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THE VICTIMS OF PASSION.

A TALE OF THE EAST.

"These shall the passions wound and tear,
The vultures of the mind."—Gray.

"Curst from the cradle, and brought up to years,
With cares and feares."—Lord Bacon.

The celebration of the august and imposing rite of admission to the priesthood of the ancient and venerable order of Seva, had drawn together a crowd of persons from various parts of the southern district of India, to witness the scene in the great temple of the God, in the river-island of Iswara. The ceremony was now over, and the multitude had dispersed. One person still lingered near the altar; it was he who had just assumed the vows of a priest.

Godari was the younger son of a powerful and distinguished officer of the state. If abundant wealth, worldly honor, and high mental endowments could have secured the happiness of their possessor, there had been few whose blessedness had equalled his; but it was the misfortune of Godari to be born with that morbidity of feeling and susceptibility of passion which are the bane of comfort in every condition of existence. The temper of his spirit was moody and intense; he could look on nothing with moderate and healthful impressions; but every emotion which swelled his bosom was splendid ecstasy or bitter grief. The whole chord of his moral sensations was attuned to a key so much higher than that of the persons around him, that the daily intercourse of life caused between them and him an endless jar and discord. The necessary inferiority and unavoidable restraints of childhood, had distressed him with a kind of torture; the playful taunts and sprightly sarcasms of his equals, which others forgot as soon as formed, sank into his mind with a rankling bitterness. So vivid was his own consciousness that he never could escape from it, or view the world in any other relation than his single friend or enemy; every thing and every person seemed to be always interested in him. He was dowered with all the sensibility, and some of the power of a poet; and the painful instincts of a lofty spirit he had suffered from his youth with a troubled mind. From the high-seasoned banquet of Apician miseries which a temper, fastidious in torments, daily prepared from the occurrences of common life, there was the fascinating refuge of the world of fancy; and thus, feeding on the dream-food of luscious visions, was the appetite of his mind still more diseased.

In addition to the sufficient curse of an over-sensitive heart, it happened, unfortunately, that the elder brother of Godari was a person of a nature and disposition the very opposite of his own. Cold, callous, and unfeeling, he took a savage pleasure in tyrannizing over the tenderness of his brother; he hourly vexed his soul with deep and aching insults, and stung him into madness by cruel irritation. The very presence of so uncongenial a spirit, stirred up by a species of magnetic influence a dark strife of struggling passions: His father, also, though kindly natured, was of the world, worldly; he had breathed the petrifying air of a court until his temper had become stern, hard, and inflexible. His son found in his forceful spirit nothing cognate to his gentle wishings. His father put down all romantic and dreamy sentiments as false and noxious; and ardent minds, when they despise or condemn a passion or a principle, often forget to allow for its existence. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising if Godari looked back upon his past life as a dark and distressful memory of woe.

If the overthrow of personal quiet and happiness were the mere result of such exquisite susceptibility as we refer to, light would be the curse of such a portion compared with the whole evil actually wrought. The reaction of such suffering upon the moral frame is the darkest part of all. The sad history of such persons may be briefly written: their sensibility makes them miserable, and their misery makes them wicked. Their life is a truceless war against inward anguish; where others are free to debate principles, or decide on conduct in reference to honour, or justice, or duty, they are absorbed by the consideration of the effect upon the feelings. They dwell ceaselessly on self; for what indeed is genius, in any of its forms, but intense mental selfishness? They desire not to love but to be loved. This racking of the peace of the heart wastes away the moral being, and crushes down the spiritual integrity; the inevitable engrossment of private ends and motives saps the vigour of that virtue whose source and support is self-oblivion. From such intolerable depression the victim of susceptibility takes refuge in an opposite frightful ruthlessness and malignity. The native hunger after sympathy creates a craving in the heart which, if it be not satisfied with love, will deaden its pangs with the narcotic stimulants of abhorrence and fiendish de-

testation. Thus did the young Godari, a being made for purity and peace, often resile from the softness of human feelings to the ferocious sternness of demoniac hate; and, by the fretting of intemperate kindness, transformed in feeling "from a slave to an enslaver," he coped in fancy with the actual world, and sitting in his lonely chamber, meditated schemes of power with the tortuous cunning of Satanic malevolence. Soon flinging from himself in imagination all restraints of piety, he sprang suddenly into the endless void of atheism, and felt for a time a high relief from the smothered vehemence of natural feeling. But soon did this idle oscillation of benumbed feeling—this "waste of passion unemployed"—this life in death—of lonely and unanswered aspiration—become more grievous than the restraints of truth. He found that the idea of an empty universe—an idea that cannot be grasped or grappled with—despotizes over the mind with tyranny far more crushing than that of the thunder-armed God of heaven. He felt that unbounded vacancy annihilates the finite spirit. The suffering of this state of existence drove him back to belief. He became deeply religious, and felt in that sheltering thought, a deep and perfect peace. Passion died away within him; the simple purity of boyhood new-garmented his soul. He found in the calm ardour and exhaustless intetest of celestial love a sufficient object for all his aspirations. He had felt, when he thought of mingling in the action of the busy world, that there was no object on earth large enough to fill the wants of his wish; he had felt that all must be embraced or all would be lost; and that impossible striving after universality had made him wretched. Now, the single thought of God was enough to satisfy his widest hopes.

Religion assures peace to its followers, not by gratifying the passions, but by changing the nature. He who, with dispositions and feelings unaltered, hopes to find in piety a refuge from the griefs and sorrows of the world, will be mistaken. The devotion which is sustained by the natural ardors of the heart, is delusion. Holiness comforts mankind, not by satisfying existent wants or soothing existent griefs, but by withdrawing the sting of irritation from accustomed sources of sorrow, and teaching us to find new pleasure in new feelings. Godari felt happy in cherishing holy thoughts, yet was not the frante of his desires transformed. Such faith might flourish in the calmness of solitude, but there was danger that it might give way in the trials of temptation. Sometimes even in the quietude of his lonely thoughts, his passions rose and overmastered his controul, and he relapsed into the wild and intoxicating freedom of defiance. But he soon returned to saner counsels, and felt joyous again in the peacefulness of prayer. The time now drew nigh in which it was necessary for Godari to make choice of some profession; for the ancient laws of that country forbade any to live in idleness. The thought of any worldly enterprise was intolerable to him; he believed that he could not succeed in any profession of that sort, and that the highest success would be ineffably paltry. He therefore chose the priesthood, and after many debates with his father, and many sneers from his brother, it was finally decided that that should be adopted. Let it not be thought that Godari was insincere; he cordially believed all the dogmas of his creed, and earnestly claved to the sentiments which they inspired as the only consolation in life. Still were his wishes but half purged, and his heart but half-illuminated. He looked upon religion rather as a refuge than as a mission; he adhered to it rather for the present happiness which it afforded than by the compulsion of a strong sense of duty. His profession was rather the choice of a refined selfishness than the results of a thorough sacrifice. In fact, the young man had not fully realized what he had undertaken; and it is the misfortune of those who, like himself, are cursed with the possession of imagination, never fairly to realize anything in life. They see nothing through the colourless light of actual life; but a roseate mist of delusion spreads itself around them, and becomes the atmosphere of their minds. To such men there is nothing agreeable in looking within, and dwelling amid the agitation of an unsatisfied heart; therefore, all their thoughts are outward and restless; they exist out of themselves in the creations of the visionary faculty. Fancy, like a coral-working insect, builds up a rich and summer dome around them, which then becomes their being. They are bent to fill up a picture of a story which imagination sketches; they think only of opinion, and never attain the consciousness of their true state, until some great calamity—some striking of the great clock of life—suddenly crushes down the net-work tracery of fancy.

The ceremony of his entrance on the priesthood was, as we have said, completed; and none remained in the temple, except the young devotee. There was a gloom and weight upon his spi-

rit which he could neither conquer nor account for; it was not the instinctive foreboding of ill which we sometimes feel, but merely a dullness and ungeniality of feeling. Perhaps it was the natural effect of the fatiguing pomp which he had just passed through; perhaps it was an uneasy feeling produced by the want of sympathy from his family in the course which he had adopted; perhaps it was a shade cast upon the glass of his spirit by the breath of some passing dream—for so small a thing as a forgotten vision of the night has power to colour the substance of our being. It was to overcome, if possible, this "stified, drowsy, unimpassioned grief" that Godari remained by the deserted altar. He endeavoured to compose his thoughts by pious recollections, and to drive away the dark shadow from his heart.

He presently rose and turned to a room joining the main temple, and separated from it by a hanging curtain. As he approached it he thought he saw the figure of some one standing upon the other side. He withdrew the folds a little without noise, and felt breathed upon his face, a soft, warm and delicious air, "so sweet that the senso ached at it." He paused a moment to inhale the ambrosial smell, and then moving the curtain, beheld the loveliest woman he had ever seen, standing and looking attentively upon a picture hung upon the wall above the curtain. Her countenance was all-rosate with the bloom of splendid intelligence; her complexion was as freshly soft and brightly pure as the dewy tints of a newborn flower; her features were gently proud with the high-born grace of purity and fine recession of a queenly innocence; and with a swan-like majesty,

The mantling spirit of reserve
Fashioned her neck into a goodly curve.

Her startled glance fell upon the intruder, and then fluctuated with a painful timidity. It was a dove-like eye that seemed a sphered soul; you might have loved and worshipped it apart from its possessor. In the breast of young Godari the bright conflagration of love was kindled in a moment.

It would be difficult to determine which party was the most embarrassed. They both stood bowing towards one another for some time, blushing deeply, and looking on the ground. At length the lady spoke.

"My brother left me here," she said with an agitated voice, "while he has gone to see if we could be permitted to look at the curiosities of the temple." And what a voice! There was a spirit in the sound; the gushing tones seemed angels uttered into immortality: there was a breathing life upon the words that pierced and played upon the hearer's heart.

"Certainly," said Godari, "on any day that the rooms shall be open, they will be infinitely honoured by your presence. Today, however they are closed, and no exception of persons is made. Yet to you, I am sure, that even now they will be open. To you I am sure that neither that nor anything else will be denied."

"O, no," said the strange lady, "I cannot think of opposing any of the usual laws. It is not a matter of any consequence," and she was moving away.

"Will you suffer me to bring you word," said Godari, "of the time when the rooms are open?"

The lady bowed.

"And will you promise to come?" said Godari, taking hold of her hand, and looking in her eyes with a supplicating impression, which it was impossible to resist. The lady smiled with an embarrassed air, and looked sideways at him.

"Promise me," continued the lover with the most persuasive accent.

"I will," said the other, half unwillingly, and making her escape at the same time from the room.

Like the dazzling blaze of sunlight, through a cloudy day, making an unconsuming flame of all the air, was the infinite illumination of the passion that blazed forth in the darkling mind of young Godari. In the experience of the spirit, unity is not completeness; individual consciousness is never wholly realized until it embraces with the being of another. As, in bodily feeling, sensation is our only evidence of the existence of the senses, so does the wierd brightness of the soul lie hid in sluggish apathy, until the reaction of another heart hath shot life into its torpid frame; then, roused by the wave-like pulsing of its strength, it rears its giant limbs, and swells its towering crest. Ere sympathy has sprung upon the heart, the spirit seems struggling into being; when first "the mirror of an answering mind" reflects the warmth of the appreciation on the desponding thoughts, then the soul flashes into splendid life. Feeling, indeed, might suggest, and those utterances of revealed truth which teach that by fellowship and unity the light of