

THE HEARSTONE

DEVOTED TO CHOICE LITERATURE ROMANCE &

VOLUME III. GEO. E. DESBARATS, No. 1, PLACE D'ARCADE HILL. MONTREAL, SATURDAY, MARCH 23, 1872. TERMS, \$2.00 PER ANNUM IN ADVANCE. No. 12.

COMMON PLACES.

BY S. W. DUFFIELD

The bee from the clover bloom
Is ready to lift his wings;
I found him gathering honey
Out of the common things.

The bird to the maple perch
The twigs and the stubble brings;
He is building his love a cottage
Out of the common things.

The poet sits by himself—
What do you think he sings;
Nothing! He gets no music
Out of the common things!

REGISTERED in accordance with the Copyright Act of 1868.

IN AFTER-YEARS; OR, FROM DEATH TO LIFE.

BY MRS. ALEXANDER ROSS.

CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

He knocked at the castle door, a knock speaking of one having authority; a servant in livery opened the door, while Adam, who had long been installed a sort of Senechal, came forward, dressed in plain clothes to welcome the visitor.

The light from the chandelier hanging in the centre of the hall, fell directly on Sir Richard, as he took off his hat and gloves, placing them on the same table on which last in the hall, he had placed the dead dog.

"Sir Richard," said Adam, in a voice replete with surprise, dread, and disappointment, his face expressive of anything but satisfaction at the return of his long absent master.

An old dog almost blind from age, followed Adam into the hall, went up to Sir Richard, sniffed about his feet, walked round him two or three times, and then bounded up to his breast, ending by lying down upon his long lost master's feet, and beating the floor with his ample tail. Sir Richard bent down to fondle the dog, taking no notice of Adam's recognition, although it was most satisfactory to him he was known and acknowledged at once.

"Caser, poor Caser, this is a good welcome home, I hope you will live many years to give me such a welcome."

"You are welcome home, Sir Richard," his old servant, now somewhat recovered from his surprise, found breath to say.

"Forced prayers are no devotion, Adam, I have no thanks to give for such a welcome," was the ungracious reply.

"To whom do these gloves belong?" asked Sir Richard, pointing to several pairs lying on the table.

"They were Sir Robert's, sir, and the young ladies will not allow them to be moved."

"And those canes, these hats?" pointing to each as they were named.

"These also belonged to Sir Robert, the young ladies will not have anything that belonged to his person touched, or removed out of its wonted place."

"Have them burned by to-morrow morning, let them never offend my sight again," spoken in a calm voice as if he gave an ordinary command.

"What rooms do you use now?"

"When we have no company, the lower dining and drawing rooms, there has been no company here since Sir Robert's death."

"Open the drawing room."

The old man did as he was bid, Sir Richard walked into a handsome room, the dark morose velvet curtains, and carpets of which set off by contrast, the silver and gold plate with which the sideboard was laden, a large fire burning in the grate was the only light in the room, the red glow and deep shadows it flung around, giving an air of solemn beauty that accorded well with the pictures of old knights in their armour, and their ladies in the powdered hair, and stiff ruff of the time when Mary of Guise held Court at Holyrood, who looked down from the old walls, on the last man of their race, as he came among them again from his long banishment.

"You have made quite an improvement here," said Sir Richard, as he quitted the dining room, "who are in the drawing room?" I hear several voices.

"Lady Morton, the two young ladies, and General Lindsay's son, Captain Arthur."

"Who is Lady Morton?"

"Lady Hamilton's sister."

"Who brought young Lindsay here?"

"He came with Lady Morton, the young ladies were visiting for a week at Inchdrewer since Sir Robert's death, Lady Morton and Captain Lindsay accompanied them home."

"Has Lady Hamilton been here since I went abroad?"

"The night of Sir Robert's death, she came here about midnight, after the body was laid out, and remained an hour by his side in prayer; she was never here before, she has not been since."

"Open the drawing room door."

Adam did as he was bid, announcing "Sir Richard Cunningham," repeating the name twice.

The two girls evinced no surprise, but coloured deeply, and seemed to shrink with



A FRIENDLY GREETING.

fear as the unexpected guest approached them, while their visitors looked with awe on the man whom they saw for the first time, and had so long believed to be a tenant of the tomb.

Sir Richard bowed with studied politeness to Lady Morton and Captain Lindsay, and seating himself opposite the twin girls, who occupied one couch, examined carefully, first the features of Agnes, then those of Margaret.

If there had been the least shade of likeness to Lady Hamilton, in either face, the colour of eye or hair, the form of cheek or lip, the slightest expression or air of her he had worshipped as a divinity in his youth, and strive as he might, could not now in his old age tear from his heart, but loved with all the romance of a boy, all the strength of his manhood, if the dimple, from her smile, the uplifting of her eye, had only left the slightest impress on these young faces, what a different fate in life might have been theirs; nay not only theirs alone, its influence would have shown itself in all their after life, extending even to the death bed of the hard old man who sat with almost bated breath, searching for the Douglas eye, the Douglas hand, anything however slight, which could strike the electric chain which bound him to Isabel Douglas. No, it could not be, there was neither shade nor line of the Douglas blood in either fair face, it was Hamilton, all Hamilton, the hated eye, the hated air of handsome William Hamilton, the very face which excited all his evil passions in the boy he stole, because he fancied that to him his mother's brow and lips were given; and when the boy grew, and he saw he was every inch a Hamilton, he in his hatred of the father in the innocent son, became day by day more fiendlike, until the seed he had sown with so unparing a hand, bore fruit, and the boy became a man who also wished for revenge; and he had it, most amply, while his persecutor counted the days and weary hours, longing for death and it came not, passed an age of worldly woe, between the bare wall of a prison cell in his own Castle.

And did the law of retribution not work also in the life of Robert Cunningham? hated as the

man he believed to be his father was, that matted gray head in the eastern tower, came between him and every soft loving caress of his beautiful wife, every dimpled smile of his innocent children; and now those tenderly cherished and dearly loved daughters were in the power of the man, he himself had helped to make twice a fiend.

The entrance of Sir Richard had filled everyone present with the utmost surprise, except the girls, they knew he had been confined in the eastern tower, that he had made his escape there from, that the story of his death abroad was a myth, and they had been in daily fear of his walking in upon them, as he had now done.

But it was not the courtly gentleman who now sat opposite them, they expected to see, but a bearded maniac, and the shiver which passed through each slight frame, as they glanced furtively at the cold glittering black eye, which seemed to scan their inmost thoughts, with the intense look fixed on their faces, told them they knew already that they had more cause to dread the same man than the madman of their imagination.

They had often talked to each other of the captive of the tower, and in their walks around the Castle, and its pleasure grounds would start at each hare or rabbit that crossed their paths, fancying the fiend like man their father had sent them to feed would start forth upon them, and perhaps tear them to pieces; so strong had this fear grown upon them, that they did not dare to leave the house, not even to wander on the lawn dotted with its little flower beds, without being accompanied by Adam.

Now that the real Sir Richard was before them, their hearts beating almost audibly, as their eyes fell under the piercing glance of those basilisk eyes, they intuitively felt, that the handsomely dressed punctilious gentleman, they now knew as their grandfather, was a hundred times more to be dreaded than the maniac their forefathers had conjured up.

When Sir Richard had satisfied himself that he had gained all the information, which face reading could give of the frightened looking

young girls, he turned with the utmost civility to Lady Morton saying,

"Lady Morton, I believe?"

The lady bowed in acknowledgement of her name.

"I had the happiness of knowing your sister, Lady Hamilton, as Miss Douglas; since she became Lady of Inchdrewer we have scarcely met."

"Lady Hamilton leaves her Castle walls so seldom, this does not surprise me," was the lady's answer "besides your long absence abroad made it impossible, for those who never left their Scottish homes to see you."

"True, this night is the first time in eighteen years, I have entered the doors of my own Castle; I find things have not deteriorated in my absence, I am old now, I will not again be inclined to roam."

As he spoke the two girls looked at him with great wondering eyes, and each asked herself the same question; "could their Father have been labouring under a delusion, when he sent them to feed the prisoner in the tower chamber?"

"Lady Hamilton must be many years your senior," continued Sir Richard, still addressing Lady Morton.

"She certainly is my senior, although I am frequently mortified by having her called the younger of the two, she looks so much younger than I do, yet I have no cause to complain," continued she smiling, "we Douglasses are a long lived race, a stranger would not fancy I had counted forty years."

As Lady Morton ceased speaking, Sir Richard gazed in unfeigned surprise, at the smooth cheek and bright eyes of the speaker, the long heavy curls of her raven hair, her slight elastic figure, all betokening a woman scarce thirty years old.

"Lady Hamilton must have passed a life of greater happiness, than falls to the lot of most mortals, if with ten years more than you have seen, she seems younger than you."

"As you know Sir Richard, she has not been exempt from the ills of life, she has had more than one startling episode of grief, the loss of

her eldest son, the first and dearest; her gallant young husband's death, so far from home, he, the brave and true, the loved of all, his grave so unapproachable in the deep blue sea, over which she cannot weep; and then fair Margaret Hamilton's departure, we could scarcely call it death, we almost saw her enter the heavens; these to most women would be griefs which kill, but Isabel has a consolation known to few in the strong faith which for her forms a bridge over which she passes at will to hold communion with her beloved dead.

When Lady Morton ceased speaking, there was a pause of some minutes, interrupting which her Ladyship said as if the circumstance had just occurred to her,

"Sir Richard allow me to introduce you to Captain Arthur Lindsay, a distant relation of yours, and your heir at law but for those young ladies."

The inclination Sir Richard gave his head when introduced to Captain Lindsay, was so slight as to be scarcely perceptible, causing the lady to imagine he did not exactly realize who the young gentleman was, and she added "a son of General Lindsay you know."

"I was aware of the young man's name and parentage previous to entering the room," was the ungracious reply, delivered with a stony British stare full in the face of the person spoken of.

Lady Morton now recollected a feud which had subsisted between the Cunninghames and Lindsays for two or three generations back; Sir Robert had wisely ignored such time respected usages, deeming them more honoured in the breach than the observance, but it was evident the old feud was sacred in Sir Richard's eyes, and she resolved to shape her course accordingly.

"Can you send me home to night Sir Richard?" she asked, "I have been here for a week, and my own carriage was sent back to Inchdrewer to do duty for Lady Hamilton, her having met with an accident."

"My carriage is at your Ladyship's service, shall I order it?" was Sir Richard's prompt reply, with his hand already on the bell pull.

"Thank you very much."

The lady accompanied by the twin sisters, at once retired to arrange her dress for her drive home, it was a short distance, not over five miles, and she felt glad to leave a house, where little foresight was required to see the sport of discord had entered together with the master, whose return would be looked upon by his grand children, and dependants, as their misfortune.

Arrived within the precincts of the room occupied by Lady Morton during her visit to Haddon, the two girls gave utterance to their feelings, throwing her arms around Lady Morton's neck.

"Agnes was the first to speak."

"Oh Lady Morton, what shall become of us? that terrible man he looked in both our faces as if he would slay us, and he has not yet spoken one word to either Margaret or me."

"There is but one course left for you to pursue. Sir Richard Cunningham has never borne a character of great amiability or consideration for others, but report generally lessens the good in us, and magnifies the evil; there is a soft side in every human heart, you must be loving, dutiful to him, find favour in his sight, endeavour to think of him only as the parent of the father you have loved so well; and pray to God to enable you to do your duty, he assured it will all come right in the end."

"I cannot be loving, or what others would call dutiful to him, I know too much of his evil deeds. The last words we ever heard our dear Father speak were words of warning, bidding us beware of this awful man."

"My dear Agnes," replied Lady Morton smiling, "your imagination has carried you beyond your better judgment, when your Father was in life, and for years before you were born, Sir Richard Cunningham was deemed a tenant of the grave, how then could your Father have warned you to beware of him?"

"Take my word for it the best course for you to pursue is a conciliatory one, I know you think he will endeavour to make you give up Arthur Lindsay, and no doubt he will, but in a few years you will be free to judge for yourself; he cannot disinherite you, and if he could, Arthur Lindsay is his heir, do what is right and leave the result to God, pray to him to lead you in the way you should go, so will you have good success."

"I cannot love Sir Richard Cunningham, I loathed and dreaded him before ever I saw his face, I could not let my eyes rest on his were it to make me Queen of England from sea to sea, and as to giving up Arthur Lindsay, one whom my darling Father approved so highly as the husband of my choice, never, never; Oh! Lady Morton take us with you to Inchdrewer, I could not sleep within the same walls which shelter that terrible man. I know Lady Hamilton will make us welcome, she told us she loved us as her own children."

The girl paused exhausted by the emotion she could not control, standing in front of Lady Morton, with clasped hands, her eyes almost wild with excitement, she waited for the reply which she believed was to seal her doom.

Lady Morton put her arm round the excited girl's waist, and drawing her towards her, sat down on a sofa, placing one of the sisters on either side.

"Listen to me," said she, "and I will in a few words convince you that what you propose, would be highly improper, as well as useless.