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POETRY.

THE FEAST OF LIFE.

I DID rise to my mystic Feast,
Each one thou lovest is gathered there;
Yet put thou on a mourning robe,
And bind the cypress in thy hair.

The hall is vast, and cold, and drear;
The board with faded flowers is spread;
Shadow of beauty fit around,
But beauty from each bloom has fled;

And music echoes from the walls,
But music with a dirge-like sound;
And pale and silent are the guests,
And every eye is on the ground.

Hark, take this cup, tho' dark it seems,
And drink to human hopes and fears;
'Tis from their native element
The cup is filled—it is of tears.

What! turnest thou with averted brow?
Thou scornest this poor feast of mine,
And art about for a purple robe,
Light words, glad smiles, and sunny wine.

Is rain, the veil has left these eyes,
Or such these would have seemed to thee.
Before thee is the Feast of life,
But life in its reality!

THE COQUETTE.

BY THE HONOURABLE MRS. NORTON.

The morrow came, and with it came George Ashton. Dismayed and weary, Lady Glenallan complained of Claude Forester's coldness—of Fitzroy Glenallan's friendship—of Lord Linton's attentions—of her husband's inattention—of Lucy Linton's health—of the world's ill-nature—of every thing and every body including the person she addressed, and, having exhausted herself with passionate complaining, sank back to wait his answer. "Bessie," said he, at length, "I have known you from childhood, and I may say now that all is over. I have loved you as well or better than any of your admirers; it is not therefore, a harsh view of your character that prompts me to give the warning I beseech of you to hear patiently. You are listless and weary of the life you are leading, and mortified at Claude Forester's neglect; but, gracious heaven! what is it you wish? or when will the struggle for pernicious excitement cease in your mind and leave you free to exert your reason?—Suppose Claude Forester to have returned with the same deep devoted love to you which filled his heart, when he left England, and fled from a fascination which he was unable to resist. Suppose him to have agreed that passion with all the vehemence of which his nature is capable—should you, indeed, as Lord Glenallan's wife, listen to the person to whom you would not sacrifice your vanity when both were free—or is there so much of the heartlessness of coquetry about you, that you would rather be wretched miserable than that you should not appear irresistible? Do you, Bessie, wish Claude were again your lover?" "No," sobbed Lady Glenallan, "but I wish him not to think ill of me." "And if you could prove that you had no fault towards him, would it seem hard that he had ever left you? It would not explanations lead to regrets and regrets to—Bessie, struggle against this stage infatuation—the various thirst for power over the hearts of men. Already you are entangled—already you shrink from the reproaches of Fitzroy Glenallan and dread the approach of the cruelly deceived Linton—already you have begun to alienate the affections of a kind and generous heart for the miserable shadows of worldly admiration. Oh! where is the pleasure—where the triumph—of conquest such as yours? What avails it to you comfort at home, or your respectability abroad, that you are satisfied to believe yourself virtuous, because you disappoint even the fools whose notice you attract? Is it indeed so breathing to see Fitzroy bow to his husband previous duties, and coldly pass

them to place himself by you? Is it, indeed, so gratifying to see that little pale deserted girl struggling for a smile, while you parade her infatuated brother through the rooms at Ashton-house? or to sit in an attitude in your Opera-box as a point towards which all the eyes in the pit should turn? Warning is given you—retreat in time—have courage to do right. Think of your home, your husband, and leave Claude Forester to his destiny." "Dear me, Lady Glenallan," exclaimed a female friend, who entered an hour afterwards; "I can't conceive what you find to fret about?" "Can't you," responded the young Countess, dipping her handkerchief in some Eau de Cologne, and applying it to her forehead. "No, indeed, I can't—all the men run after you—all the women are jealous of you—you've no children—no lapdogs—no sisters-in-law—none of the toments of married life. You are as rich as Ceresus, and" Bessie Glenallan looked from the window, and sighed. "Yes, it's a very empty park—very dull—been so wet all the morning—but I should think you would be at no loss for amusements—got your harp and all the new books, I see. Are you going to Lady Maskingham's to-night?" "Yes—no—why?" "Why? really, my dear Lady Glenallan, something must have happened, you're quite absent; you know every one will be there." "True,—yes—oh! I shall go certainly." "He shall not think I am sad for his sake, thought Bessie, and she sighed again.

Full of excellent resolutions, Lady Glenallan ordered her carriage—bathed her eyes—drove to South Audley street. She found Lucy alone, and proposed to her to drive out, which was gladly consented to. As they returned, Bessie said to her little companion: "I shall call in the evening to see if you look to the ball—do go; I never saw you look better." "And then," thought she, as the carriage drove off, "I will have a few words of explanation with poor Linton, and after that I will play the coquette no more, for it is all very true."—And again Lady Glenallan sighed. Lady Glenallan and Lucy were late at the ball, owing to the difficulty the former had found in persuading Miss Linton to go at all. But Bessie, like most selfish people trying to do a good-natured thing, would take no denial, and though Lucy persisted that she was more weak and weary than usual—her chaperone waited till she was dressed, and carried her off in triumph. The ball-room opened on an illuminated garden, and Lady Glenallan was standing on the stone steps which led to the principal walks, when Lord Linton hastily addressed her, "Let me speak three words to you—pray, pray, hear me. . . . Startled and confounded, Lady Glenallan neither spoke nor moved, while, in a rapid and confused manner, he explained that he had heard a story of her attachment to Claude Forester, of her parting, of her agitation at seeing him the night before, and he conjured her, not to trifle with him, but at once to confess, either her love for Claude, or her willingness to fly with himself to the uttermost parts of the earth. "May I dance? Do you think it would be safe for me to dance, Linton?" asked the gentle voice of his sister. "Yes, yes, love; no, I mean—speak, damn by all means, dance?" "I have really your leave?" she continued, with a smile; "I believe you scarcely heard my question." "Yes, yes, my dear Lucy; you wish to dance—go now—go—I am quite willing you should dance to-night."—Oh! Lady Glenallan—! Bessie! answer me, speak to me!" But another voice was in Bessie's ear. As they stood in the shadow of the portico, unseen by those who were walking in the garden, Claude Forester and a lady passed close to them. "Do not deceive me," said Claude, "I have deceived once, and I tell you fairly, that my contempt and disgust for the most wretched and profligate of her sex, is weak to what I feel towards the coquette, who, with no temptation but vanity, trifles with—" the words were lost in the distance. Yet, as the speaker returned, Bessie thought she distinguished her own name in the mur-

ming protests of Claude's companion. "He scorns me—he holds me up as a warning, as an example, he—Claude—the only being whom I ever really loved!" and Lady Glenallan leaned her head against the portico, too faint even for tears. "Speak to me," she said to herself, "answer me, beloved Bessie!"—She had forgotten him. Shuddering, she attempted to withdraw her hand from the death-like clasp of his, while she exclaimed in agony: "Oh! well, might he scorn me! Let me go, infatuated boy! you know not what you love!—Oh! let me depart and die, I am sick, sick at heart! I have not heard you—I am a fool—a miserable, vain, accursed fool, I am—Oh! God, forgive me!" "Lord Linton! Lord Linton!" cried several voices, in a tone of alarm and horror: "Lord Linton! your sister!" said Lord Glenallan, as he made his way through the crowd, and seized the arm of the unhappy young man. Instantly he darted forward—and Bessie followed; drawn by that fearful impulse which prompts us to leap the precipice we shudder to gaze from. A silent circle was formed where the dance had been; the music had only ceased that moment; there was but one sound through the wide room where hundreds were collected; and that sound was the gasping breath of him who knelt with the slight form of Lucy Linton, supported in his arms. All that yet deceitfully told of life, was the shivering communicated by his trembling grasp. He laid her down, and felt that he was gazing on a corpse. Peals of laughter, and merry voices came faintly from the garden, where the event was unknown. "Oh, stop them!" exclaimed Lord Linton, as he gazed towards the portico. "Oh! madman! fool! to let her dance!" And as he uttered these words in a tone of agony, his eye fell on Lady Glenallan with an expression that froze her very soul. A terrible dream seemed to haunt her; a dream from which she could not wake. Slowly, and with an effort she withdrew her eyes, and gazed round the circle, all, all were gazing spell-bound and horror struck, on that awful sight; all but one. Claude Forester supported the girl with whom he had been walking, and whose gaze was riveted on that mournful group of the young brother and his dead sister. His eye alone sought another face—Bessie Glenallan met it—and fainted.

Many, many years have passed since that night of sudden horror. They have danced in the same ball-room, to the self same tunes, and the name of Lucy Linton is a sound forgotten even by those who knew her best. But Lady Glenallan yet remembers in her prayers that fearful evening, and smiles tearfully in her husband's face, as, for the thousand time he repeats to comfort her, the certainty that poor Lucy would have died in a few days at all events; and pressing his little daughter's sicken curls against her mother's cheek, his her guide and guard her well, lest she too should be a coquette.

ILL-USED MEN.

There is a class of men, whom, if we are to believe their own tale, the whole world has entered into a combination to injure and oppress. They have met with nothing but deceit and knavery through life; they have been circumvented in all their projects, and their good nature and unsuspecting disposition taken advantage of at every turn. As may reasonably be expected, after having suffered so much at the hands of their base fellow-creatures, they do not in general wear a very propitious aspect; but even although you did not observe this, you could hardly at many minutes in their company, till you had learned something to the same purpose from their lips. If a bankruptcy is mentioned, "What else was to be expected?" strikes in the ill-used man; "I know well what that business is; and he hints at the possibility of his having been a few hundreds, or perhaps thousands, richer to-day, if he had never known it. If any person is described as having lost something considerable by security, "Ay, I know

what it is to trust friends?" if, on the other hand, any one is said to have refused another security, "Ay, ay," he is equally ready to remark, "I know what it is to place a dependence on friends." Whatever instance of harm of hardship may be mentioned, the ill-used man is sure to have suffered in that way. He refused of men to promise; he has been the worse alike of their friendship, and their enmity; every relation of life has brought him all its miseries, and none of its blessings. What he chiefly suffers by, however, is his own honesty and good intentions. Though tricked a thousand times, as he would have you to believe, still, unable to think ill of mankind, he goes on in the same implicit way with them as ever; and, accordingly, you never meet him but he has some new grievance to tell you of. He has also a number of standing mischiefs, which he rails at in the intervals (if any) left by the contingent ones. Among these are shop-rents. Shop-rents, he would have you to believe, are the great vampire influences which suck the blood of tradespeople, and prevent above one in ten (for such he tells you is the proportion) from making any thing more than salt to their broth. He can also be very eloquent occasionally—not on the taxes at large, but on some single particularly pestilent tax—his favourite abhorrence—which he represents as a perfect gangrene in the side of the nation, though in all probability it is so small that you never once thought of it, or were hardly aware of its existence.

If the history of the ill-used men were inquired into, it would generally be found that all the evils which they represent themselves as having endured through the roguery of mankind, arose from their own culpable negligence or folly; and hence, whenever I hear a man have nothing but ill to speak of the world, I can hardly help concluding that he must have been unfortuné, by some decided though perhaps secret failing, for bearing a proper part in it. I once knew an ill-used man, who had brought ruin upon himself by a practice of thrusting favours upon his friends for ostentation-sake, and another who had fallen out of all employment and respect in consequence of some very equivocal circumstances in his domestic life. Both looked upon themselves as dreadfully ill-used, and had contracted a misanthropical turn; but their errors though not very serious, had been the sole cause of their unhappy circumstances; and no men of correct understandings or right feelings could have been guilty of such errors, comparatively trivial as they seem.

There are other ill-used men, whose misfortunes have arisen from a speculative turn of mind—who, not content with one honest and profitable occupation, would eagerly enter into every novel project, and, because such undertakings do not succeed to their expectations, are ever ready to throw upon others the blame which ought to attach only to their own excited imaginations. One ill-used man of this kind, with whom we had once the misfortune to be acquainted, had no sooner at any time accumulated a little capital by slow but sure industry, than he launched out into some extensive project, which he felt perfectly assured would make his fortune in a trice. In this way he has been successively merchant, distiller, rectifier, builder, and half-a-dozen other trades besides; in all of which he has only succeeded in squandering in a few months what he had laboriously acquired in as many years. His undertakings, curiously enough, always fail just when the eve of success, and uniformly through the roguery of some party or parties with whom he has associated himself. Their co-partnership invariably terminates in a law-suit, in looking after which, and detailing to his acquaintances the story of his wrongs, our friend amuses himself until he has refitted the shattered vessel of his fortunes for another cruise.

In short, it will be found, almost without exception, that the outcry about "ill-usage," "ingratitude," "deceit," &c., in which these