

ROMANCE OF ANCIENT HISTORY.

STORY OF ATHENAI8.

THE Grecian sage, Leontius, was lying on his couch, calmly awaiting the approach of death. His daughter, the beautiful Athenais, was bending over him, and bathing his brow with her tears. The fading beams of the setting sun illumined the apartment; and cast over the pallid cheek of the dying man, a glow that mocked the hue of health. As the weeping Athenais beheld this rosy flush, she hushed her voice of mourning, and, for an instant, a ray of hope irradiated her brow, and shone amid her tears, as a transient sunbeam sometimes gilds a stormy cloud, and sparkles amid the falling rain. Leontius beheld the change, and said in faint but tranquil tones—

"Deceive not thyself, my dear Athenais, with vain illusive hopes—they will but cheat thee into a momentary forgetfulness of sorrow, and render the hour of grief, that *must* come, more painful to endure. Learn to look calmly upon the trial that awaits thee, and bear with becoming fortitude the loss thou art about to sustain. I feel that I must die. Even now the lamp of life burns dimly in its socket, and ere long it will be quenched for ever. Weep not so bitterly, my child, at this decree of the Gods. They are wise—they are merciful. They have granted me a long sojourn on the earth, and they are now conducting me peacefully and pleasantly to repose. Murmur not, then, at their dispensations, but bow submissively to their will, and pray for aid to strengthen thy spirit in the coming season of affliction."

But Athenais renewed her lamentations, and her tears flowed more freely as she listened to her father's words. Grief had gained the mastery over her spirit, and, for a time, it ruled with despotic sway. Calmly Leontius waited 'till the violence of the storm had passed, and, in the fall of those passionate lamentations, he said,

"I grieve to see, my child, that all the lessons of wisdom and virtue which I have taught thee, have failed to lift thy mind to that elevation which I had hoped it would attain. But I despair not that thy soul will one day be as lofty and heroic as my fondest wish could desire. Thou art young, and thy heart is yet tender enough to take a deep impression from every passing touch. Let but a few more years roll away, and the breath of sorrow, like the beam of joy, will pass almost unheeded over thy spirit's fount of feeling, and wake only a ripple on its surface. Thus would I have it

And now, my dear Athenais, I have but a few more moments to linger, and I entreat you to listen to the voice that will so soon be silent for ever. Hereafter it might be a source of deep regret to reflect that you had not heeded my dying words."

This admonition had the desired effect—the young mourner dried her tears—lifted her beautiful head, and with a forced calmness and composure, listened to his words.

"In leaving thee, my child, to the evils of life, and the temptations of the world, I cannot leave thee without a protector, for thy excellent heart will be a guardian more vigilant and more useful than the wisest I could appoint—and in bequeathing my patrimony almost entirely to thy two brothers, I do thee no act of injustice, for thy youth and loveliness, and above all, the many virtues, constitute a dowry that queens might envy. What were riches to one like thee? What were stores of sparkling gems, and heaps of glittering gold? Hast thou not a beauty whose splendor can rival the diamond's light, and treasures of the mind, whose value is above all price? These last, my daughter, are a legacy which none can take away. Time, who will steal thy youthful charms, cannot deprive thee of those fading treasures. They are exhaustless as the earth, and enduring as life. Thou art not portioned, and I die happy in the belief of thy welfare."

The philosopher paused—a solemn silence reigned in the apartment, and it seemed the death was hovering near. Faint and faming grew the light of departing day—dim, and dimmer burned the lamp of expiring life. Low and the softest whisper of the leaves when stirred by the breath of spring, rose once more the voice of the dying sage.

"My daughter, see you not yon lingering radiance in the west—how slowly and majestically it gives place to the footsteps of night? How softly and sweetly the last beam fades away, and sinks to rest? Thus does a philosopher bid farewell to earth. Thus calmly and peacefully sank to his last repose. My such, dear Athenais, when thy sojourn here is ended, be thy closing hour. Blessings be with thee now and for ever. Farewell!"—So gently and so tranquilly had he sunk into the arms of Death, that the bereaved Athenais dared not disturb, with the voice of her sorrow, the solemn and solemn scene. For many moments she sat fearless, motionless—almost breathless, gazing reverently upon the hushed and holy features of the departed. But as soon as the