

leisurely stroll brought us in the afternoon to Lanark. The farmer came with us, and did not leave us until he consigned us to a brother of his for the night. Though in the humble occupation of a carrier, this brother had a house that was the perfection of neatness, and his wife and himself were the perfection of good nature. Our supper was from a board covered with homely plenty. We slept in compact little chambers, with beds and windows curtained in the purest white; and we arose to a breakfast, at which we had trout, which were that morning caught in a contiguous stream. The scenery around Lanark is inexpressibly lovely, and the falls of Clyde, with more beauty than sublimity, to any one who has seen Niagara, yet, like all cataracts, defy description. But, though I cannot describe to you the torrent, or the woodland paradise in which it is embosomed, I can tell you something of a young blacksmith, who was my voluntary and unpaid guide. At the upper fall, we sat in a rustic bower; we listened to the roar of waters, and watched the tumbling flood, which seemed, as its broken gushings mingled with the sunbeams, a shower of gems and rain-bows. Romance is in all conditions; and in every condition the poetry of the heart has purity and exaltation. While I was admiring this summer aspect of the fall, the blacksmith dwelt on some of its winter appearances. He used to see it, when the frost congealed its brilliant dribbles on the rocks, and when the moon poured her splendour upon the forest and the fall. And one used to see it with him; and here was the charm. In this bower he came to meet his lady-love; and here they mingled the outpourings of affection with the voice of song; and she, who was then a glad some lassie, was now a youthful matron. Very oddly, had they heard Rossini's music, or read Bulwer's novels, they could not have courted with more romance, or been funder of sylvan shades for their whisperings. But nature, after all, is the greatest teacher. Young man and maiden, royl or rustic, may differ in expression, but in little else; for nature, which is no monopolist, is not in the texture of the garment, but in the living pulse that throbs beneath it. This young pair, as well as the most refined of aristocrats, would woo in silence and alone—they sought the moonlight and the grove, and here they had a trysting place, which Queen Mab herself might choose, if she had an elfin lover; but no doubt the anthem of the eternal cataract, that rushed beside and beneath them, was a faint sound, while they breathed their mutual vows; and the vista between hills to the far-off sky, and the gleaming of stars upon the dancing waters, were little heeded in the reflection of love in meeting eyes. Wherever

nature can act in freedom, life in its essential has much of equality—the worst anomalies of life arise from the paralysis of nature by sordid destination, or the perversion of nature by artificial desires.

The truth of these remarks had practical illustration in another, but very opposite kind of person, whom I came across in this neighbourhood, and on this evening. A few nights previously, I had been in the theatre in Glasgow, and was profoundly affected by the pathos which a young performer threw into his acting. He was, as I found upon enquiry, a person of some genius, but of no discretion. He once had highest prospects on the London boards—was admired by the elder Kean, and at his recommendation procured an excellent engagement. But drinking and dissipation ruined all. In the foam of the goblet all high aspiration was drowned, ambition quenched, and hope forever darkened. He not only neglected his studies, but forgot his appointments, and when he ought to have been in the green-room, was insensible in the tavern. The result is clear: confidence was taken from him, and he was east upon the world with pitiless contempt. Now and then a provincial manager would have him in a favourite part, and on such occasions needed all precautions to keep him sober. On the evening that I was in Lanark, I saw, by bills through the town, that he was to give recitations, and I went to hear them. The place, I think, was an old market-house. The elocutionist came from behind a sort of screen. His face was pale and pimpled, his eyes heavy, his graceful person clad in vesture that was as worn as himself. His boots were patched, his trousers brushed to thin elemental threads, and his coat buttoned closely to the chin. He was accompanied by a female, already passée in age and beauty; her dress was tawdry, rouge was stuck upon her pallid and withered features. She took part in some dialogue pieces, and was affectation, vanity, and poverty, personified. The gentleman, although he seemed to have taken some strong drink, recited with exceeding truthfulness and force, and with a simplicity that combined fine perception with high culture. But to whom did he recite? Besides my young friend and self, there were two factory girls—three men, in soiled fustian jackets—half a dozen young scamps, that yelled like wolves or jackalls—a dandy, that kept his hat on, and sucked the head of his cane, and an old crimson-nosed toper, that snored after the first five minutes, to the close of the performance. The weary and wretched speaker retired from this beggarly bundle of auditors without enough to pay for the dirty tallow candles, which dropped their grease upon the floor,