

THE LIVING PHANTOM—A TRUE STORY.

BY THE LATE CHARLES LAMB.

When I was a young boy, I had delicate health, and was somewhat of a pensive and contemplative turn of mind: it was my delight, in the long, summer evenings, to slip away from my noisy and more robust companions, that I might walk in the shade of a venerable wood, my favourite haunt, and listen to the cawing of the old rooks, who seemed as fond of this retreat as I was.

One evening I sat later than usual, though the distant sound of the cathedral clock had more than once warned me to my home. There was a stillness in all nature that I was unwilling to disturb by the least motion. From this reverie I was suddenly startled by the sight of a tall, slender female, who was standing by me, looking, sorrowfully and steadily in my face. She was dressed in white, from head to foot, in a fashion that I had never seen before; her garments were unusually long and flowing, and rustled as she glided through the low shrubs near me, as if they were made of the richest silk. My heart beat as if I was dying, and I knew not that I could have stirred from the spot: but she seemed so very mild and beautiful, I did not attempt it. Her pale, brown hair, was braided round her head, but there were some locks that strayed upon her neck; and, altogether, she looked like a lovely picture, but not like a lovely woman. I closed my eyes forcibly with my hands, when I looked again, she had vanished.

I cannot exactly say why I did not, on my return, speak of this beautiful apparance: nor why, with a strange mixture of hope and fear, I went again and again to the same spot, that I might see her. She always came: and often in the storm and plashing rain, that never seemed to touch or to annoy her, and looked sweetly on me, and silently passed on: and though she was so near to me, that once the wind lifted those light, straying locks, and I felt them against my cheek, yet I never could move or speak to her. I fell ill; and when I recovered, my mother closely questioned me of the tall lady, of whom in the height of my fever, I had so often spoken.

I cannot tell you what a weight was taken from my boyish spirits, when I learned that this was no apparition, but a most lovely woman—not young, though she had kept her young looks; for the grief which had broken her heart seemed to have spared her beauty.

When the rebel troops were retreating after their total defeat, in that very wood I was so fond of, a young officer, unable any longer to endure the anguish of his wounds, sunk from his horse, and laid himself down to die. He was found there by the daughter of Sir Henry R—, and conveyed, by a trusty domestic, to her father's mansion. Sir Henry was a loyalist: but the officer's desperate condition excited his compassion, and his many wounds spoke a language a brave man could not misunderstand. Sir Henry's daughter, with many tears, pleaded for him, and promised that he should be carefully and secretly attended. And well she kept that promise: for she waited upon him (her mother being long dead) for many weeks, and anxiously watched for the opening of eyes, that, languid as he was, looked bright and gratefully upon his young nurse.

You may fancy, better than I can tell you, as he slowly recovered, all the moments that were spent in reading, and low-voiced singing, and gentle playing on the lute; and how many fresh flowers were brought to one, whose wounded limbs would not bear him to gather them for him; and how calmly the days glided on in the blessedness of returning health, and in that sweet silence so carefully enjoined him. I will pass by this, to speak of one day, which brighter and pleasanter than others, did not seem more bright or more lovely than the looks of the young maiden, as she gaily spoke of "a little festival, which (though it must bear an unworthier name) she meant really to give in honour of her guest's recovery." "And it is time, lady," said he, "for that guest, so tended and so honoured, to tell you his whole story, and speak to you of one who will help him to thank you: may I ask you, fair lady, to write a little billet for me, which, even in these times of danger, I may find some means to forward."

To his mother, no doubt, she thought, as, with light steps and a lighter heart, she seated herself by his couch, and smilingly bade him dictate: but, when he said, "My dear wife," and lifted up his eyes to be asked, for more, he saw before him a pale statue, that gave him no look of utter despair, and fell, for he had no power to help her, heavily at his feet. Those eyes never truly reflected the pure soul again, or answered, by answering looks, the fond inquiries of her poor old father. She used to be as I saw her, sweet and gentle, and delicate always; but reason returned no more. She visited, till the day of her death, the spot where she first saw the young soldier, and dressed herself in the very clothes that he said so well became her.

TRIUMPHS OF THE SPEL.

Our contemplations of victory in human war are always connected, in the philanthropic mind, with many causes of sorrow. There are some occasions the history of human conflict on which we may look with a measure of complacency, regarding the results for which they sometimes are overruled. As, for example, when the genius of Liberty rising triumphant from the nage of the battle, goes forth to scatter her blessings in a renovated and emancipated people. And yet, my brethren, in the highest and best form of manifestation, much is there from which an enlightened and sensible spirit must revolt! Yes, let human victory come in at form she will, she comes with garments rolled in blood; her attendants—the troops and warriors—in her train are the unnumbered spectators of the murdered, the life-stream she has spilt. Music may sound its notes of enchantment, rendering our passions high, and the exciting and inspiring us with the very spirit of the field; painting may spread its canvass, and bring home to every sense the hottest of the battle, with all the deeds of carnage and forms of renown; poetry may wield its magic numbers and employ all the powers of language of imagination to commemorate, to eulogize, and adorn; and religion may lend and prostrate heads, and mock thanksgivings may ascend in metropolises to that God before whom Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry—but these constitute only a pall spread over agony and wretchedness, designed to hide what, were it revealed, would exhibit wars and conquerors well nigh in the light of fiends, and drive the heart into contemplation, and there the glory should be the sepulchre, and there the only banner should be the shroud.

Turn from this, and contemplate the victory which Christianity aspires to achieve—a victory which would elevate the subjects of from the thralldom of Satan to the liberty of the children of God—a victory, which will clothe the universe again in the attributes of peace, and more than primeval balm—a victory, which shall bring an innumerable multitude of spirits, each one more precious than all the stars that stud the firmament of the sky, to stand in the palace of glory and of immortality, where there are pleasures evermore—there to sing the anthem of everlasting praise—"Salvation unto God and unto the Lamb." Oh! look, indeed, with joy, in contemplating the victory which Christianity is to accomplish. While we are not after the flesh, and while we pass by with abhorrence the crimes of human conflict, we would urge you to take part, in conducting onward this high achievement, the result of which will be to give you—

"The joy of — to see a smiling world."

James Parsons.

HAPPINESS. A recipe for happiness is offered in the following. We'll not promise that it will succeed, but it would be well for every one to try it and report the result. "We are," after three things—honour, riches and repose. He who lives retired from the world, gains honour; he who is contented with what he has, is rich; he who despises the world and does not occupy himself with it, will find repose."

GENUINE ELOQUENCE.—Leitch, in his "Travels in Ireland," says—"In my morning rambles, a man sitting on the ground, leaning his back against the wall, attracted my attention by a look of squalor in his appearance, which I had rarely before observed, even in Ireland. His clothes were ragged, to indecency—a very common circumstance, however, with the males—and his face was pale and sickly. He did not address me, and I passed by; but, having gone a few paces, my heart smote me and I turned back. 'If you are in want,' said I, with some degree of peevishness, 'why do you not beg?' 'Sure, it's begging I am,' was the reply. 'You did not utter a word.' 'No! is it joking you are with me, sir? Look there!' holding up the tattered remnant of what had once been a coat; 'do you see how the skin is speaking through the holes in my trousers, and the bones coming out through my skin? Look at my sunken cheeks, and the famine that's staring in my eyes! Man alive! isn't it begging I am, with a hundred tongues?'"

SOLITUDE.—This subject has more sound than substance, the man who retires from the busy scenes of life, and the woman from the domestic concerns thereof, to become more devotional for its remaining period, will soon discover that the worship of that God whose wakeful and watchful eye retire not from the daily and nightly care of his wide spread creation, requires not the aid of idleness, and shows his disapprobation of the act, by leaving the mind of the idle subject to confusion, and dull vacuity—a curse to itself, and no blessing to the world. Man was made for social life, and when he ceases to find his happiness in contributing his portion to the general good, and by his example, raising and improving his fellow men, he becomes like the fish, which to relieve itself from company, should leave its native element, and perish in the change.

MOTHERS.—Oh! women, if you could only see one of the miracles promised to maternal influence, with what noble pride would you enter upon that career which has so generously opened future ages to our endeavours! That which is not in the power of any monarch or any nation to accomplish, it is given to your will to execute. You alone can unite the scattered flock, and give it one common impulse. That which I have not been able to trace on this cold paper, you can engrave on the heart of a whole people. I offer to you a feeble image of the world, and you can bequeath the truth itself to the whole world. When, in our public walks and gardens, I see on all sides the noisy crowds of children diverting themselves with the sports suitable to their age, my heart trembles with joy at the thought that they yet belong to you. Let each devote herself to the happiness of her own children, for in such individual happiness God has placed the promise of general happiness.—Young girls, young wives, tender mothers; it lies in you, much more than it lies in the law of a legislature, to confirm the future destiny of Europe, and the destiny of mankind!—Aime Martin.

TRUTHS.—Many a truth is like a wolf which is held by the ears—afraid to let it escape, and yet scarcely able to retain it. And why should we let it go, if it be likely to worry or annoy our neighbour? To promulgate truth with a malicious intent, is worse than to infringe it with a benevolent one, inasmuch as a pleasant deception is often better than a painful reality. It was a saying of the selfish Fontenelle, that if he held the most important truth, like a bird in his hand, he would sooner crush it than let it go. Lessing, the German, on the contrary, found such a delight in the investigation of truth, that he professed his readiness to make over all claim as to its discoverer, provided he might still be allowed to pursue it. Nor can we wonder at his holy ardour; for, to follow truth to its source, is to stand at the footstool of God.

Employment is an universal specific; a concealed cure, from which the patient derives beneficial effects without the formality of a prescription, or the consciousness that he is healing himself.