

A STRANGE LOVE.

I clasped her, struggling, to my breast: I whispered love unknown; One kiss upon her lips I pressed— And she was all my own.

HENRIETTA TEMPLE

BY THE RIGHT HON. B. DISRAELI.

'But suppose we do not quit England. Suppose we buy a small estate and live at home.' 'A small estate at home! A small, new estate! Bought of Mr. Hopkins, a great tall-chandler, or some stocking-jobber about to make a new flight from a lodge to a park. Oh no! that would be too degrading.'

What gelatinous veal pies! What colossal hams! Those are evidently prize cheeses! And how inviting is the perfume of those various and variegated pickles! Then the bustle emulating the plenty; the ringing of bells, the clash of thoroughfares, the summing-up of ubiquitous waiters, and the all-pervading feeling of omnipotence, from the greatest who order what they please, to the landlady, who can produce and execute everything they can desire.

'So! we have arrived, I suppose, grumbled one of these gentlemen, taking off his night-cap. 'Yes, gentlemen, I am happy to say our journey is finished, said a more polite voice; and a very pleasant one I have found it. Porter, have the goodness to call a coach.'

'The day after the conversation in the library to which Father Glastonbury had been an unwilling listener, he informed his friends that it was necessary for him to visit the metropolis; and as young Ferdinand had never yet seen London, he proposed that he should accompany him. Sir Ratcliffe and Lady Armine cheerfully assented to this proposition; and as for Ferdinand, it is difficult to describe the delight which the anticipation of his visit occasioned him.

'It did indeed seem that Thursday would never come; yet it came at last. The travellers were obliged to rise before the sun, and drive over to Nottingham to meet their coach; so they bid their adieus the previous eve. As for Ferdinand, so fearful was he of losing the coach, that he scarcely slept, and was never convinced that he was really in time, until he found himself planted in breathless agitation outside of the Dart light post coach. It was the first time in his life that he had ever traveled outside of a coach.

appeared. 'My dear, dear Glastonbury,' he said, 'I heard you were here, and I would come. This shall be a holiday for us all. Why, Father, you bury yourself alive! Mr. Armine, said the Duchess, pointing to Ferdinand. 'Mr. Armine, how do you do? Your grandfather and I were well acquainted. I am glad to know his grandson. I hope your father, Sir Ratcliffe, and Lady Armine are well. My dear Father Glastonbury, I hope you have come to stay a long time. You must dine with us every day. You know we are very old-fashioned people; we do not go much into the world; so you will always find us at home, and we will do what we can to amuse your young friend. Why, I should think he was about the same age as Digby? Is he at Eton? His grandfather was. I shall never forget the time he cut off old Barnard's pig-tail. He was a wonderful man, poor Sir Ferdinand! he was indeed.'

While his Grace and Father Glastonbury maintained their conversation, Ferdinand conducted himself with so much spirit and propriety towards the rest of the party, and gave them each a lively and graceful narrative of all his travels up to town, and the wonders he had already witnessed, that they were quite delighted with him; and, in short, from this moment, during his visit to London he was scarcely ever out of their society, and every day became a greater favorite with them. His letters to his mother, for he wrote to her almost every day, recounted all their successful efforts for his amusement, and it seemed that he passed his mornings in a round of sight-seeing, and that he went to the play every night of his life. Perhaps there never existed a human being who at this moment more thoroughly enjoyed life than Ferdinand Armine.

It was arranged that Ferdinand should join his regiment by the next Mediterranean packet, which was not to quit Falmouth for a fortnight. Father Glastonbury and himself, therefore, lost no time in bidding adieu to their kind friends in London, and hastening to Armine. They arrived the day after the Gazette. They found Sir Ratcliffe waiting for them at the town, and the fond smile and cordial embrace with which he greeted Father Glastonbury more than repaid that man for all his exertions.

'My dear Father Glastonbury, you cannot suppose that I believe that the days of magic have returned. This commission, both Countess and myself feel, that is, we are certain, that you are at the bottom of it all. The commission is purchased. I could not expect the Duke, deeply as I feel his generous kindness, to purchase a commission for my son; I could not permit it. No! Father Glastonbury! and here Sir Ratcliffe became more animated, you could not permit it, my honor is safe in your hands.' Sir Ratcliffe paused for a reply.

pended a portrait of Lady Barbara, which she had bequeathed him in her will. The floor was covered with so many boxes and cases that it was not very easy to steer a course when you had entered. Father Glastonbury, however, beckoned to his companion to seat himself in one of his two chairs, while he unlocked a small cabinet, from a drawer of which he brought forth a paper. 'It is my will,' said Father Glastonbury, handing it to Sir Ratcliffe, who laid it down on the table. 'Nay, I wish you, my dear friend, to peruse it, for it concerns yourself. I would rather learn its contents from yourself, if you positively desire me, replied Sir Ratcliffe. 'I have left everything to our child,' said Father Glastonbury; for thus, when speaking to the father alone, he would often style the son. 'May it be long before he enjoys the bequest,' said Sir Ratcliffe, brushing away a tear; 'long, very long.'

'Excellent, kind-hearted man!' said Sir Ratcliffe, pressing the hand of Father Glastonbury in his own; 'I accept your offering in the spirit of perfect love; believe me, dearest friend, it was no feeling of false pride that for a moment influenced me; I only felt—' 'That in venturing upon this humble service I deprived myself of some portion of my means of livelihood; you are mistaken. When I cast my lot at Armine I sank a portion of my capital on my life; so slender are my wants here, and so little does your dear lady permit me to desire, that, believe me, I have never yet expended upon myself this apportioned income; and as for the rest, it is, as you have seen, destined for our Ferdinand. Yet a little time and Adrian Glastonbury must be gathered to his fathers. Why, then, deprive him of the greatest gratification of his remaining years? the consciousness that, to be really servicable to those he loves, it is not necessary for him to cease to exist.'

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'It was the last day; on the morrow he was to quit Armine. He strolled about among the mouldering chambers of the castle, and a host of thoughts and passions, like clouds in a stormy sky, coursed over his hitherto serene and light-hearted breast. In this first great struggle of his soul some symptoms of his latent nature developed themselves, and amid the rifts of the mental tempest, occasionally he caught some glimpses of self-knowledge. Nature, that had endowed him with a fiery imagination and a reckless courage, had tempered those dangerous, and, hitherto, those undeveloped and untried gifts, with a heart of infinite sensibility. Ferdinand Armine was, in truth, a singular blending of the daring and the soft; and now, as he looked around him and thought of his illustrious and fallen race, and especially of that extraordinary man, of whose splendid and ruinous career, that man's own creation the surrounding pile, seemed a fitting emblem, he

asked himself if he had not inherited the energies with the name of his grandfathers, and if their exertion might not yet revive the glories of his line. He felt within him alike the power and the will; and while he indulged in magnificent reveries of fame and glory and heroic action, of which career, indeed, his approaching departure was to be the commencement, the association of ideas led his recollection to those beings from whom he was about to depart. His fancy dropped like a bird of paradise in full wing, tumbling exhausted in the sky; he thought of his innocent and happy boyhood, of his father's thoughtful benevolence, his sweet mother's gentle assiduity, and Father Glastonbury's devotion; and he demanded aloud, in a voice of anguish, whether fate could not indeed supply a lot more exquisite than to pass existence in these calm and beautiful bowers with such beloved companions.

'No adieus to-night!' said Lady Armine with a gasp, as she scarcely returned the habitual embrace of her son. 'We shall be all up to-morrow. So wishing his last good night with a charged heart and faltering tongue, Ferdinand and Armine took up his candle and retired to his chamber. He could not refrain from exercising an unusual scrutiny when he had entered the room. He held up the light to the old accustomed walls, threw a parting glance of affection at the curtains. There was the glass vase which his mother had never omitted each day to fill with fresh flowers, and the counterpane that was her own handiwork. He kissed it; and, flinging off his clothes, was glad when he was surrounded with darkness and buried in his bed.

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'Mother, dearest mother, think of my father; think how much his hopes are placed on me; think, dearest mother, how much I have to do. All now depends on me, you know. I must restore our house. 'O! Ferdinand, I dare not express the thoughts that rise upon me; yet I would say that, had I but my child; I could live in peace; how, or where, I care not. 'Dearest mother, you unman me! 'It is very wicked. I am a fool. I never, no! never shall I pardon myself for this night, Ferdinand. 'Sweet mother, I beseech you calm yourself. Believe me we shall indeed meet very soon, and somehow or other a little bird whispers to me we shall yet be very happy. 'But will you be the same Ferdinand to me as before? Ay! There it is, my child. You will be a man when you come back, and be ashamed to love your mother. Promise me now,' said Lady Armine, with extraordinary energy, 'promise me, Ferdinand, you will always love me. Do not let them make you ashamed of loving me. They will joke, and jest, and ridicule all home affections. You are very young, sweet love, very, very young, and very inexperienced and susceptible. Do not let them spoil your frank and beautiful nature. Do not let them lead you astray. Remember Armine, dear, dear Armine, and those who live there. Trust me, oh! yes, indeed believe me, darling, you will never find friends in this world like those you leave at Armine. 'I know it,' exclaimed Ferdinand, with streaming eyes; 'God be my witness how deeply I feel that truth. If I forget thee and them, dear mother, may God indeed forget me.'

'My Ferdinand, said Lady Armine, in a calm tone, 'I am better now. I hardly am sorry that I did come now. It will be a consolation to me in your absence to remember all you have said. Good night, my beloved child; my darling child, good night. I shall not come down to-morrow, dear. We will not meet again; I will say good-bye to you from the window. Be happy, my dear Ferdinand, and as you say indeed, we shall soon meet again. Eight-and-forty weeks! Why what are eight-and-forty weeks? It is not quite a year. Courage, my sweet boy! let us keep up each other's spirits. Who knows what may yet come from this your first venture into the world? I am full of hope. I trust you will find all that you want. I packed up everything myself. Whenever you want anything write to your mother. Mind, you have eight packages; I have written them down on a card and placed it on the hall table. And take the greatest care of old Sir Ferdinand's sword. I am very superstitious about that sword, and while you have it I am sure you will succeed. I have ever thought that had he taken it with him to France all would have gone right with him. God bless, God Almighty bless you, child. Be of good heart. I will write you everything that takes place, and as you say, we shall soon meet. Indeed, after to-night, she added in a more mournful tone, 'we have ought else to think of but of meeting. I fear it is very late. 'Your father will be surprised at my absence.' She rose from her bed and walked up and down the room several times in silence; then again approaching him, she folded him in her arms and quitted the chamber without again speaking.

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