

time will pay up the arrears of the long debt that fortune owes you. It is an old and hacknied saying, that riches cannot confer happiness upon their possessors; your uncle and cousin are living demonstrations of the truth of this proposition. He is affluent, and might enjoy all the luxuries of life, yet he toils with as much assiduity to increase his large property, as the poorest labourer does to earn bread to support a numerous family. You will, perhaps, say that it is well for me to preach—that the grapes are sour—that I speak with indifference of the good which Providence has placed beyond my reach. Geoffrey, I was once independent of the world, and regarded wealth with the utmost indifference whilst I was its envied possessor."

"And what has deprived you of such an advantage?" I eagerly exclaimed. This was the first allusion he had ever made to his former circumstances, and I was anxious to draw him into a general confession.

"My own folly; I spent a fine fortune like a prodigal, and for a few years made a dashing appearance amongst beings as thoughtless and dissipated as myself. The extent of my ambition was to be reckoned a fine gentleman. My imbecile desire was gratified. The world applauds such madness and I had friends and flatterers at will. My brief career soon terminated, and the world wore a different aspect. I was deserted by all my gay associates; I knew that this would be the result of my altered circumstances, yet I was babe enough to weep, when I found the truth of the old proverb realized in my own person. These are mortifying lessons which experience, wisdom's best counselor, daily teaches the sons of men, and a person must be either very insensible or self-conceited, who cannot profit by her valuable instructions. The hour which brought home to my heart the humiliating conviction that I was a person of no consequence, that the world could go on very well without me, that my merry companions would not be one jot less facetious, though I was absent from their convivial parties, was the most fortunate of my life. A knowledge of myself made me a wiser and a better man; I called my creditors together, and paid them to the uttermost farthing, and when this painful duty was discharged, and I was free of the world in the most literal sense, I felt happy—I had abused the good things of this life, whilst they were mine, and I determined to work hard, that I might learn to use them better. A friend whom I had never regarded in the days of my prosperity, generously came forward to assist me, and offered to purchase for me a commission in the army, and had not circumstances of a peculiar nature influenced me to enter this office, I should most gladly have accepted his offer."

And what were the circumstances to which you allude?" George sighed deeply, and passed his hand thoughtfully across his brow. "Excuse me, dear

Geoffrey, these reminiscencies are too painful to recall at a time when we are every moment liable to interruption. At some fitting opportunity I will tell you all; but this brief sketch may, if you please, afford a useful lesson. It will shew you the vanity of those things on which young and ardent minds are too apt to fix their affections. Live in the world, Geoffrey, but never for it—whilst you perform your relative duties conscientiously, its good or bad word will be a matter of indifference. The only world which can really conduce to your happiness is within the confines of your own breast. It is a territory which no change of fortune can wrest from you whilst you remain true to yourself."

I was much touched with this candid exposure of his past faults and follies, though, as usual, disappointed in the general terms in which they were revealed. Harrison spoke like a philosopher, but I saw the tears in his eyes. He was conscious that I remarked his weakness, and turned to the parchment he was copying, with an air of cheerful resignation, but the next moment the pen he had grasped so tightly was flung to some distance, and he looked me full in the face.

"This is the weakness of human nature, Geoffrey; when I think of what I am, and contrast the present with the past, it brings a cloud over my mind, which generally dissolves in tears. The years so uselessly wasted rise up in dread array against me. All the floodgates of my heart are broken up by the tide of bitter and remorseful feeling, which for a moment overwhelms my soul. But see," he continued, dashing the gathering mist from his eyes—and resuming his peculiarly benevolent smile; "the storm is over, and the sun of hope already brightens the gloomy horizon. My sorrows were of my own seeking, and I never recall them in vain."

"And you are happier than I," I exclaimed, regarding his April face with admiration and astonishment. "You can smile through your tears?"

"And so would you, Geoffrey, if like me you had brought your passions under the subjection of reason."

"It is no easy task," I replied, to besiege a city when passion defends the walls, and at every sally forces the besieger back to the trenches. I will, however, commence the campaign, by striving to forget that there is a world beyond these gloomy walls, in whose busy scenes I am forbidden to mingle."

"Valliantly resolved, Geoffrey, but a truce to all further colloquy. Here comes the heir of the house of Moncton."

"I will dispute his right to that title one of these days," I replied, resuming my pen. "Though my fortunes are at the lowest ebb, I cannot forget that I am the only male representative of the elder branch of the family."