

SOME PASSAGES IN THE LIFE OF SUSAN ANSTEY.*

BY H. B. M.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WALK BY MOONLIGHT.

A merry group sallied forth from the mansion of Miss Wilmoth, on their way to the city of Stourbourg. It was moonlight, radiant as day, yet soft as pearl, and they sent away their carriages, and would walk home in company. On turning a corner of the road they came suddenly on the descent of the hill, and the city lay spread out before them. The citizens of Stourbourg record with pride, that the Prince de Joinville—who, albeit being the son of a king, is besides the most far travelled tourist of modern times, and therefore competent to afford valuable testimony on such matters,—on his visit to their city, affirmed it to be the most splendid and beautiful, in point of situation, of any collection of human dwellings he had ever visited. We think he was perfectly right. Surrounded on all sides by lofty hills wooded or cultivated to the top, with handsome villas it may be on their sides, and sloped off into gardens and vineyards, as they incline themselves into the plateau where the city stands; at the junction of three noble rivers, whose confluence has formed the valley where the buildings have been reared, it appears to sleep amidst rivers and mountains like some fragment of European civilization, taken and transported amid the rude grandeurs of the yet untamed regions of the West. Strange is it to see long piles of manufactories, with huge mill chimneys, iron forges and furnaces, lead works, salt works, manufactories of every sort, reared at the foot of those mountains and beside those rivers, where thirty years before the Indian hunted the otter and the bear, and alligators wandered among the reeds; where an unbroken forest covered the hill side, and nothing disturbed those waters but the shooting across of some chance solitary canoe. The city looked splendid in the moonlight. The rush and the roar of forges and factories in the day time, to which the blowing of all Vulcan's furnaces, I have often thought, could be but a child's whistle in comparison, were now hushed. The dense smoke, from which the buildings loomed out in the day-light as from amongst the

vapours of some Lethean pit, was now cleared away; and the unsightly black buildings, and awkward mill chimneys seemed transformed by the magic of the moonlight, into architectural monuments or palaces of fairy land. Only the rush and the red glow of the iron furnaces, as they sent their reflection up to the skies, and their long trains of smoke like some gigantic snake curling and winding on its way in the air between earth and heaven—showed that yet labour ceased not, but in reversal of the Divine decree, toiled on while nature slept. The three rivers slumbered in silver, except where the lights of a high pressure boat swept past like a shooting star, as with double engine, with its alternate "cough, cough," she passed on to her destination—thousands of miles away. A boat canal was cut like a line of silver, and ran parallel with the river like a miniature rivulet, as far as the eye could reach, till there arose at its termination on the outskirts of the city, a high hill crowned with a columned building, like a fair Grecian temple of the olden time.

Susan Anstey's mind was perhaps at this moment more full of the scene than of any other subject, though she was sensible of matters more nearly affecting herself and others interfering with her entire enjoyment of it. She, with her companion, quickly fell behind the others—a retardation which Underwood managed to accomplish, apparently in no way unseconded by her wishes. Little was spoken, for Miss Anstey seemed to have little inclination to broach any subject, and Underwood, though a great rattle, was apparently suffering from a slight degree of embarrassment which interfered with his usual volubility. At last he said:

"It was so kind of you to accompany me to-night, how can I thank you—feeling I have so many things to say to you, so much of import to my future happiness?"

"I knew you desired it," said Susan, "and therefore gave up my intention of remaining till to-morrow, resolving to walk home to-night."

"So generous—so kind"—interrupted Underwood hurriedly; "then I do not deceive myself, and you—?"

"Not another word!" said Susan, interrupting