

THE WORTH OF WOMAN.

Honored be woman! who sweetly discloses
In life's rugged pathway such heavenly roses!
Gracefully weaving love's fortunate band,
While in the Grace's most winning attire,
She carefully watches the bright, genial fire
Of our purest emotions with skillfullest hand.
Ever from the bounds of reason
Stray the restless powers of man:
In the raging sea of passion
Plunges his thoughts, devoid of plan,
He grasps the future with emotion,
Never is his heart at rest,
Beyond the farthest planet's motion
He seeks what ne'er can make him blest.

But with mild looks, whose sweet magic enthral him
To the straight path of duty 'tis woman recalls him,
Warning of dangers, which threaten in view!
With useful employment wild fancies expelling,
Quiet she rests in her beautiful dwelling.
Daughter of nature, still faithful and true:
Man to conquer still is striving,
Wild destruction spreading round!
Some end pursuing, yet ne'er arriving
Through life unsatisfied is found,
Dally his own works o'erturning,
Never rests the eager strife;
Ere one passion consumes burning,
Another rushing into life!

But woman, with glory less brilliant contented
Gathers the slow-rot each moment presented
Cherishing gently their fragrance and bloom;
In her limited circle more free in her motion,
To knowledge more true is her spirit's devotion;
To her, fancy's flowers yield their sweetest perfume:
Strong and proud, himself sufficing,
Man's cold heart is never moved,
Another's sympathy by prizing,
To seek the bliss of being loved!
He cannot know the rapturous feeling
Confidence and love impart,
Life's hard contest ends in stealing
Harder still his rugged heart.

But the pitying bosom of woman resembles
The Aeolian harp, which so easily trembles
At Zephyr's soft breathing, its chords passing through,
Her heart swells with pity when misery viewing,
The accents of woe, her compassion renewing—
Glistens her bright eye with heavenly dew.
Man, in his proud and high dominion,
Makes strength usurp the throne of right;
With the sword he rules opinion,
Governing by force and might!
His passions no repose e'er finding,
Wildly rage unchained and free:
Where peaceful streams were gently winding,
Rushing torrents we may see!

But, with the soft magic of gentle persuasion,
Sweet woman can sway the wild sceptre of reason,
Allay the fierce tempest when wildly it blows:
Instruct warlike powers foolish hate to relinquish;
In each various being the good to distinguish,
Thus bringing together the deadliest foes!
Then honored be woman! who sweetly discloses,
In life's rugged pathway such heavenly roses!

From the Friendship's Offering.

ELIODORE.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SKETCHES OF CORFU;" "EVENINGS ABROAD," ETC.

V.

It was a day of busy preparation; her Ladyship was closeted all the morning with Madam Guiletta, gauzes, laces, etc. Her Ladyship's page had a sorry time of it, and her Ladyship's lady's maid—poor thing! her fate would have drawn tears from a stone image. All the white kid gloves in the place were bought up, all the laurel bushes for miles round were stripped—spangles and red roses were not to be had at any price—the book of costumes,—there was one only in the library,—was in constant request. If it had but been private property, a man might have made his fortune; as it was, two duels were almost fought about it. As to the poor aides-de-camp—Captain Donothing actually walked his feet to stumps, so that he never could dance afterwards, and consequently lost his place,—while the Right Honourable Augustus Frederick Fiddle-de-dee, sunk into an easy chair half an hour earlier than was his wont, and declared that if the very existence of the British Army depended on his carrying out one more card of invitation, he really could not do it,—all this fuss was for a fancy ball.

It was a brilliant evening. The apartments in the Casino were one blaze of light, and groups of merry masques wandered hither and thither, and exchanged gay sally and quick repartee. The band rang out glorious snatches of martial music, and light feet responded to the quick measure. The gardens too, were like a scene of enchantment, for bright lamps gleamed among citron flowers, and all the night blossoms gave their richest perfume to the air. It was a strange scene for an English eye to dwell on, for the trees were of southern growth, and the rich flowers that

grew so luxuriantly by the paths of the parterre, were such as we behold only in green houses. The figures that flitted about were dressed in costumes of all nations, and strange and gorgeous as were their aspects, turbaned head, and jewelled scymetar, gleaming through orange trees and palms, were in perfect harmony with the scene. There were characters there of all sorts, good, bad, and indifferent. The seven native legislators came disguised as the seven wise men of Greece. Two or three imps came fresh from Lucifer's domain, and acted their parts to the very life. Some came as gentlemen—they were the hardest to be recognised,—one noble Lord wore the very same suit of armour, in which he had valiantly sustained a defeat, at the siege of Cadiz. Another came as an old gipsy-woman. He drew from his pedlar's basket some slips of folded paper, and gave one to every body that drew nigh. Peals of laughter were heard all around, for these papers contained each a verse, in which some witty or unexpected allusion was made to the private history of the reader. The perfect knowledge which every individual in that limited circle had obtained by means of *on dits*, letters from home, etc. of each other's affairs, rendered this practicable.

Edmund Gray stood by a marble pillar near, but he was in no mood for such fooleries. He turned loftily away and went out on the terrace. There all was calmness, and peace, and beauty; the blue sea slept below, the dark sky above was spangled with a thousand living lights; even the breeze that came softly up from the waters, seemed to linger lovingly among the myrtles and oleanders, that stood on the low balustrade of the terrace, ere it came to bathe the brow of the young enthusiast with its cool freshness. "It is a lovely scene," at last he said, half aloud.

"It is lovely," echoed a soft voice near him; "nature is more beautiful than art. Those lights are brighter than the brightest in the ball room, and they whisper far different thoughts." In a moment Edmund was at the speaker's side. "You here, Eliodore! how came you here?"

She to whom he spoke was habited as a young priestess of the sun, but her long loose robe could not conceal her figure; her dark eyes peered through her mask, and her voice was not to be mistaken; but how could the wild mountaineer have entered in such a scene?

"Shall we join the dancers,—the music is striking up?" said Edmund, anxious to hear her speak again.

"Music," answered the young priestess, "music,—call you that clanging of trumpets and jarring of strings, music? Come hither, Edmund Gray! Do you hear those sounding waves that have murmured on, in their everlasting harmony since time began? No human being may stand by the sea-shore and listen without feeling that he too is immortal, without dim and delicious aspirations after purer felicity than earth can yield—that is music."

"Eliodore," said the young soldier, "let us go down to the sea-shore and talk of all these things."

"Ay!" answered Eliodore, "let us leave this noise and dazzle that bewilder the brain and fatigue the eye. It is all vanity." Edmund started, for the girl, unconsciously, had awakened an echo that had long slumbered in his spirit.

VI.

"And I have found happiness at last," said Edmund, "here where I least expected it, in a mountain wilderness, and with a companion wild and untutored as her own mountain olives, ay, and as graceful too."

It was a pretty pastoral scene on which the young soldier looked; one which, in its very simplicity, possessed a thousand charms for an eye that had gazed to weariness on worldly splendour, that had roved from scene to scene until it had been sated with variety.

The old Syndic, venerable and placid, with his white flowing hair and his picturesque capote thrown carelessly over his shoulders, sat smoking his pipe under a broad Spanish chesnut, that shaded the door of his white-washed dwelling. There was peace in the old man's heart, and an expression of deep happiness in his eye as he looked down on his fertile vineyards, and around on the many signs of opulence that begirt his home. The low pilasters that supported his broad verandah were decorated with wreaths of Indian corn, and festoons of tobacco, hanging to dry in the sun, that promised an abundant supply of comfort for the coming winter: little Dimos, his youngest darling, frolicked beside him in the unthinking glee of childhood; the old man stroked lovingly the boy's sunny ringlets, and when he turned and looked within, there too, all was peace and beauty; Edmund could not but own that the pride which then lit up the old Syndic's eye, was pardonable pride, for Eliodore sat there, bending in the twilight over her guitar. Edmund too looked proudly on her innocent beauty, for he had made her his own. He had asked her of the old Syndic fairly and honourably for his bride, and though the good gentleman did demur awhile at giving her to a heretic, yet Eliodore and young Dimos pleaded, and they overruled his scruples. Edmund would not look too curiously to the future,—for the present he had no apprehension; he loved his dear one not only for her flashing eye and bright cheek, but for the soul that beamed in both. He knew too that her young spirit was attuned to the deep poetry of his own, and that her heart was as an unfa-

thomed well of affection, so what cared he for the laugh and jeer of his comrades? Neither smile nor sneer could detract one atom from her beauty or from her worth.

"But, Eliodore," he said one evening as they ascended the narrow path that led to their favourite little church, "one thing I cannot understand yet; how could you find me out on that dismal rock at Paolo Castrizza, and the masque evening?"

"I know, I know," she replied. "what you would ask; Johannes is my foster brother, and I have some young cousins in the city with whom I went to the palace; but let us not talk on these things now,—must you go, must you go, dearest, to-morrow?"

"I will return," answered Edmund; "my duty calls me to the city, but fear not, Eliodore, my home, the home of my soul is with you."

They entered together the mountain church. It was a meet sanctuary for Love and Hope, for twilight threw a veil of softness over all harsher objects that might offend the eye, and invested with beauty even the rude painting of the Madre Dolorosa. Eliodore threw her votive offering of orange blossoms in fragrant heaps below the picture, and then, kneeling down, she veiled her fair young face, and poured out her soul in prayer. For the first time in her happy life, her prayers were freighted with sighs and tears.

"Come away, dear one," said Edmund at last, "come, the dews are falling, and I must away,—I cannot leave you here."

"Yes, yes," she softly whispered, "let us part here,—this is a holy place—let us meet here again—here I shall come every day to watch for the first gleam of your white feathers among the trees; leave me here, if go you must."

So there on the threshold, beneath the dark cypress trees, they parted. "Johannes," were the last words of Eliodore, "you have been as a brother to me from the cradle;—guard his life and his safety, as you would guard your own soul."

And the young wife watched them depart,—she stood under the dark trees as they slowly descended the narrow hill-path, noting every wave of Edmund's lofty plume, as it glimmered through the flickering olive boughs. There was a pause in the sound of their footsteps; she bent down her bright face to the earth to listen for the patter of the horses' hoofs; one by one the heavy sounds fell like a knell upon her heart; when the last had died away in the distance, she arose, folded her veil about her, and returned to the silence of her father's hearth.

VII.

There is one fault, peculiar almost to a high spirit and generous disposition. It is the pride which will not condescend even to explain away an error; the impetuosity which will not even wait for or admit expostulation. The blow first, right or wrong, the blow must be given first. The unavailing regret, the bitter self-condemnation come afterwards. It was but a light word, lightly spoken at a pic-nic party, after dinner, when wine circulates freely, and the spirits are let loose, and prudence is sometimes forgotten; but that word related to Eliodore; her name was not mentioned, only implied, and something was said about an infectious fever, lingering longer than such fevers are wont to linger, and being a cheap price to pay for the attendance of a young Grecian beauty. It was enough. Edmund's was not the spirit to suffer such words to pass unanswered. No apology was offered or would have been received, but a soldier's short and decisive measure of settling all quarrels was adopted. "To-morrow—the pass of Panta Leone—at day dawn;—and the affair was settled.

As long as Edmund remained with his noisy companions it was well; as long as he drank the red wine and joined in the chorus of the loud song, it was well; the still small voice was unheard; but when, one by one, they had departed; when the horse's head of the last lingerer was turned city-wards,—for they had been dining *al fresco*, far enough away from the capital—when quiet and rest stole over the still landscape, he began to ask himself if he had not done an unjustifiable as well as a sinful thing. It had been arranged that Edmund and his antagonist, with their seconds, should sleep at the neighbouring village, that they might be nearer their place of rendezvous in the morning. "We may as well settle the matter now," said young Mordaunt; "what need to sleep over it?" But Edmund replied, "No, I have some affairs to arrange, some ties yet remain to me in this world."—So they parted, and Edmund persuaded even his friend to leave him alone.

Edmund's preparations were soon finished. He had but little to leave, and but one in the world to regret, and over her he determined to bend yet one more parting look; so, calling his trusty Johannes, who, so he believed, knew nothing of all that had passed, he resolved to revisit once again his happy home.

But Johannes was a Greek, and knew well enough how to employ both eyes and ears. He could form a shrewd guess why, when all the rest departed homewards, these four remained behind; he could read the troubled aspect and flushed cheek of his young master; he could also divine why Edmund should go by night, in silence and in darkness to visit that village paradise, whereat his presence was always welcome as the day light itself. He, however, kept all his imaginings to himself, rightly judging,