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From the New Havener.

GERTRUDE DALTON.

A TALE OF TRUTH.

Ask, what is human life? The sage replies,
With disappointment low'ring in his eyes:
A painful passage o'er a restless flood,
A vain pursuit of fugitive false good."

COWPER.

"Out, out brief candle! Life's but a walking shadow!"

SHAKESPEARE.

William Melbourne was a merchant of the city of New York, who possessed a princely fortune, and an unblemished character. He traced his lineage through the blood of heroes, to a German prince; and rarely neglected the memory of his fathers, when occasion offered. The revolution, which gave us a national existence, had so far impaired his fortune as to induce him to embark in the mercantile life, in which he had been highly successful, and accumulated wealth "beyond desire." Possessing naturally a kind and generous heart, he might have been the "orphan's father and the wanderer's friend," but the pride of family and wealth, the power to move in pomp and state amid those by fortune less favored than himself, had chilled and dried the once gushing fountains of his heart—had turned back the natural current of his soul, and gave selfishness the empire. His wife was an accomplished and amiable woman. Mistress of all the bright virtues that adorn her sex, she breathed hope into the bosom of affliction, and scattered smiles and joy on all around her.

Alonzo was their only son; and though not brilliant, he had a firmness and energy of character, upon which his anxious parents built their future hopes. Unfortunately for man, talents and genius, without exalted virtues to light them onward, are not unfrequently a curse to their possessor and the world. Alonzo had listened to an unwise father's precepts, and drank in his deeply rooted prejudices; and conscious of being sole heir to a magnificent fortune, he quenched the incipient efforts of his native powers—while pride, selfishness, and the darker passions, ruled his fortune with a rod of iron.

Though Mr. Melbourne esteemed the mercantile as one of the most honorable professions, he nevertheless designed that his son should never embark in it, but live at ease upon that wealth he should leave him. Alas! what a stranger to real happiness must that father be, who would bid his son seek it in a life of idleness and pleasure. Alonzo had recently returned from the University, sapiens in nomine, sinon de facto.

The first thoughts of the anxious parents were directed to the choice of a partner for their son, who might curb his fiery passions—charm him away from the dangers which beset him—and, like a guardian angel, watch over his future destiny.—Gertrude Dalton, the niece of Mr. and Mrs. Melbourne, was left an orphan by the premature death of both her parents, when but three years of age; and from that tender and helpless period, she had found the Melbournes kind and affectionate parents. They had spared no expense to adorn a character, rich in every native excellence, with all the higher accomplishments of the age. Gertrude was well worthy of their tenderest care—for heaven had given her commanding talents, combined with a sweetness of temper, which won the involuntary prayers and smiles of all who knew her. You could not gaze upon her polished brow, the large blue interpreter of her soul, or hear the soft full tones of her rich and thrilling voice, and pass unheeding onward to forget. We need not, therefore, wonder if the Melbournes hoped a day might come, when a still tenderer tie would bind to their hearts this noble scion of a kindred stock. Though they well knew how unlike were the proud and fiery spirit of Alonzo,

and the gentle being with whom they would unite him—yet hope whispered to their anxious hearts that Alonzo might reform—Gertrude would make the sacrifice to seal the happiness of her adopted parents. The heart of Alonzo approved of the choice, as he had long since learned it was not a brother's love he bore the sweet companion of his childhood's sports. Of Gertrude's feelings, we may further learn, from a brief conversation, which at this time took place between her and Alonzo.

It was a bright luxurious night in August, when by Alonzo's wish, they sallied forth to breathe the garden air, and banquet on the beauties of the bright queen, that in the "stilly night," holds over the world her vaunted empire. 'Tis then

"There is a dungeon silence in the hour,
A stillness, which leaves room for the full soul
To open all itself, without the power
Of calling wholly back its self control."—BYRON.

They walked for some time in silence, one fearing to breathe the feelings of his heart; the other dreading a declaration, the consequences of which must mark her destiny for weal or woe. This was a bitter hour for Gertrude. She had loved Alonzo as a playmate—but, since she could read his character, her gentle nature shrank from his lowering brow, his haughty glance and unschooled passions. After running over events during their last separation, Alonzo observed—

"But, my fair cousin, you seem quite altered since last we rambled through these flowery walks; you are silent—thoughtful—and seem less joyed at my return than I could wish. Has time dimmed the memory of our childhood hours?"

"Time! the corrector where our judgments err,
The test of truth—love—sole philosopher,
For all beside are sophists."

"Time," said Gertrude, "has doubtless brought its wonted change; I am older, perhaps less gay and thoughtless than when last you saw me—but, think not, cousin, I am forgetful of the past, or regardless of the future—for, when memory steals not back to other days, hope cheers, and points our pathway onward."

"I rejoice," said Alonzo, "that the contemplation of the future gives us pleasure."

"Hope and fear, Alonzo, are generally united; that those upon whom fortune and happiness have smiled, may so bear them as if mindful that a storm might wreck their tinsel barque, and leave them hopeless wanderers."

"May no ripple, dearest Gertrude, break the surface of that stream which bears thee onward; but let us now speak of other things. I would fain dwell upon a topic near and dear to my own heart, which will influence deeply the future happiness of my parents. I will not remind you of your past or present situation, nor name the care devoted to your childhood; but plead the wishes of my parents, and my own fond hopes. My parents saw and loved your gentle nature, and as they dwelt upon your budding virtues, longed only for the hour when they might call you daughter by a new and holy tie. But, sweet cousin, you will spare the story of my love; you have seen its progress, and cannot doubt its truth—then briefly, may I hope? Shall my dreams of bliss be realized? Oh! speak fair tyrant, and dispel the doubt that like a dark cloud mantles me.

Gertrude was surprised and alarmed at the earnestness of his manner—she dared not beard the lion by an open declaration that she could never yield—she was too generous to give assurances that would flatter or deceive. Her solicitude and fear were so great as scarcely to allow her utterance, and she faltered.

"Give me time, Alonzo—I am so agitated—I know not—but let us go in."

At that trying moment, the unhappy Gertrude was relieved by the voice of Mr. Melbourne, requiring her presence in the parlor.

Alonzo felt a bitter disappointment at this sudden interruption, but fearing to excite curiosity, smoothed his brow, and led his fair charge home. Gertrude sought her chamber early, and throwing herself upon a couch, wept long and bitterly over the gloomy fate, apparently awaiting her. How could she blast the long cherished hopes of her generous benefactors, and repay the caresses of her early years by indifference or ingratitude? She could cheerfully have given life to spare their bosoms a solitary pang—but, could she bear a living death, and mate for life with one from whose very glance she shrank. Such were the unwelcome thoughts that preyed upon her gentle nature, till

"The iron tongue of midnight had toll'd twelve,"

when "nature's soft nurse" embraced her, and her sorrows were forgotten. The next day Gertrude avoided as much as possible the presence of Alonzo, fearing the renewal of a subject which gave her so much anxiety and pain. Towards eve a note was handed her by a servant, who immediately retired without exciting any general notice. Gertrude retired to her own room with a fluttering heart, (for she knew the seal) and read this brief, but meaning sentence:—

"At nine, beneath the old elm.

"ALFRED."

A tear of joy beamed in her eye as she pressed the welcome token to her lips, and placed it next her heart. Let us now briefly introduce our new acquaintance. Alfred Melten had brought letters from Norfolk, Va., and obtained a situation in Mr. Melbourne's counting-house, at the head of whose business he was soon placed by his probity and talents. He possessed an easy and commanding person, a cultivated mind, generous sentiments, and an exalted sense of probity and honor, which won him universal esteem and confidence.

Alfred and Gertrude had met and loved—loved for the noble qualities each saw mirrored in the other—they had no mercenary views or feelings, for heaven had left both without parents or fortune, but they were rich in generous sympathies and sincere affections. Gertrude had never dared to inform Mrs. Melbourne of her attachment, for she could hope little mercy in the imperious character of her uncle. The interviews between the lovers had of late, therefore, been stolen—and truly "sweeter for the theft."

Beneath the "old elm," Gertrude had wandered ere the appointed hour, and seating herself on the verge of a bubbling little brook, that glided past its base, she gave loose rein to her anxious thoughts. Her reverie was soon broken by a footfall, and the next moment she hung upon the bosom of her lover.

"What an eternity it has seemed, dear Gertrude, since last we met. But, knowing that your cousin had returned, I forbore to ask this kindness longer than I am wont; but now, dearest, like a true knight, I promise to reform, and henceforth you shall ever find me at the post of love and duty. But why so gloomy? What has disturbed thee, dearest Gertrude?"

"Alas! Alfred, my fears were true. Alonzo has avowed his attachment, and the wishes of his parents. I know not how to act. I dared neither to excite his hopes or fears. I have obtained leisure to make up my mind, and now how can, how shall I answer him?"

"I see," said Alfred, "one safe, though perhaps painful course—but Gertrude, are you ready for the sacrifice? Can you prefer poverty and Alfred, to being mistress of this stately mansion, and a boundless fortune? If you are