of his benevolence lived for many years afterwards, but gradually declined, and at last sunk into the grave, there can be little doubt, from the effects of a broken heart. Not one of her relatives had ever deigned to inquire after her—and they even carried their vindictiveness beyond the grave. Upon being informed of her death, her generous benefactor hastened down to Scotland, for the purpose of seeing the last rites paid to her remains, and thought it but his duty to send a notification of the event to her parent, who was still alive; but no notice was taken of the intimation. Captain Gillespie, therefore, laid her head in the grave himself, assisted by a few friends, who were aware of all the circumstances that originated the connexion between them, and who piled the dead no less than they honoured the living.

It was from one of these mourners that we learned the particulars of this mournful tale, which in every part is related exactly as it reached us. In saying so, we are not practising one of those arts by which the writers of narratives, probable and otherwise, so often attempt to abuse the confidence of their readers. The story is positively true, and such, in our opinion, is its chief value, as its publicity in this place may per-