

THE DOOMED.

BY S. J.

I WAS returning from a summer evening's excursion along the romantic banks of the Tamar, in the County of Devon, when the transcendent loveliness of the view prompted me to pause and bestow a parting glance on the magnificent scenery which lay around me. The lofty elms mirrored in the deep water seemed to survey with pride their reflected beauty. A gentle breeze fanned the surface of the placid river, as, steeped in the roseate hue of sunset, it swept silently on in liquid loveliness. As I continued to gaze upon this scene of surpassing beauty, a tiny bark appeared in the far distance, and with distended sail, seemed almost imperceptibly to approach the spot whereon I was standing. The "farewell flush" of day was yet contending with the purple tints of twilight—when suddenly there rose a rich "voluptuous swell" of mellow breathing flutes and sounding viols, while ever and anon, a harp's wild, deep resounding chords, came floating on the breath of eve—waking the slumbering echoes of the neighbouring hills, and startling the feathered choristers as they poured forth their gladsome even-song. And now a love-lorn wailing melody came stealing to the shore; it ceased, and presently these words of mournful sweetness were wafted o'er the waters:—

SONG.

Oh! life is a weary dream,
A short lived summer's day,
A ripple that plays on a rapid stream,
And basketh awhile in the bright sunbeam,
Then melts away.

Oh! life is a furrowed way
Of friends and verdure void,
Where flourishes nought but fell decay,
And hope's bright bubbles burst away,
All, all destroyed!

Oh! yet there's a happier sphere,
Where the sunlight ne'er declines,
Where never is wept the bitter tear,
Where joy's bright, sun undimmed and clear,
For ever shines.

Still life is a weary dream,
A short lived summer's day.
A ripple that plays on a rapid stream,
And basketh awhile in the bright sunbeam,
Then melts away.

The last mournful echoes were yet sobbing along the wooded banks, when the boat touched the shore, and anxious to escape observation, I resumed my journey. The solemn stillness of the twilight hour is ever a fit season for melancholy musing, and I surrendered myself freely to its mysterious influence. I had remained absorbed in meditation for a considerable time, when a sound of deep and irrepressible emotion caused me to start abruptly from my reverie. The mild moon was shedding a full flood of mellow light o'er the gently gliding river, and its mimic waves fell regularly and softly, as the pulse of sleeping infancy. I gazed eagerly around, and at length detected the dark outline of a figure standing beneath the shadow of a huge oak which flung out its fantastic arms far into the stream. I approached cautiously until it became sufficiently distinct to observe its motions. It was that of a man in the decline of life; his arms were folded moodily upon his breast, while, at intervals, the convulsive shudder which agitated his frame, sufficiently betokened that he battled with some internal agony. As I pressed forward yet nearer with mixed emotions of sympathy and curiosity, my foot slipped and I was precipitated to the ground with considerable violence.

Ere I could recover myself the stranger observed and hurriedly approached me. The moonlight revealed his haggard countenance, which was blanched to an unearthly pallor, and bore the impress of no common grief. His eye flashed with supernatural brightness, and my cheek reddened as I met its piercing gaze.

"Ha! eaves-dropping," he muttered almost inaudibly, while a scowl of unutterable malignity settled for a moment on his countenance, then turning towards me with the utmost blandness, he exclaimed: "You have stumbled, Sir, and I hurried to offer you assistance, but my services, I trust, are not needed. I am happy to find that your fall has been attended with no worse results. I, too, fell," he ejaculated bitterly; "but then I fell, like Lucifer, never to hope again."

Anxious to learn something of his history, I took advantage of the severe strain one of my ancles had received, and availing myself of the