

ANGLO-AMERICAN MAGAZINE.

VOL. VI.—TORONTO, APRIL, 1855.—NO. IV.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A PORTRAIT
PAINTER.

MRS. ST. AUBYN.—No. III.

If I stood in the fabled palace of Truth, and were there asked the name of the most beautiful woman I ever looked upon, I am sure my reply would be, "Margaret Vernon." It is not that she is associated in my mind with any pleasing incident, or that she ever stood very high in my favour; I knew her but slightly, and all I saw and heard of her tended to produce anything rather than an agreeable impression respecting her. But for mere personal beauty, the beauty of perfect symmetry, with which no single fault could be found, I certainly never saw any one who equalled her. Shall I try to sketch her portrait in words! I never did so on canvas, for she is not my heroine, though deeply involved in the incidents of my story. Let me attempt to pourtray the beautiful Margaret Vernon at the age of twenty-three. She was the eldest daughter of Sir Gilbert Vernon, a man of immense wealth, of which he was far less proud than of his ancient title and unblemished descent. Her mother died when she was seven years of age, leaving Miss Vernon and a sister five years younger, to the care of their father, who died just as Margaret attained her nineteenth year.—Certain traits in her character, early manifested and carefully cherished, induced Sir Gilbert, on finding himself attacked by an incurable disease, to execute a will, by which he emancipated his eldest daughter from all

VOL. VI.—20.

control on her twenty-first birthday; and gave her the sole guardianship of the young Agnes during the remaining five years of her minority.

In person, Miss Vernon was somewhat taller than the ordinary run of women, though not remarkably so, and the dignity of her carriage would scarcely have become a figure less perfect and graceful than hers. Her head was beautifully placed on a neck and shoulders, so fair and spotless, that no ivory could have surpassed them in polish and purity. Her rich dark hair was simply braided from her magnificent forehead, and twisted up behind, one massive tress being permitted to rest on her neck. Her eyes were of the deepest richest hazel that can be imagined, set off by long lashes of intense blackness. So beautiful a temple should have had a correspondent spirit to inhabit it, and in some points, Margaret Vernon's mind was not unfitted to dwell there. She was warm in her affections, liberal in her charities, honourable in her worldly dealings; but then she was haughty and unbending, proud to an extreme, and somewhat inclined to tyrannise, where she had the power to do so. She loved her sister Agnes, but she loved her in her own way, and did not always take the most pleasing methods of proving her attachment. Her excessive care and watchfulness placed a restraint on Agnes's every action, that amounted to a positive thralldom. Much as Agnes loved Margaret, she could not but feel that her eldest sister's absence was like a peep at freedom. She felt continually