

tion which he felt that he had himself provoked: and lent himself manfully to arrangements in his favour which were making by his friends, and which resulted in once more opening up to him the path of fortune, though far away from the scenes alike of his early hopes and recent faults. Under circumstances of peculiar promise, he was invited to join a commercial speculation in India; and in a few weeks the seas were to ratify that separation between George P*** and the rector's daughter, which, in her mind, was already consecrated by the grave of her father.

I have said that Caroline seldom weeps; but many and bitter, in those days, were the tears shed by the solitary girl. It was on a winter's evening, in one of those moments when her spirit was awakened by the scene of its utter desolation, that the window of the old oratory was opened from the garden, and George P*** stood once more, in the presence of the rector's daughter. The buoyant youth of sixteen was changed into a pale and wasted man; and he had come to take the words of forgiveness from the lips of Caroline, ere he parted from her for ever. No one saw their interview; but the old nurse heard the murmur of voices in the boudoir, and the sound of deep and passionate sobbing. What passed between them is known but to God and themselves—save by its result; and that result was what might have been anticipated from such an interview. What could be expected from two young beings, thus thrown together by the old tie which was the only one that time had left—at least, to Caroline? How was the orphan girl to be proof against the passionate pleading of the only heart which still beat in unison with her own? George had the art to persuade his mistress that the promise exacted by her father, in the prospect of his follies, would assuredly have been cancelled in favor of his repentance; and that, if the rector had been with them, that evening, in the oratory where they had so often sat together, he would not have stood between his child and the returning penitent whom she still loved. Caroline's reason and heart alike told her that this was indeed so: and ere the lovers parted on that night, they were once more betrothed. The friends who immediately presided over the fortunes of the orphan, entirely approved of the spirit in which her promise to the rector had been read, and gladly ratified the contract which once opened up a prospect of happiness to her bruised spirit. It was agreed that George should depart for Calcutta, alone: and, so soon as the success of his speculations had been ascertained, and arrangements made for her reception, that Caroline should follow, and become his wife. There were many in the village, however—where Caroline was beloved of all—who looked on this engagement with uneasiness; and prophesied that no good could come of a contract founded on a breach of promise to the dead.

And almost from the first, it seemed as if these forebodings were about to be realized. The ship in which George had taken his passage for India had sailed many months, yet no tidings of it reached England. Week after week of anxious suspense passed away, and the ill-fated girl drooped and faded before this new trial of the heart. At length, however, when the time which had elapsed left no hope in the minds of all others, the spirit of the orphan rallied, under some mysterious impulse, and hope came back to her heart, and bloom to her cheek. Her friends looked on uneasily—for she was obviously sustained by some delusion—and this “hoping against hope” argued an unsoundness of judgment, at which they trembled, but could not wonder. Strange and poetic fancies kept the poor girl happy, through that trying time. Dreams of enchanted islands, at which the ship had, perhaps, cast anchor, wooed by their wondrous beauty—visions of unknown continents, which the crew might have turned aside to explore, accounted to her for the delay. Then, there were times when her fancies took a more sober tone, and drew their salutations of her love's silence from something more like realities. But, amid them all, it never occurred to her to doubt that he would, one day, come back. He might have been shipwrecked, or taken by pirates—but his return was a portion of all her speculations—long after his friends had mourned him as dead! And, for this once, fortune was in alliance with her heart. When all who had hopes embarked in that vessel, save herself alone, had laid them in their graves, came letters, announcing George's arrival at Calcutta. The vessel had been driven far to the southward, by a long prevalence of adverse winds; and regained her course when famine had nearly deprived the crew and passengers of all power to avail themselves of the more auspicious weather. Caroline received the news without surprise—as what she had long expected: but, in the presence of her assured hopes, her tottering mind gradually regained its natural tone. And then came fresh tidings, announcing George's success; and Caroline set sail for India, to be, at length, united to the lover of her youth.

The weather was stormy enough, until the ship, in which she and her hopes were embarked, had reached the tropic latitudes; and, in the excitement of the novel scenes by which she was surrounded, Caroline's thoughts were diverted from dwelling much either on her past sorrows or her future prospects. But when the weather lulled, and a succession of calms and light breezes succeeded to the noise and bustle of fresh gales and heavy seas, a sort of tender melancholy stole over the spirit of the lonely girl. Amid the vast solitudes of the ocean—cut off from all old familiar

ties—the scenes of her orphaned condition came heavily to her heart; and though she strove to look forward to that happiness of which she was sailing in search, yet she had been too long the victim of disappointment to be altogether successful in her strife against that feeling of foreboding, so naturally born of the waste of waters and the torpid air.

It was one evening, after a day of more than usual depression, that Caroline descended to her cabin, in order to seek in sleep a refuge from the heaviness of spirit which she had vainly endeavoured to shake off. She sat long at her window, watching the shadows gradually steal over the world of waters by which she was surrounded; and flung herself, at length, upon her bed, weary in spirit and heavy at heart. But her slumbers were unrefreshing and her dreams disturbed: and, after a troubled sleep, of she could not guess how long, she found herself suddenly awake. Her face was hid in the bed-clothes; and vague and undefinable terror was upon her, which made her flesh creep, and chilled the blood within her veins. Cold drops of perspiration stood on her forehead, and her heart fainted, as the heart of one who stands in the presence of a disembodied spirit! She lay for some moments in this mortal trance; and then, with a presence of mind marvellous in one whose pulse stood still with fear, she argued herself into the conviction that she was under the impression of a nightmare, and, raising her head by a convulsive effort, looked forth into the cabin. The moon shone clear into the small chamber; and between her bed and the narrow window by which it gained entrance—in the direct path of its rays—stood the pale face and wasted form of George P***. The moonlight fell around him, like a mantle; and the eyes which had never before turned on her without the expression of love, were fixed on her's with a look of calm and passionless repose. With a loud scream, she buried her face again within the bed-clothes; and lay, she knew not how long, in the sleep of insensibility. When consciousness returned, and she, once more, ventured to look up, the apparition was gone, and the moonlight fell unintercepted on her bed. With a feeling like that of approaching death, she rose from her couch; and, flinging a cloak over her shoulders, ascended to the deck.

It was a beautiful but melancholy night. The moon glided, spectre-like, through the cloudless heaven; and flung, from her nearly full orb, upon the slumbering waters, that pale and mournful light which the young crescent planet never shed. The ship floated through the waters, before a breath so faint as to be scarcely perceptible, save from the creeping motion which it communicated; and, standing on the same tack with themselves, though all but motionless, the yards and shrouds of another ship rose right before her line of vision and the wan moon. Most of the canvass had been taken in; and the two vessels were evidently standing under easy sail, for the purposes of communication with other. As Caroline gazed upon the spars and cordage, with all their tracery defined in the pale moonlight, the strange vessel appeared to her excited imagination like a spectre-ship; and the same mysterious sense of terror crept to her heart, that had chilled its life-blood in the cabin which she had left! But the night-air revived her—and her fear passed away—and a sensation of exceeding tenderness and melancholy took its place. The phantoms of her mother and her sisters passed through her heart—and the echoes of old familiar voices floated to her ear; and it seemed to her as if her destiny were accomplished, and she was beckoned, by invisible hands, on board the spirit-ship that lay white before her, in the moon-beams. She sat on the poop of the vessel, and watched the strange craft that appeared to her heart like some mystery which it was bound to solve: till, letters having been exchanged between the ships, the object of her trance-like interest spread its wings, and glided slowly away through the moonlight. Never before had the lonely girl felt so lone. What was the strange ship to her, that her spirit yearned towards it, and her heart so died within her, to see it depart? All night, she fancied that she heard the sound of wings that went and came between the ships; and when, at length, in the gray of the morning, the stranger faded off into the distance, it seemed to her as if the spectre-ship; had vanished away into some sea grave!

That night at sea it was which left on the forehead of the rector's daughters, the solemn characters whose interpretation you have so often sought from me! The tale is soon told. When Caroline reached Calcutta, there was no one expecting her, and no one to meet her. Three days after the date of his letter, summoning over his bride, her lover had been seized with the fever of the country, and carried off in a few hours. In writing to Caroline, he had recommended her to come out by a vessel which was to sail some months later than that in which, for reasons of convenience, her friends had secured her passage. She was not, therefore, expected so soon; and when he knew that he was dying, he had made it his earnest request that he might be sent home to lie near her, in the old churchyard. His body was conveyed to England, in the vessel which had exchanged letters with the ship on board of which was the rector's daughter; and thus had the two met, for the last time, amid the moonlight solitudes of the sea!

This it is that has weighed more heavily on Caroline than all her sorrows besides. Never has she consoled herself for having misunderstood the warnings of her heart, in that unconscious meet-

ing, and passed forward to India, in search of happiness, while her lover was travelling homeward to his grave! The strangeness of that meeting—strange enough even to you and me, who are but unimpassioned listeners to the narration of an incident so singularly wild—has haunted her heart, like some high and solemn mystery; and it can scarcely surprise you to learn that the poor girl's mind is indelibly impressed with the reality of a visitation from her lover, in her cabin, while the two ships were in company. There are some circumstances, so striking in themselves and so strange in their combination, that it would be worse than idle to argue against the convictions which they leave behind, in the troubled spirit they assail. Caroline returned to England, and has resided since amid the friends to whom her story is known, and beside the graves of her perished hopes: and the memories of that night, acting upon a heart which time has once more tuned to all its early sweetness, have made her the intensely interesting and strangely beautiful being you now see her.

ELOQUENT EXTRACT.

BY REV. T. IRVING.

“Take up a handful of dust and ashes, and there behold the materials out of which the Lord God Almighty fashioned man—this living form of man, so quick and pregnant with all sensual and spiritual feeling. And if you would know the kindness which your father hath put forth in the works of his hands, look to the tribes, from the worm to the lion, all made of as good materials; in size, strength, fleetness, and durability, surpassing man. But, where is their counsel? where is their government? where is their knowledge? where is their religion? which of them has any fellowship with God, or reasonable intercourse with one another? The other creatures are but the outward endowments of man's senses, to clothe, to feed, to lay the lusty shoulder to his burden, to carry him about, to watch over him in sleep, and to minister in other ways to his entertainment.

“And what is the earth whereon you tread, and which spreads its flowery carpet beneath your feet? And what are its various fruits, with their varieties to sustain, to refresh, and to cherish human life; the corn, the wine, and the oil? And what the recurring seasons of divided time; the budding spring, the flowery summer, the joyful vintage, the lusty harvest; and the homely well-provided winter? And what the cheerful outgoings of morn, and dewy eve, and balmy sleep, and blessed action? What are they all, but the sweet cradle and the blessed condition into which our Father hath brought us, his children? Is there nothing fatherly in all this; in the costly preparation and glad welcome of our coming; and in the motherly bosom of plentiful affection and food stored for us? and in the fruitful dwelling-places to which we are born? Is it nothing, that the range of our mansion is to the starry heaven, and not cooped within the incumbrance of a narrow shell? Is it nothing, that the heavens drop down fatness upon us, and that the river of God's bounty watereth all the garden where we dwell; rather than that we should have gripped the rock for our bed, or found our birth-place in the oozy channels of the deep?

“Let us praise our heavenly Father, that he hath made us with more understanding than the beasts of the field, with more wisdom than the fowls of heaven; that he hath made us a little lower than the angels, and crowned us with glory and honor, and made us to have dominion over the works of his hands, and hath put all things under our feet; all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea. ‘Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?’ Look upon the treatment you have received at the hand of your Creator, and say if it doth not speak him more than fatherly in his love and carefulness. Our bread hath been provided, our water hath been sure; we have been protected from the summer's smiting heat, and from the winter's blasting cold. The damps of the night have not settled chill upon our raiment, nor hath the pestilence which wasteth at noonday blown its deadly blast across our path. The Lord hath been the length of our days, and the strength of our life, from our youth up to this day. He hath surrounded us with lovely children, to stand in our room when we are gone; and he hath given us a house and habitation among men; and he hath found us in the sight of men more favors than we have deserved. Hath he not hidden your faults from the knowledge of men? Hath he not been very tender to your reputation, which, by a turn of his providence, he could have blasted? Hath he not restrained the wrath of your enemies? No sword hath come up against us; no famine hath pinched our borders; no plague, nor pestilence, nor blasting winds have bitten us; no weapons formed against our liberties have ever prospered! Another year hath told out its months and seasons; but each day hath brought our necessary meals and luxurious entertainments; and each night hath brought its refreshment of dewy sleep; each sabbath hath its rest and blessed ministry of salvation. The heavens have dropped down fatness on our tabernacles. Very pleasant are our dwelling-places, and the places where our lines have fallen, to very good.”