

that the enormous rock, that was suspended and buttressed up by the column, might have fallen down, and thus bar up all passage through the hole we had so rashly made. Had such a misfortune happened to us what a horrible situation we should have been in! We could hope for no help from without, even from our friend Genu, who, as we had witnessed, had been so upset by fear; so that, rather than suffer the anguish and die the death of the wretch buried alive in a sepulchre, our poignards must have been our last resource.

All these reflections, which we analysed and commented upon, one by one, made us resolve upon returning, and leaving to others, more imprudent than ourselves, if any there be, the care of exploring the space we had still to travel over. We soon got over the ground that separated us from the place we had most to dread. Providence had favoured and protected us—the large fragment of rock, that object of all our fears, was still propped up. One after the other did we squeeze ourselves through the narrow opening, avoiding as much as possible the least friction, till at last we had all passed through. Joyous were we on seeing ourselves out of danger after so perilous an enterprise, and we were already beginning to direct our steps towards the outlet of the cavern, when suddenly a hollow, prolonged noise, and below our feet a rapid trembling excited once more all our fears. But those fears were soon calmed by our Indian, who came running towards us at full speed, brandishing in his hand his pick-axe. The imprudent fellow, unwilling to sacrifice it, had waited till we were some paces distant, and then pulling it to him most forcibly, while all the while he took good care to keep quickly moving away, when thanks to Providence, or to his own nimbleness, he was not crushed to atoms by the fragment of the rock, which, being no longer buttressed up by the column that had been shaken, fell to the ground, completely stopping up the issue through which we had passed one after the other: so that no doubt no one, after us, will be able to penetrate into the beautiful part of that grotto which we had just passed through so fortunately. After this last episode we no longer hesitated in returning, and it was with the greatest delight that we beheld once more the great luminary of the world, and found our friend Genu sitting upon a block of marble, reflecting upon our long absence, and, at the same time, our unqualified temerity.

MAJOR.—I see the book contains pictorial illustrations.

DOCTOR.—It does, and they are well executed, and apparently characteristic. Altogether a better bargain for five shillings never was offered to the "reading million" by Harper Brothers.

LAIRD.—Is there anything new in the poetical line? It's unco wersh wark speaking continually about prose, prose, prose!

MAJOR.—Right glad am I that you have been the means of reminding me of a work which I wish much to behold a welcome inmate of the Shanty.

LAIRD.—Wha's the author? What's the name o' his buik?

MAJOR.—In answer to your first question, I respond, Gerald Massey. His volume is intitled, *The Ballad of Babe Christabel, and other Lyrical Poems*.

DOCTOR.—Though I flatter myself that I keep pretty well up with the literature of our age, the name of Massey falleth strangely upon mine ear.

LAIRD.—I never heard tell o' the chiel before.

MAJOR.—Not many days have elapsed since I first met with the little lyrical duodecimo which I hold in my hands, and up to that epoch I likewise was ignorant of the existence of a new and a true poet.

LAIRD.—Indeed, man, let's hae a pree o' the lad! But first and foremost, what are his antecedents?

MAJOR.—Gerald Massey, who has just attained his twenty-sixth year, is the son of an English canal boatman. A large percentage of his existence has been spent in toil and grinding poverty. Hear how bitterly he alludes to his cold and sunless early days:—

"Having had to earn my own dearly won bread," he says, "by the eternal cheapening of flesh and blood thus early, I never knew what childhood meant. I had no childhood. Ever since I can remember, I have had the aching fear of want throbbing in heart and brow. The currents of my life were early poisoned, and few, methinks, would pass unscathed through the scenes and circumstances in which I have lived, none, if they were as curious and precocious as I was. The child comes into the world, like a new coin upon upon it; and in like manner as the Jews sweat down sovereigns, by hustling them in a bag to get gold-dust out of them, so is the poor man's child hustled and sweated down in this bag of society to get wealth out of it; and even as the impress of the Queen is effaced by the Jewish process, so is the image of God worn from heart and brow, and day by day the child recedes devilward. I look back now with wonder, not that so few escape, but that any escape at all, to win a nobler growth to their humanity. So blighting are the influences which surround thousands in early life, to which I can bear such bitter testimony."

LAIRD.—Waesock! waesock! Folk speak o' the pleasures o' memory, but I doubt few sic pleasures can fa' to the share o' puir Gerald!

MAJOR.—At the age of fifteen the stripling came to London, where he procured employment