

mon to the circle into which I had been admitted; they bound us together with closer ties; for it is only the alliances of virtue, which form here a lasting and indissoluble friendship. They conducted me to Naples. They occupied there one of the splendid palaces of that classic city. They had around them the works and arts of the *past*—the great productions of the *present*. We sailed over its magnificent Bay; they carried me to Herculaneum and Pompeii, those disinterred cities of Roman life; and we often contemplated Vesuvius belching out her volumes of lurid flame, while the moon shone placidly above. It is not wonderful that Italy should be famed for the imaginative power of her people—that she should be rich in poets and painters—that the arts should flourish among them; for there is no other country where the imagination has such a field to work upon—the fertility of her soil—the magnificence of the Alps—her classic ruins and reliques—her gorgeous architecture—statuary:—I felt my own imagination kindle amid the excitements by which it was surrounded.

General Darnley was there the British Resident at the Court. He enjoyed the friendship of his sovereign. His eldest son occupied a high station in the Court of George the 4th. His eldest daughter Edith had been married unto one of the most ancient families of the English nobility. He was educating his family there, amid the classic associations by which they were surrounded.—I spent three months under his roof. It was one of the happiest periods of my long sojourn in Europe, happy because I saw a perfect picture of family intelligence and peace—a rare union of station, of cultivated knowledge, of peace, and of rational piety. General D. and his family mingled in the gay circles of that magnificent Capital, and yet kept himself and children free of its follies and vices. To me it had additional charms—for we often recalled our recollections of Nova Scotia, and of all the incidents of the preceding tale. I heard Edith say then, (I still write her maiden name,) that although Italy was beautiful, and Naples the home of the arts—and she had many reasons to be attached to both,—there were no spots on earth to which her heart yearned so fondly as to the Prince's Lodge on Bedford Basin, or her father's garden in the north suburbs of Halifax. She often spoke of one gnarled old oak, which stood in the garden, and which her father had held in special reverence. In these places the foundation of her happiness had been laid. In them she had passed the first severe ordeal of her earthly trials; and had enjoyed the blissful dispensation of that great and overruling Providence, in which she had ever felt undeviating faith. She showed me the original of Darnley's letter, and of her reply, both kept as precious reliques of an early love. She allowed me to take copies.

Thus far I have painted this picture in its rosy hues, but these bright tints had for me a melancholy and lasting shade. While I was in Italy, I had much to make me happy; my

pulses of life beat quickly; and though before a young man, free from any desire to relinquish the freedom of a single life, and consign my happiness to the keeping of another, my views and aspirations changed, and I began to sigh for the love and sympathy of a kindred heart. I am yet single, and have travelled through life a bachelor,—having lived for years sighing over the *ideal* of a beautiful and unattainable good. Why conceal it! Grace Darley, the second daughter of the matchless Edith—the fit daughter of such a mother, and such a Wife—inspired me with the tender passion. O, how it tortured and consumed me. I fear to peril my reputation in painting what Grace then was. She was not fair. She approached the brunette, but the Grecian forehead, the flashing eye, radiant with the heart and intelligence, the curved mouth; the outline and proportions—they were a treasure to the most refined taste—and to the noblest bosom nature ever gave. To have swept an arm round such an object, and to have been able to have called it *mine*, would have been an ecstasy—divine, and expressively exquisite. I gazed and sighed, but at a distance. I won her friendship, but not her heart. I was disappointed. She had been *before* engaged, but I knew it not.—She did not deceive me, for she was above deception. The hour it was announced to me, my heart turned to stone!

I love yet a bright home, the laughing glee of other men's children,—but my own house is lonely. Poor Grace, how she wept for me, when she knew the desolation of my heart, which she innocently scathed. She became a bride, but her happiness was short lived, and she was soon transferred to a better sphere—her fate was happier and holier than mine; but a truce to the confessions of an old, wrecked and disappointed man—for why shadow so bright a picture with such sad and drooping colours? Such is life!—the bluest and brightest sky of Italy herself is never free from the menacing cloud; the richest vallies have ever their peaked and frozen crags above; the rose has ever its thorn; and our happiest hours are overlung with the coming and instructive affliction, because here we have no lasting heritage, and the earth is but a trial-place to fit us for the glories and happiness of heaven: there is ever something bright and better to yearn and work for, inspiring reflection and imposing responsibility, until we have gone to the grave, cast away the frailties and weeds of mortality, and stand as expectants at the gates of eternal bliss.

Edith and the General have since gone down to the grave—it receives the good as well as the evil—the saint and the sage have a common end. Some of their children still live, and will read this history—and recognise the friendly hand which has sketched it.

The fate of Archer may form the subject of another series of passages; for it is a dark page in the volume of human life. Our task for the present is at an end.