

depth of withering despair by slow movement, but surely downward and downward it tore her. That same voice "Too late" heard in the gloomy night wind, again finds utterance, (not in imagination this time,) through the little novice, and as it fell in mournful cadence 'en on her very soul, convulsed with a paroxysm of rage and fright in feverish madness, she drove from her presence the simple seeming maid. The reaction brought her nearer to herself :—

"The simple fearful child  
Meant nothing, but my own too fearful guilt  
Simpler than any child betrays itself."

N. x. brought face to face with her sin, Guinevere sees it in its consequences, as destructive of an empire, as subversive of all purity and goodness among the people, and before her gloom stretches in waste interminable, darkness and death. She strives to repent but the end is not yet, and even while voicing her half-conscious petition to the Almighty, as a vindicator of the sincerity of her desire,

"Her memory, from old habit of the mind,  
Went slipping back upon the golden days,  
In which she saw him first."

Lancelot, in her memory still lived, a loving form. The King was *not* like her Lancelot. Arthur was still a being high above her, breathing the t in ether of exalted nobility, which to Guinevere meant suffocation. Thus she forgot herself and, immersed in a trance-like state of pleasing memories, heard not nor heeded the approach of her husband.

He came. In all literature there stands forth no higher, grander character than this one we now behold. So suddenly to have found one loved and trusted to be unworthy of that love so freely given, was a blow which overwhelmed him with grief, and pierced him through with deadliest sorrow. We can only listen to him speaking in words measured, slow and impassionate; but even then there is revealed more of real soul agony than would have appeared in the most violent and withering denunciation. His queen was lying at his feet in conscious shame. His soul was as the bosom of the mighty deep, lashed by a hurricane of conflicting emotions driven and tossed. His very voice as the hollow plaintive mourning of the chastened billow was merely a long drawn sigh of pity and regret. He could not lightly regard her sin. In justice he was judge himself; he must tear from his own life that which rendered it sweet and joyous. He

loved his wife, and now must leave her. The depth of pathos and anguish is revealed :—

"Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,  
That I, the King should greatly care to live."

To himself, to his knights, to his people he must be just. And this was easy; but to reveal to his Queen in justice, her own, sad, sinful heart, so black; and to show her what it might have been, this to Arthur was the pain of death itself. She could not bear it; closer to his very feet, in fear and shame she falteringly crept; then listened as he spoke again :—

"And all is past, the sin is sinned, and I,  
Lo, I forgive thee as Eternal God  
Forgives."  
Let no one dream but that I love thee still.  
Farewell!"

He turned and left her to herself. The MAN not the king had triumphed.

And now the long holden fountain of her woman's heart is broken, and forth there gushes a crystal purifying stream, glittering and sparkling in the clear light of her Lord's forgiveness. The King was never nobler, than when, in deepest love he forgave. The Queen never appears to us so beautiful as when in deepest humility, she loves her Lord, her Arthur, not Lancelot, not another. Thus we have learned the other lesson, voiced in Scripture :—"There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared."

How grand is Arthur! how noble! how good! The aims of his life were all thwarted; his hopes all blighted, and he fades away from sight as mysteriously as he came. All seems a failure. And yet the leading of one true soul from earthly things engrossing, to gaze upon the charest peaks of Alpina spiritually, and to impart to that soul an unquenchable desire to reach those heights, renders Arthur's life not a failure, but a splendid victory. There is revealed to us the strong basis upon which he stood, and the heavenly sensibility of his heart is clearly seen, when looking down from that high eminence he pitied, he stooped, he lifted the fallen, and covered the sin in love. He was, it is true, an ideal man. Perhaps he never lived. But to the reader he lives, and will live forever, for the eye retains the image long after the exciting cause has vanished.

"We must not scorn ourselves,"

we must be brought face to face with the grandeur and sublimity, the poverty and beauty, of what is