

us, they were loved, feared, esteemed, or hated in their day; and filled, with honor or dishonor, the stations allotted them on earth. Their day is over—their names are forgotten—and their dust is here. While musing on their fate we recognize our own—

‘One Cæsar lives—a thousand are forgot.’”

“Why do the ruins of a temple, once dedicated to the service of the Deity, call up feelings of a higher order, than those of a feudal castle or fortress?” said Sophia.

“The latter,” said Fleming, “recall to mind scenes of oppression and strife—the cruelties of the merciless tyrant—the groans of the captive, and the discontented murmurs of the soul bound slave. Gorgeous banners, glittering armour, waving plumes, and all the pomp and magnificence which romance loves to weave around the days of chivalry, only cover, like the flowers in Cleopatra’s basket, the poison and death that lurk beneath. The poetical illustrations of fancy cannot shut our eyes to the crimes of a darker age, when the man who had caused the greatest misery to his fellow creatures was esteemed the greatest hero, and received, from erring beings like himself, divine honors. We look up to those mouldering towers, perched like the eagle’s nest upon some tall cliff, and rejoice that they are no longer the spoiler’s abode—that the tread of armed warriors is heard no more in their desolate halls.”

“What an enthusiast you are, cousin Fleming,” said Sophia, who began to feel a lively interest in the subject. “Now what have you to say in favor of our ruined Abbey?”

“In surveying the ruins of a temple once dedicated to the service of God,” said Fleming, “the mind assumes a loftier tone, and the tenderest sympathies of our nature are called into immediate action. The organ has pealed through these roofless aisles. The word of God has been preached from yon ivy-covered nook, and thousands of human beings from age to age have bent the knee, and worshipped their creator at that deserted shrine, over which the wild rose throws her fantastic wreaths, and the ash waves her light drooping foliage. Their fate irresistibly recalls our own, and every heaved up turf and crumbling stone becomes a silent monitor.”

As Fleming finished his long dissertation on ruins, his attention was arrested by some writing on a stone which headed a grave, and he read with considerable interest the following lines, traced with a pencil:

“Tell me, thou grassy mound,
What dost thou cover?
In thy folds hast thou bound
Soldier or lover?”

Time o’er the turf no memorial is keeping,
Who in this lone grave, forgotten is sleeping?”

“The sun’s westward ray

A dark shadow has thrown,

On this dwelling of clay,

And the shade is thine own—

From dust and oblivion this stern lesson borrow

Thou art living today, and forgotten tomorrow.”

“I should like to know the author of these lines?” said Fleming, “how exactly they coincide with the subject on which we have been talking.”

“I can satisfy your curiosity,” said Sophia.

“The first verse was written by Alice, and the second by a young gentleman who was educated by my father; don’t you observe the difference in the autographs?”

“I see it now—And the gentleman?”

“Became what people of his fanatical turn of mind call decidedly pious, and turned missionary. It was a pity. He was a handsome, clever fellow, and papa’s favorite pupil—who was much attached to him. Stephen Norton was an orphan, and heir to a fine property; but, entertaining very romantic religious notions, on the death of his guardian he abandoned his country, and devoted his life and property to the arduous profession he had chosen. Last spring he returned to England, and came to see his old friends at E—. He visited these ruins with Alice and me; my sister wrote the first verse, Stephen answered it; and now you have the history of the melancholy lines you are pleased to admire.”

“For which you have my thanks. The man who could thus generously devote the morning of his life to the service of his fellow creatures, must be a character of no ordinary cast. Is Alice engaged to Mr. Norton?”

“Oh no—not positively engaged. But they always loved each other. Indeed, he was the brother of our childhood, and I esteemed him very much, until he turned fanatic, and became grave and puritanical. But he converted Alice, who thinks him a saint, and constantly corresponds with him on religious subjects. They ought to marry, they so nearly resemble each other.”

“He is worthy of Alice,” said Fleming, suppressing a sigh; “I wish they may be happy.”

The wish was sincere,—but Arthur fell into a fit of musing; and hardly remarked that they had quitted the ruins, until he found himself once more on the high road. “And do not your religious sentiments and your sister’s agree, Sophia?” he said, making a desperate effort at composure, for the full conviction of Alice Linhope’s worth had never struck him so forcibly as at that moment, when he felt that however superior she might be to her sister, he had no longer a choice left between them.