

Upon it till it could not pass away;
He had no breath, nor being, but in hers;
She was his voice; he did not speak to her,
But trembled on her words; she was his sight,
For his eye followed hers, and saw with hers,
Which colour'd all his objects:—he had ceased
To live within himself; she was his life,
The ocean to the river of his thoughts,
Which terminated all: upon a tone,
A touch of hers, his blood would ebb and flow,
And his cheek change tempestuously—his heart
Unknowing of its cause of agony."—*Byron*.

I returned not by the path I had taken, for the farmer led me by a road which wound down the dell about half a mile, when it brought us to the river, and we followed its serpentine banks.—As we strayed slowly along through the fertile meadows my companion, fetching a deep sigh, enquired abruptly, "Were you ever in the West of Devonshire, sir?" "I have been down on the Southern coast as far as Plymouth and Devonport," was my reply. "Then you was never up the beautiful valley of the Tamar?—Well, you know where Saltash is, for you can see it from Devonport. But it is not of the Tamar I would speak, but a mountain stream which rises among the hills which form the Western boundary of Dartmouth Forrest, and, dark and craggy, overlook the ridges, vales, and tapering shores of Cornwall; it is in the centre of those hills, about half-way between Tavistock and Oakhampton, that the Beer has its source, and after emerging from its highland bed, where it is a rapid, roaring torrent, it passes by Tavistock, and meandering smoothly and gently through the fertile meadows below that town, washes the walls of Beer-alston, and falls into the Tamar nearly opposite Saltash. I should also have stated that ere reaching Tavistock it passes through the grounds of the Duke of Bedford; but above that, where it first leaves its narrow course among the granite-covered hills, and first descends to the open and arable valley, just at the foot of the hill where it loses its rapid character, stands the Parish Church of Poltavy, in the midst of a flourishing and picturesque hamlet. The parish is mostly pastoral, the soil being light and the ground too much broken for tillage; but the herbage being plentiful, vast herds of cattle may be seen grazing in every direction, from the quiet valley far up among the hills; while many a farm house in elevated situations gives a wildness to the scene, although the whole wears an aspect of retirement and rural comfort. My poor brother, whom I perceived you commiserated, accidentally became acquainted with a wealthy farmer, who resided in Poltavy, during his youth, and receiving many pressing invitations, he at length paid him a visit; and becoming enamoured of his host's daughter, married and settled there, receiving with his bride a handsome dowry, with which, added to his own patrimony, he purchased a farm. The marriage being what is generally termed a *love match*, was a happy one; and in a few years they were blessed with three children; but by one of those dispensations of Providence, which are unaccountable to us, they were attacked with the scarlet fever, and only one of them—the eldest—survived. She was a delicate little girl, possessing a remarkably mild and sweet temper—of her my story treats.

It was about ten years after my brother's marriage, that, taking my wife and one or two of my children with me, I paid him a visit; and never before was I so struck with a picturesque view as that which presented itself from my brother's residence. His farm stood for the most part on an elevated plain, while a portion of it ascended the abrupt hills in the rear; and gazing down the valley in a Southern direction, the whole appeared like one vast amphitheatre. Immediately in front lay the quiet hamlet with its gothic church and square tower. The smooth stream meandered through the fragrant meadows till it was lost among the plantations of the Duke of Bedford. On the left the view extended to some six or eight miles, presenting in the distance nought but the granite-covered summits of lofty hills; and on the right it was terminated by the lonely church and tower of Brentor, situated on the highest peak in the West of Devon, commanding a view over half of Cornwall, and known as a land mark from both the English and Bristol Channels.

Lucy Hicks, my brother's daughter, was at this time about nine years old, and although feminine in the highest degree, and extremely timid and retiring, her intellectual attainments were far beyond her years; and these combined with her modest deportment and exquisitely handsome person, made her the most interesting child I have ever seen. But when you looked into her full blue eyes, you discovered a depth of feeling you would never imagine a child possessed. It seemed as though her young thoughts were employed on some object which had excited in her breast feelings of pity or of sorrow, and the tear seemed ever ready to gush forth. No wonder an only child, and *such* a child, should be the idol of her parents, and petted and admired by her neighbours; but this could not spoil her—her feelings—her soul was too pure for her ever to become vicious, and if there was any danger of her erring, it was from a want of firmness. Yet I must confess that whenever I gazed upon her I trembled for her fate; it might have been because I felt more than ordinary interest in her, and dreaded the effect of so fragile a flower coming in contact with the rude storms of life, and I thought on Campbell's oft-quoted line:—

"But coming events cast their shadows before,"

and I trembled again. The fact is, that wherever I perceive an unusual sensitiveness and depth of feeling in the young, although they are eminently qualified for the enjoyment of domestic and intellectual life, I almost invariably find them unable to jostle their way through this world, and they generally fall victims to slighted affections and despair:—let us hope they meet with a better reward in another world.

It was on one evening during my visit, that accompanied by my brother and his daughter, we took a stroll down to the village, immediately below which is a common appropriated to gymnastic exercises—reckoned indispensable in the west of

England;—it was also a favourite place of resort, extending along two or three hundred rods on the bank of the stream, the walk on the margin of which was overshadowed by a row of noble elms. Lucy having been joined by two or three of her acquaintances, strayed along gayly chatting in this walk, followed by her father and myself. It was almost sunset, and the feathered songsters had retired to rest; but to make amends for this, the village bells were merrily chiming in the old moss-covered tower, while a hundred echoes among the hills caught up and prolonged the sounds. In the back-grounds of the common were a party of lads from 12 to 16 or 17 years old, playing the favourite game of cricket. We were observing them quietly, when an incident caught our attention and caused us to approach; it was one of the youngest boys—about 12 or 13 years old—disputing with one apparently two or three years older, who said he had bowled him out. "I say you have *not* bowled me out," said the younger one, "neither will I give up the bat until I am put out fairly, and if you think you can take it from me Dick Hoskins, although you be the Squire's son, you'd better try it!" "A spirited youth that," said I, "who is he?" "His name is Tresilian" was the reply; "his father is a farmer in this parish, who, though he has as much as he can do to make a living, is as proud as Lucifer. He claims a direct descent from one of the chiefs of the ancient Britons, and calls the Saxons mushrooms and upstarts!" He has several sons, all of them smart active boys, but this one is the wonder of the neighbourhood; his match of his own years or weight cannot be found; and I verily believe he would face a man! then again he will go to the fair or market and buy or sell, with as much judgment, and oftentimes with more shrewdness than those who have arrived at mature age.—But he has one bad quality—I should like the boy only for that—he is vindictive." Here my brother stopt short, for matters between the lads were assuming a serious aspect; Hoskins being goaded on by the sneers and taunts of his companions—ever ready in such a case—accepted the challenge, and came up to wrest the bat from the other; the challenger at first lifted the instrument in the attitude to strike, but on Dick exclaiming, "Ah, coward!" he immediately lowered it, and suffered the other to take hold. A fierce struggle ensued, while the other boys formed a ring, and calmly looked on. The difference in age and strength at last began to show its superiority, and Dick had nearly got the bat to himself, when the other suddenly let go, and exclaiming, "take it, and take *that* with it!" and suiting the action to the words, he struck his opponent with all his might in the mouth, and laid him sprawling on the ground. "Well done Harry!" "At him again, Dick!" were the exclamations of their juvenile companions, and quick as lightning they began to strip. I was about to interfere, but at that instant a piercing shriek was heard from the little girls, whom we had left wandering on the banks of the stream. We ran towards the spot, but the agile Harry outstript us all, and no sooner reached the stream than he plunged. On coming up we saw him just rising from the bottom, grasping by the arm the still terrified child of my brother. She had been standing carelessly on the extreme margin, and her foot slipping, she fell in. As the stream was but a few yards wide, we soon got them both on shore; the boy could scarcely be prevailed on to give her up to her father, saying as he kissed her fair cheeks, "What! my little lily! I could not afford to lose you!" And on our thanking him for his gallantry, he replied with much hauteur in his looks and manner, "you may bestow your thanks in another channel; *it was my destiny!*" While we stood gazing with astonishment at those words, so remarkable in the mouth of a boy, he ran nimbly back to the spot where a few minutes before there was a ring—now almost broken up—and where a few of the boys still remained, while his antagonist was dressing himself. "Stop Dick!" cried he, "you are not going to escape me in that way; I was only saving my little favourite from drowning—so show us your buff once more, or I'll tear your toggery off ye." Dick hesitated, and it was evident he did not relish the alternative; when Harry approaching him exclaimed, "*peel* I say!" and at the same time planted a well-aimed blow on his adversary's temple. The fight was immediately renewed, and for several minutes was conducted with much spirit on both sides, Harry's superior skill and agility making up for his want of strength, until he gave Dick a tremendous fall by slipping aside and dexterously avoiding his blow, while he tripped him up. "Hurrah, hurrah!" shouted the spectators—in which I believe I unconsciously joined, so powerfully had my sympathies been enlisted in behalf of the youngest and weakest. Dick lay a few seconds, apparently stupified by his fall, when stung to the quick by the jeers of his companions for allowing himself to be beaten by one so much his junior, he arose and renewed the fight with equal determination and more caution. Seizing Harry with one hand, he held him while he punished him dreadfully with the other; still the urchin did not cry, but kept fibbing as long as he could stand. At length they fell heavily together, Harry under. We lifted them up and thought proper to separate them, and finding that Dick was perfectly willing to let the matter drop, I caught Harry in my arms and held him. After a few desperate struggles he remained passive, but I shall never forget the determined expression with which he turned his face to mine, as he said, "You may part us if you think proper, but do you think I'll forget? No; the next time I meet with him, though it should not be for seven years to come, I'll flog him or die in the attempt!" I must not omit to mention, that all the while the boys were fighting Lucy was begging her father with cries and tears not to let that "big brute" beat the *dear little fellow* who saved her life.

The boy Hoskins was the son of a country gentlemen whose ancestors—like himself—were stewards to the noble family of Russell, in which situation they had amassed considerable wealth. The present head of the family had assumed the title of "Squire."

* This feeling is not yet wholly extinct in the West of England.

kept a carriage and a hunter, and affected to look down with contempt upon his neighbours. His estate joined that of my unfortunate brother, upon which he had long cast a longing eye, and young as the parties were he had already planned a match between Dick, one of his younger sons, and Lucy. I mention these facts now that the sequel of my story may be the better understood.

The morning after the events on the "village green" I arose early, tempted by the freshness of the mountain air, and accompanied my brother in a ramble over his farm. It was a beautiful may morning; the rising sun was scattering his slanting rays over the plain as he peeped over the craggy boundary of Dartmoor forest, tinging the tops of the mounds and enlivening the dark foliage of the distant plantations, although many a romantic dell was still wrapt in shade. The lark and the cuckoo poured forth their morning songs, while the blackbird, the thrush, the goldfinch and the linnet awoke the valley with one continuous thrill of heavenly music. The cattle arose at our approach and shook the glistening dew-drops from their sides, while the snow-white lambs frisked and frolicked around their dams, too happy to attend to the maternal bleat, calling them to their morning meal. Delighted with our walk, and engaged in an interchange of confidential communications, which had been much interrupted of late years, we reached the confines of the farm, and strayed along a high bank which overlooked the circuitous route of the stream.

"Alas!" exclaimed my brother, "even here we find there is nothing to prevent the tranquility of nature from being disturbed. See yonder hawk, how he flaps the air with his wings, and then remains perfectly still, doubtless with a view of coaxing one of the foolish birds, who seem to be taunting him that he has not yet breakfasted, to venture within the reach of his talons!"

"Then if such are their taunts" I replied, they are premature, for see! there he descends to make a meal of one of the songsters in the grove below!"

I had scarcely spoken when we heard a shrill and piteous cry. We rushed into the thicket and before we had advanced many steps saw the hawk in the act of rising with something in his talons; a shout made him drop his prey, and we took up, apparently but little hurt, a beautiful thrush.

"Poor little thing!" said my brother, "we have saved thee from being torn to pieces by thy natural enemy, and now I must needs carry thee to my Lucy, who, if she imprison thee, will make thee ample amends by a thousand acts of kindness and attention; so now brother let us return—I feel an appetite for my breakfast, although we have deprived yonder varacious bird of his:—but how is this,—did not the dog follow us?"

"Yes, but I have not seen him for some time—I think he left us when we first reached the bank of the stream, some two or three fields above this."

The dog to which we alluded was a cross between the sheep-dog and the Newfoundland, and rarely left his master's heels whenever he suffered the animal to follow him. No further remark was made, however, and we returned to the house.

"Here Lucy!" said my brother on entering the house, "come and see what a pretty songster I've got for you. What! not up yet, truant child! well, I must train the little captive to call you in the mornings betimes, but for the nonce I must, I suppose, attend to that duty myself."

As he said this he opened Lucy's bedroom door, but he found no person there.—A servant approached:—

"Miss Lucy, sir, and Mrs. Hicks are both in the green room."

"The green room!" and a melancholy expression overshadowed his countenance, for it was in this room his two sons had died, and since the death of the latter it had remained unoccupied.

We turned towards the room indicated, and on our approach perceived the door ajar, while the sound of subdued voices within reached us; but at this juncture the dog, knowing his master's step, came out of the room and wagging a fond recognition, came forward and licked his hand.

"Hillo Cæsar! where have you been in the water so early? or why did you leave me, eh, old dog?"

The faithful brute looked up as though he understood every word addressed to him, wagged his tail again and led the way to the green room. On entering, the first object which caught our attention was the lifeless form of the boy Tresilian lying on the bed, his face bruised and blackened, although a curl of triumph was visible upon his ashy lips. Around him stood my brother's wife and two or three attendants, chafing his limbs, and performing other services recommended by the Humane Society to be rendered to a person "apparently drowned;" while in one corner of the room knelt the gentle Lucy, with her tiny hands clasped before her in the attitude of prayer, while her bosom struggled with sobs and sighs which "would not be suppressed." On perceiving us she arose from her knees and rushed into her father's arms, exclaiming, "Oh, dearest papa, what *shall* we do to recover dear Harry? Oh, come and pray with me!"

A few minutes after our arrival the pulse of the boy began to beat feebly, and after a little more assiduity his breathing became audible—he recovered. It was then our turn to evince some curiosity respecting his narrow escape, and how he had received so many severe contusions, when we were made acquainted with the following facts, viz:—Burning with resentment on account of the premature termination of the battle the preceding day, Harry had arisen early and proceeded to Mr. Hoskins' farm, where he had dogged Dick until he found him in a secluded nook on the margin of the stream; he then emerged from the bushes among which he had concealed himself, and by his bitter taunts induced Hoskins to strip and decide the contest I had interrupted on the green. After fighting some hours with various success, and at length getting the better of his antagonist by dint of his activity and indomitable perseverance, he stumbled over a stone, which sent him forward head foremost; Dick taking advantage of this accident, planted a blow upon his temple so dex-