

weeping Agnes told her sad tale. No tongue can express the fervid sympathy which travelled through the vale, when it was learned that neither George nor Sarah Green had been seen by their children since the day of the Langdale sale. Within half an hour, or little more, from the remotest parts of the valley—some of them distant nearly two miles from the point of rendezvous—all the men of Grasmere had assembled at the little cluster of cottages called "Kirktown," from their adjacency to the venerable parish church of St. Oswald. There were, at the time I settled in Grasmere, about sixty-three households in the vale; and the total number of souls was about 265; so that the number of fighting men would be about sixty, according to the common way of computing the proportion; and the majority were so athletic and powerfully built, that, at the village games of wrestling and leaping, Professor Wilson, and some visitors of his, scarcely one of whom was under five feet eleven in height, with proportionable breadth, seemed but middle sized men amongst the towering forms of the Dalesmen. Sixty at least, after a short consultation as to the plan of operations, and for arranging the kind of signals by which they were to communicate from great distances, and in the perilous event of mists or snow storms, set off, with the speed of Alpine hunters, to the hills. The dangers of the undertaking were considerable, under the uneasy and agitated state of the weather; and all the women of the vale were in the greatest anxiety, until night brought them back, in a body, unsuccessful. Three days at the least, and I rather think five, the search was ineffectual: which arose partly from the great extent of ground to be examined, and partly from the natural mistake made of ranging almost exclusively on the earlier days on that part of the hills over which the path to Easedale might be presumed to have been selected under any reasonable latitude of circuitousness. But the fact is, when the fatal accident of a permanent mist surprises a man on the hills, if he turns and loses his direction, he is a lost man; and without doing this so as to lose the power in one instant, it is well known how difficult it is to avoid losing it insensibly and by degrees. Baffling snow showers are the worst kind of mists. And the poor Greens had, under that kind of confusion, wandered many a mile out of their proper track. The zeal of the people, meantime, was not in the least abated, but rather quickened, by the wearisome disappointments; every hour of day light was turned to account; no man of the valley ever came home to dinner; and the reply of a young shoemaker on the fourth night's return, speaks sufficiently for the unabated spirit of the vale. Miss Wordsworth asked what he would do on the next morning. "Go up again, of course," was his answer. But what if to-morrow also should turn out like all the rest? "Why go up in a stronger force on the next day." Yet this man was sacrificing his own daily earnings without a chance of recompense. At length, sagacious dogs were taken up; and, about noonday, a shout from an ærial height, amongst thick volumes of cloudy vapour, propagated through repeating bands of men from a distance of many miles, conveyed as by telegraph the news that the bodies were found. George Green was found at the bottom of a precipice. Sarah Green was found on the summit of what had passed, the sad hieroglyphics of their last agonies, it was conjectured that the husband had desired his wife to pause for a few minutes, wrapping her mean time, in his own great coat, whilst he should go forward and reconnoitre the ground in order to catch a sight of some object, (rocky peak, or tarn, or peat field,) which might ascertain their real situation. Either the snow above, already lying in drifts, or the blinding snow storms driving into his eyes, must have misled him as to the nature of the circumjacent ground; for the precipice over which he had fallen was but a few yards from the spot in which he had quitted his wife. The depth of the descent, and the fury of the wind, almost always violent on these cloudy altitudes, would prevent any distinct communication between the dying husband below and the despairing wife above; but it was believed by the shepherds, best acquainted with the ground and the range of sound as regarded the capacities of the human ear under the probable circumstances of the storm, that Sarah might have caught, at intervals, the groans of her unhappy partner, supposing that his death was at all a lingering one. Others, on the contrary, supposed her to have gathered this catastrophe rather from the want of any sounds, and his continued absence than from any one distinct or positive expression of it; both because the smooth and unruffled surface of the snow where he lay seemed to argue that he had died without a struggle, perhaps without a groan, and because that tremendous sound of "hurling" in the upper chambers of the air, which often accompanies a snow storm, when combined with heavy gales of wind, would utterly oppress and stifle any sounds so feeble as those from a dying man. In any case, and by whatever sad language of sounds or signs, positive or negative, she might have learned or guessed her loss, it was generally agreed that the wild shrieks heard towards midnight in Langdale Head announced the agonizing moment which brought to her now widowed heart the conviction of utter desolation, and of final abandonment to her own fast-fleeting energies. It seemed probable that the sudden disappearance of her husband from her pursuing eyes would teach her to understand his fate; and that the conse-

quent in definite apprehension of instant death lying all around the point on which she sat, had kept her stationary to the very attitude in which her husband left her, until her failing powers and the increasing bitterness of the cold, to one no longer in motion, would soon make those changes of place impossible, which, at any rate, had appeared too dangerous. The footsteps in some places, wherever drifting had not obliterated them, yet traceable as to the outline, satisfactorily shewed that however much they might have rambled, after crossing and doubling upon their own paths, and many a mile astray from their right track, still they must have kept together to the very plateau or shelf of rock at which their wanderings had terminated. By the time they had reached this final stage of their erroneous course, all possibility of escape must have been long over for both alike; because their exhaustion must have been excessive before they could have reached a point so remote and high; and, unfortunately, the direct result of all this exhaustion had been to throw them farther off their home, or from "any dwelling place of man," than they were at starting. Here, therefore, at this rocky pinnacle, hope was extinct for either party. But it was the impression of the vale, that, perhaps, within half an hour before reaching this fatal point, George Green might, had his conscience or his heart allowed him in so base a desertion, have saved himself singly, without any very great difficulty.

For his wife not only must have disabled him greatly by clinging to his arm for support; but it was known, from her peculiar character and manner, that she would be likely to rob him of his coolness and presence of mind by too painfully fixing his thoughts, where her own would be busiest, upon their helpless little family. "Stung with the thoughts of home"—alternately thinking of the blessedness of that warm fire side at Blentarn Ghyll, which was not again to spread its genial glow through her freezing limbs, and of those darling little faces which, in this world, she was to see no more; unintentionally, and without being aware even of that result, she would rob the brave man of his fortitude, and the strong man of his animal resources. And yet—had Sarah Green foreseen, could her affectionate heart have guessed even the tenth part of that love and neighborly respect for herself, which soon afterwards expressed themselves in showers of bounty to her children; could she have looked behind the curtain of destiny sufficiently to learn that the very desolation of these poor children which wrung her maternal heart, and doubtless constituted to her the sting of death, would prove the signal and the pledge of such anxious guardianship as not many rich men's children receive, and that this overflowing offering to her own memory would not be a hasty or decaying tribute of the first sorrowing sensibilities, but would pursue her children steadily until their hopeful settlement in life—or anything approaching this, to have known or have guessed, would have caused her, as all said who knew her, to welcome the bitter end by which such privileges were to be purchased.

The funeral of the ill-fated Greens was, it may be supposed, attended by all the vale; it took place about eight days after they were found; and the day happened to be in the most perfect contrast to the sort of weather which prevailed at the time of their misfortune; some snow still remained here and there upon the ground; but the azure of the sky was unstained by a cloud; and a golden sunlight seemed to sleep, so balmy and tranquil was the scene, upon the very hills where they had wandered—then a howling wilderness, but now a green pastoral lawn, to its lower ranges, and a glittering expanse, smooth, apparently, and not difficult to the footing of virgin snow, in its higher. George Green had an elder family by a former wife; and it was for some of those children, who lived at a distance, and who wished to give their attendance at the grave, that the funeral was delayed. After this solemn ceremony was over—at which the grief of Sarah's illegitimate daughter was the most overwhelming—a regular distribution of the children was made among the wealthier families of the vale. There had already, and before the funeral, been a perfect struggle to obtain one of the children, amongst all who had any facilities for discharging the duties of such a trust; and even the poorest had put in their claim to bear some part in the expenses of the case. But it was judiciously decided, that none of the children should be entrusted to any persons who seemed likely, either from old age, or from slender means, or from nearer and more personal responsibilities, to be under the necessity of devolving the trust, sooner or later, upon strangers, who might have none of the interest in the children which attached, in their minds, the Grasmere people to the circumstances that made them orphans. Two twins, who had naturally played together and slept together from their birth, passed into the same family; the others were dispersed; but into such kind hearted and intelligent families, with continual opportunities of meeting each other on errands or at church, or at sales, that it was hard to say which had the happier fate. And thus, in so brief a period as one fortnight, a household that, by health and strength, by the humility of poverty, and by innocence of life, seemed sheltered from all attacks, but those of time, came to be utterly broken up. George and Sarah Green slept in Grasmere churchyard, never more to know the want of "sun or guiding star." Their children were scattered over wealthier houses than those of their poor parents, through the

vales of Grasmere or Rydal; and Blentarn Ghyll, after being shut up for a season, and ceasing for months to send up its little slender column of smoke at morning and evening, finally passed into the hands of a stranger.

The Wordsworths, meantime, were so much interested in the future fortunes and suitable education of the children, that they energetically applied themselves to the task of raising funds by subscription. The Royal Family were made acquainted with the details of the case; they were powerfully affected by the story, especially by the account of little Agnes, and her premature assumption of the maternal character; and they contributed most munificently. Miss Wordsworth, upon my proposal to write to various ladies, upon whom I knew that I could rely for their several contributions, wrote back to me, desiring that I would not; and upon this satisfactory reason—that the fund had already swelled under the Royal patronage, and the interest excited by so much of the circumstances as could be reported in hurried letters, to an amount beyond what was likely to be wanted.—*Autobiography of an English Opium Eater.*

RUBENS AND THE SPANISH MONK.

One day, during his residence in Spain, Rubens made an excursion in the environs of Madrid, accompanied by several of his pupils. He entered a convent, where he observed with no small degree of surprise, in the choir of the chapel, a picture which bore evidence of having been executed by an artist of sublime genius. The picture represented the death of a monk. Rubens called his pupils, showed them the picture, and they all shared the admiration which the *chef d'œuvre* elicited from their master.

"Who painted this picture?" inquired Van Dyck, the favorite pupil of Rubens.

"The name of the artist has been inscribed at the bottom of the picture," observed Van Tulden, "but it has been carefully effaced."

Rubens sent for the old prior of the convent, and requested that he would tell him the name of the artist.

"The painter is no longer of this world," answered the monk.

"What!" exclaimed Rubens, "dead! and unknown! His name deserves to be immortal; it would have obliterated the remembrance of mine." "And yet," added he with pardonable vanity, "I am Peter Paul Rubens."

At these words the pale countenance of the monk became flushed and animated. His eyes sparkled, and he fixed on Rubens a look which betrayed a stronger feeling than curiosity. But this excitement was merely momentary. The monk cast down his eyes, crossed on his bosom the arms which he had raised to heaven by an impulse of enthusiasm, and repeated:

"The artist is no longer of this world."

"Tell me his name, father," exclaimed Rubens; "tell me his name, I conjure you, that I may repeat it throughout the world, and give him the glory which is his due!" And Rubens, Van Dyck, Jordaens, Van Nuel, and Van Tulden, surrounded the prior, and earnestly entreated that he would tell them the name of the painter.

The monk trembled, and his lips convulsively quivered, as if ready to reveal the secret. Then, making a solemn motion with his hand, he said:

"Hear me! You misunderstand what I said. I told you the name of the painter of that picture was no longer of this world; but I did not mean that he was dead."

"Does he then live? Oh! tell us where we may find him!"

"He has renounced the world, and retired to a cloister. He is a monk."

"A monk, father! a monk! Oh! tell me then in what convent he is, for he must quit it. When Heaven marked a man with the stamp of genius, that man should not bury himself in solitude. God has given him a sublime mission, and he must fulfil it. Tell me the cloister in which he is hidden. I will draw him from his retirement, and show him the glory that awaits him. Should he refuse, I will procure an order from our holy father the pope, to make him return to the world and exercise his talent. The pope, father, is a kind friend to me, and he will listen to me."

"I will neither tell you his name nor that of the convent to which he has retired," replied the monk in a resolute tone.

"But the pope will compel you to do so," exclaimed Rubens impatiently.

"Hear me," said the monk, "hear me in the name of Heaven. Can you imagine that this man, before he quitted the world—before he renounced fortune and fame—did not struggle painfully against that resolution? Can you believe, that anything short of the most cruel deception and bitter sorrow, could have brought him to the conviction that all here below is mere vanity? Leave him then to die in the asylum to which he has fled from the world and despair. Besides, all your efforts would be fruitless. He would triumphantly resist every temptation. [Here he made the sign of the cross.] God would not refuse him his aid! God, who in his mercy has called him to himself, will not dismiss him from his presence."

"But, father, he has renounced immortality!"

"Immortality is nothing in comparison with eternity!"

The monk drew his cowl over his forehead, and changed the conversation, so as to prevent Rubens from further urging his plea.

The celebrated Flemish artist left the convent accompanied by his brilliant train of pupils; and they all returned to Madrid, lost in conjectures respecting the painter whose name had been obstinately withheld from them.

The prior returned to his lonely cell, knelt down on the straw mat which served as his bed, and offered up a fervent prayer to Heaven.

He then collected together his pencils, his colours, and a small easel, and threw them into a river which flowed beneath the window of his cell. He gazed for some moments in profound melancholy on the stream which soon drifted these objects from his sight. When they had disappeared, he once more knelt down to pray on his straw mat, and before his wooden crucifix.