

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Hogg's Edinburgh Instructor.
PARTING UNDER A CLOUD.
BY GRACE GREENWOOD.

In looking through a portfolio of choice engravings, in the studio of my artist-friend —, a short time since, I met with a picture of 'Byron at nineteen,' which startled me by its singular resemblance to one I had known long and well in days gone by. A near relative of ours, and the favourite classmate of my brother, Henry Elliot, though many years my senior, was, perhaps, the most familiar friend of my early girlhood; and though we have since been widely separated, his character and history have never lost their interest to me—an interest which the sight of that picture but quickens into expression.

At the time when he left college, Henry Elliot was surely one of the finest specimens of manly beauty which it was possible for one to meet. With a figure athletic and powerfully developed, yet unerringly graceful in action and repose; a face not classic, indeed, but absolutely radiant with enthusiasm, and the ardour and energy of a fine physical organisation; an assured and elegant manner, it was wonderful that he was not quite spoiled by the favours and flatteries of society, the involuntary deference of men, and the obvious admiration of women. His originally strong and manly character, the favouritism of which he was made the subject, could not destroy, but in one respect it was surely to him an incalculable injury. It prevented him from acquiring a knowledge of and a power over himself. By nature fiery, impetuous, and impatient, and deprived at an early age of the wise counsels and controlling influences of a father, he never learned to curb his passionate and excitable temper. Though never sullen or vindictive, he could not, or he would not, 'govern his own spirit,' in moments of irritation or disappointment. This was the one dark shade upon a most honourable, and otherwise loveable character.

On leaving college, young Elliot made choice of the legal profession, and pursued his studies with a friend of his family, a lawyer of eminence in one of the beautiful cities in the eastern part of the state of New York. Soon after entering upon the practice of his profession, he married the object of his 'first and passionate love,' the sole daughter of his legal preceptor, a beautiful girl of nineteen, fair-haired, blue eyed, serene-browed, and soft-voiced; one who fitly wore and sweetly graced the only true poetical name, 'Mary'; the only name which universal usage and common associations have not robbed of its beauty and sacredness.

Mary Hamilton, an only child, had been from her infancy almost companionless. Just as she entered womanhood, her mother died; thus her character, originally moulded in purity and softness, was deepened and spiritualised by solitude and sorrow, until it was as ideal in its serene loveliness as it well might be in our every-day life, in our profoundly real age. Hers was not a strong character, however, except it be in the strength of the affections. The single principle of love pervaded and absorbed her entire being. Her devotion was unbounded and untiring; it could not be taxed too much, or too often, by the one beloved. With the forbearing meekness of a saint, and the depending tenderness of a child, the young wife's influence was not such as was calculated to correct her husband's peculiar faults of character. His too despotical and exacting will, and his habit of giving way to sudden outbursts of passion or petulance, were strengthened by exercise. It followed, that toward his gentle wife, who never allowed a word of complaint or defence, much less of angry retort, to escape her lips, he soon unconsciously stood in the light of a master; one who would have been feared and detested, had he not been loved adoringly. As it was, his sovereignty was acknowledged, with an obedient, patient, and a willing spirit.

Mary had a wonderful power of concealing all feelings whose expression might not be pleasurable to another. She resolutely shut in upon her own heart its cares and griefs, and subjected the exquisite sensitiveness of her most feminine nature to a perpetual martyrdom. Whatever her pain, she never frowned on her husband, or assumed that most irritating of expressions, an injured look. Knowing in reality little of himself, and far less of women, Henry Elliot had not the acute perception to remark, that the smiles of his wife, after a harsh and inconsiderate word from him, were forced and unnatu-

ral. He little knew, that often, while the wan sunshine was playing about her quivering lips and drooping eyelids, there was storm in her heart, that her spirit was groping in thick shadows.

Yet might the Elliots have been what they seemed to the world, eminently happy in the marriage relation, had there not been wanting the one element of equality, from which come mutual confidences and perfect understandings. From the first, they occupied false positions towards one another, from which it was impossible that true and harmonious relations should result.

But soon a new fount of happiness, real and unfeigned, was opened in the hearts of both, by the birth of a daughter. This infant grew to be very lovely, and very like her mother. She had the same transparent complexion, the same golden-hued hair, and the same soft eyes, from whose depths looked forth a soul, 'steeped in the blue of its remembered home.'

'And so, Mary,' said Elliot, one morning when he had worn the dignity paternal for about three months, 'you are not disposed to humour me in bestowing your name upon our little lady bird, here?'

'Pray, do just as you please, dear Henry; but you know that one is not often partial to one's own name.'

'Well, then,' replied Henry, 'as we have neither of us rich maiden aunts, with long ugly names, what say you to a sweet little fancy name—Blanche, for instance?'

'Oh, yes, that is beautiful.'

'Well, then, Blanche let it be at the christening. I hope we will not grow tired of it. Many of these fanciful names only sound well in romances, as some costumes only look well on the stage. Why, Mary, you are looking rather pale this morning,' he added; 'I should insist on your taking a long drive, but that, as I have asked Judge Howard and the Allens to dine with us, I suppose you will choose to superintend the getting-up of dinner in suitable style; but this afternoon, if you are not too weary, perhaps I will drive you out myself.'

'Thank you, Henry, but I think I had better not leave the baby; she is a little fretful to-day.'

'Don't call her the baby! I'm tired of that nursery term; call her Blanche. Well, good morning; now see that dinner is ready precisely at three.'

The spring that little Blanche was three years old, Mary Elliot became seriously alarmed for herself, by a pain in her side, sometimes accompanied by a palpitation of the heart, to which she had been subject at intervals for a number of years, but of which she had never complained. Of this she finally spoke to her husband; touched lightly on the pain she had endured, but calmly expressed a conviction that she was suffering from an organic disease of the heart, a malady to which some of her family had been subject. Agonised with apprehension, Elliot lost not a moment in summoning the family physician, a man of some science and great celebrity. It happened to be near the dinner hour of the illustrious practitioner. So he asked a few hurried questions of Mary, listened to the action of her heart through his gæscope for a moment, then smiling upon his embarrassed patient the bland, patronising smile of scientific complacency, briefly informed her, that she had deceived herself as to the 'symptoms'; that she was merely troubled with 'nervousness,' which would pass away presently, if she did not nurse it; prescribed more exercise; complimented her on the beauty of her child, and bowed himself out, bearing with him the comfortable consciousness of having earned a ten-dollar fee; a tolerable good mental sauce for a cold dinner.

Mrs. Elliot, who had great faith in her physician, as the door closed after him, lifted her suffused eyes, while a fervent 'Thank Heaven!' rose to her lips. But a sudden pang shot through her heart, she pressed her hand to her side, and was silent. Her husband, not remarking her, threw himself back in his chair, with a long sigh of relief and exclaimed, in a slightly impatient tone, 'There, Mary, you see how it is; all a woman's fancy of your own! What would women do without nerves? What a fright you have given me, all for nothing.'

'Why, Harry, one would think you regretted it was not for something.'

'What nonsense you talk, Mary! You know that I am rejoiced. I thought of all terrible things from the time you made your startling announcement, till I heard the doctor's decision. Why, Mary, dear, I thought of you as—as—'

'Dead, Henry.'

'There you are again, bringing out that word in connection with yourself, as coolly as though you were speaking of that rose-tree. Ah, by the way, Mary, is that the plant from which comes the half-open-

ed rose which has been your daily offering to me of late?'

'Yes, Henry; it bears the prettiest early roses we have; I am sorry they are so nearly gone.'

'Yes, and there is a sentiment in your simple gift, a rosebud, which I may always find beside my breakfast plate; whose sweet breath mingles with the aroma of my coffee, and which I may twirl in my teeth while I glance over the Gazette, and wear in my button-hole half the morning.'

One evening, soon after the above conversation took place, Elliot announced to his wife that business called him to New York for a short time, and that he should be obliged to leave home the next morning, in the seven o'clock train of cars. At her husband's request, Mary, who was an early riser, promised to awake him in time, and see that an early breakfast was provided, as, from the depot being distant, he would have to leave home by half-past six.

Poor Mary was troubled and restless that night; she did not close her eyes until near morning, and as a natural consequence overslept herself. She was awakened by her husband calling her name, in a sharp, impatient voice. She dressed hurriedly, and descended to the breakfast room, to find there no sign of breakfast, although it was already half-past six. Her cook was a new one, and, as it proved, dilatory and untrustworthy. Henry soon came down, with his handsome face distorted with ill-humour, and his tones petulant as a schoolboy's. He did not seem to hear Mary's apologies, or to notice her mortification and distress. He could not reach the depot in time if he stayed for his breakfast, which he would not go without; so declared his intention of waiting for the nine o'clock train, though the delay might cause him serious inconvenience. When breakfast was at length served, Elliot jerked his chair up to the table with violent impatience, and sat a moment silently, but with his brows heavily charged with domestic thunder. He then found the steak undone; pronounced the coffee execrable, and pushing it from him, ordered tea. While Mary was making this, he palmed to pieces her daily love token, her good-morning flower, which lay by his plate. When his unsatisfactory meal was concluded, he in vain sought consolation in the morning paper. He pronounced it 'trashy,' 'stupid,' 'dishonest,' flung it from him in disgust, and began walking the room vigorously backward and forward.

'At length his wife, looking up timidly as he passed her, said, 'Tell me, Henry, just how soon you will return home.'

'Return home! I don't see that I am ever to leave home at this rate! I cannot tell precisely; why are you so extremely anxious to know?'

'Because, dear, it seems that I cannot part with you for a long time now. I have such strange, sad, forebodings; I feel that all is not right here, that my heart is really diseased, and—'

'Say rather your imagination is diseased,' said Henry, interrupting her. 'Do you put more faith in your own foolish fancies than in the skill of such a physician as Dr. Arnold? Why, Mary, it would seem that you introduced this subject again at this time, to render me anxious and uncomfortable while I am absent.'

To this harsh charge Mary only replied, 'Oh, Henry, how unjust!' and sat tearfully watching her husband as he walked the room more rapidly and pertinaciously than ever.

'There is a person waiting to see you in your office, sir,' said a servant, appearing at the door. As Henry took up his hat to go, Mary laid her hand on his arm, and said gently, 'May I look for you by Saturday afternoon, next week?'

With greater impatience than he had yet shown, Elliot replied, 'When my business will allow me to return, expect me, not before.'

At that moment, none might tell which of these two was most profoundly wretched: the husband, who closed the door hastily, and went forth with a proud, stern look, but a remorseless heart, or the wife, who gazed mournfully after him, then sank into a seat, covering her face with her hands, and wept bitterly.

Elliot, who had been detained in his office until somewhat after the time fixed upon for leaving, at length came hurriedly into the house, and bounded up stairs to the nursery, to take leave of his little daughter. She was in her mother's arms, and Mary looked up with a faint, sad smile. Henry spoke not, but folded them in a long, close embrace. As he kissed his wife for the last time, her tears fell upon his cheek. Ah, they burned into his heart like lava! He yearned to say, 'Forgive me!' but the term was a stranger to his lips, and he was silent. As he turned away, Mary rose, and, taking Blan-

che by the hand, followed him down the stairs, and through the long hall, and they stood in the portico to watch his going.

The last look that Elliot caught of them through the carriage window, showed him Blanche, with her little hand shading her eyes from the sunlight; but he remarked that the hand of Mary was pressed close against her heart.

At midnight, just a week from the time of his leaving for New York, Henry Elliot reached his home. He had written once during his absence, though but a hasty note, and had received an affectionate reply from Mary. Yet his mind had been ill at ease, and he had hurried home sooner than was expected. There was no one up to receive him, and letting himself in with his pass-key, he stole softly up stairs, careful not to waken the household. He first sought the nursery, to see if it was 'well with the child.' The fair creature lay in all the exquisite gracefulness of infantile repose; with one hand against her rosy cheek, and her soft, golden hair floating over the pillow. The father's heart yearned over her in unspeakable tenderness, and he raised his eyes in mute thankfulness to heaven. Suddenly the child turned, and moaned in her sleep; then slowly opened her eyes, raised herself in the bed, and began weeping silently, a touching peculiarity of the little girl's always. When she saw her father, she sprang to his embrace, and nestled against his breast. When he questioned her why she wept, she said, 'Nurse put me to bed without letting me go to mamma, for her good-night kiss.'

After a little soothing, Elliot left his daughter, fast falling into another sleep, and entered the chamber of his wife. The room was dimly lighted, and had a strange stillness to him. He listened in vain for the sound of the deep-drawn breath of slumber. He walked softly to the bed, and drew aside the snowy curtains, saying, 'Mary!'

She was lying there before him, but she did not start up at the sound of the beloved voice; she was very pale; her hands were folded on her bosom. Alas! she was dead.

With one long wild cry of unutterable anguish, Henry Elliot threw himself beside his lifeless Mary; caught her cold form to his breast; called her fond names, and kissed her cold lips and closed eyes, as with a terrible transport, in the passion of his agony!

But one took him almost by force from her, and led him from the room. This was Mr. Hamilton, the desolate father of Mary, who, unperceived by Elliot, had been sitting on the opposite side of the bed, the sole watcher by his dead child.

Poor Mary had died very suddenly, on the morning of the day of her husband's return. She had been reading, as was her usual custom, a portion of the sacred Book, to her dear father. It happened that she came to that most beautiful and divine passage of the Psalmist, 'He giveth his beloved sleep,' and she paused and said, 'I never so felt the blessedness of this passage as now.'

'And why, my child?' said her father.

'Because for a long time I have not slept well; not known real repose. This troublesome nervous affection,—suddenly she started, dropped the volume she had been reading, pressed her hand to her side, and with a succession of sharp, quick cries, fell forward in a swoon. From this she partly revived, but, though medical aid was promptly summoned, she did not regain her full consciousness till just at the last, when she spoke once, these words very faintly, 'My dear ones! bring them also home, O, Christ my Redeemer!'

In little more than an hour from the time when she sat reading by her father's side, supported on his breast, she breathed out her pure life, and her meek spirit returned to the sheltering bosom of the divine Father, who, 'giveth the beloved sleep.'

The flowery May-turf was broken in the beautiful cemetery of —, for one more grave beneath the cool shadows and beside the clear waters, and Mary Elliot was laid to her rest, with all the loveliness of nature in her loveliest season gathered about her. But though the light and warmth of sunshine, and the warbling of innumerable birds were abroad in the air above her, down low, where she was lying there were but cold, and darkness, and silence. The place of the dead may be a paradise to the outward sight, but to the spirit that has loved and mourned it is ever sadder, and wilder, and more fearfully desolate than a desertland.

The day succeeded that on which Henry Elliot had seen the grave close over the chosen of his heart, the bride of his youth he was sitting in his favourite room, with his child upon his knee, gazing fixedly upon a portrait of the lost one, which hung opposite to him. Blanche had fallen asleep, leaning against her poor father's