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GRACE INNES.

My school-boy days were spent at S—, a beautiful village in one of the loveliest valleys of the beautiful land. The mountains of Verden, cultivated to their very summits, and varying in their graceful outline, rise beneath it on the east; two ranges of hills, stretching from them, and sinking by a calm valley to the west, it widens into an extensive fertile plain, the border heights of the Hudson being seen plainly in the distance.—A river and rapid stream, fringed along its course by the dwarf-willow and the elder, winds its fertilizing way through the meadows; and frequent elms and sycamores, spared from the forest by the taste of the original proprietor, cast their broad shadows to shield the hay-mower in his noon-tide rest, or the reclining herds from the summer's sun.

The valley having been settled more than thirty years by an Englishman of wealth and refinement, who brought with him from across the sea the ancestors of the present inhabitants, some regard to order, and even picturesque effect, is visible in the disposition of the houses of the villages and farm-dwellings around. The residence of the chief family, asserting by its ample size and numerous offices, claims to aristocratic rank.

A distance from a market town, without the privileges for manufactures, or inducements for railways, the people of S—, if they have not grown rich, have enjoyed a plenty in primitive simplicity. The industry and intelligence of the first proprietor descended with his wide estate to the son of his only son, and all the influence of equalizing institutions has not removed from the minds of their descendants the reminiscence which the early settlers held the Lord of the Manor. This power has been happily employed to encourage the order and industry of the many; and, perhaps, no where in the world can be seen so pleasing a union of the old world with those of the new. In the house of an aged clergyman, whose humility could not prevent the fame of piety and learning from reaching the ears of his parents, myself and several equals in years went, that we might have the advantage of instruction and be removed from the temptation of the city.

Among the companions in the happy valley was a year older than myself, whom I will call Ferdinand Cariton. Descended from an English ancestry on his mother's side, he had a hazel eye, the massy raven hair, and the countenance that sneered from of that race; nor was he wanting in its pride and earnestness of purpose.

In his boyish sports, he was always the leader of those born to command; and whatever his attention had his whole soul. At the first moment his widowed mother placed herself of the assistance of a richer relative, and placed him among us, we became acquainted, and our friendship knew no chill till I was beside his grave. It was from him I first learned to consider study not as a drudgery, but as a delight. The heroes of the Trojan war fought before me, as he rendered the sagacious Greek into his flowing words; the Egean of Sally seemed to my childish thoughts to flow from his lips; and as we turned the pages of Horace together, we melted with his feelings, numbers or laughed at his graceful lines. So rapidly did his precocious talent lead through our appointed tasks, that we had to find many a pleasing study beside. We were engaged with Pluta's warriors and the chivalrous with Froissart, Campbell, and Byron, in the height of their glory. Would have smiled proudly could they witness the pleasure which they gave to two school boys beside the winter fire, beneath the shade of the summer tree. Often, we forgot to wile away the cautious from his whirling haunt, as we enjoyed the infant morality of honest, pious Isaac; or watched the mist gathering on the distant hills, reviving the superstitions of the till the sun was low, and the night-shrouded from the clouds. Sad expe-

rience of a colder world had long since chilled my romance but Ferdinand Cariton gave up his soul to the enthusiasm, and died a man as he had lived a boy.

Among the objects of our boyish gallantry, (daughters of the few families of the better class) were two, whom I must particularly describe.—One was the only daughter of the wealthy proprietor, a dark haired girl, whose hazel eye and haughty brow spoke an innate sense of superior rank, though her quiet manner was always attractive, and her kind heart careful not to offend. Mary Derwent was the friend of all, but that familiar friend only of Grace Innes, the daughter of her father's agent and trusted friend.—What a fairy creature was Grace Innes then! None could say that she had beauty, if beauty consists of regular features and perfect form; yet her dancing blue eye was always joyous, and her sunny hair waved carelessly around a fair and open forehead, and her rosy cheek, though sunburnt, dimpled with its smiles, as she danced around her graver companion whom she fondly loved. Her laugh! It was like a gush of merry music, making all who heard it glad with her, as she gathered the wild fawns, or twined the wild flowers round her straw bonnet. She had the beauty of happiness, a beauty which none could envy her, for she was ready to share it with all.—Every body loved Grace Innes, and she loved every body. Yet full of frolic innocence as the dear child was, there were times when she would sit for hours with quiet pleasure,—nay, not quiet, for she was continually breaking forth into exclamations,—Ferdinand Cariton read to us some favourite page, or, when the twilight came upon the book, told us stories of the oiden time. Dear did he love to have those sweet children for his listeners. He read the interest he won in the speaking eye and suffused cheek of Mary Derwent, and in the laugh or the tears of Grace Innes. Which did he love best? In those happy days he could love them both.

Years passed away. We had left our venerable teacher with the promise to pay him an annual visit, and had entered college. Then, amidst new and exciting scenes, and afterwards, while studying for our professions, the happy hours we had spent at S—, were often forgotten. We never omitted to pay our promised visit to our dear old friend, but the visit was short. Mary Derwent was seldom at home, her father having sought for her greater advantages of education at a distance; and Grace Innes, pursuing her studies in a more humble way, was rarely absent from the side of her feeble mother, whose health had been failing for several years.

In the mean time the genius of my friend Ferdinand was shining brightly forth. Limiting intensity of application with native luxuriance of fancy, he delighted in communion with the older writers. Plato became as dear to him as Euripides, and he turned from the rhetoric of Cicero to the deep philosophy of his Socratic treatises.—He glowed with the ambition of patriotism and philanthropy. The drier studies of the law were cheered by his hope of being the future advocate of injured innocence, or the lofty legislator of his country's good. He had carried off all the honors of his college. And now promised fairly to win equal success at the bar. The fire within him, however, burned too fiercely, and his physician prescribed rest and rural quiet for some months before he should enter upon the practice of his arduous profession. Joyfully did I consent to his companion again in the happy valley.

Our old friend received us under his roof with much affection, enjoyed our society the more, as his infirmities had obliged him to discontinue his school. All severe study being forbidden to Cariton, we felt naturally back into the enjoyments of our early years. We roamed again through the woods, and read beneath the trees, and wandered beside the stream.—We met, also, frequently with Mary Derwent and Grace Innes.—Mary had attained a glorious beauty. Her form was at once noble and lovely. The light of her dark eye was deeper, and a loftier consciousness crowned her queen-like brow. The beauty

of her external form was, however, but a fitting type of the mind within, which education had done its utmost to adorn and strengthen. Her words in conversation were few and simple, but her sentiments were high and decided, and her expression of them frank and unhesitating. She spoke as one who knew and felt that her words were truth. Perhaps there was even more of masculine vigor than feminine tenderness in her mental character; and, though it was impossible not to admire her, I always felt that she was a being fitted to command, rather than to win regard.—Ferdinand thought otherwise.

Grace Innes had passed through bitter trials. Her father and mother were both dead, and she had experienced the coldness of distant relations, to whom she had flown upon their first expressions of sympathy for her orphan state. Poor Grace found, what her ingenuous heart had never dreamed of in the happy valley, that the language of kindness could be used to deceive, and the show of affection be made to betray. At first she was treated with the utmost attention; but when it was found that her little property was so carefully guarded in the hands of Col. Derwent, as to be beyond their reach, her hollow friends soon made her feel herself a stranger in the house of her kindred. Yet every outward courtesy was preserved, there were no positive acts of which she could complain, even if her gentle spirit had the disposition to do so. Thus solitary and shut up to her own heart, her thoughts naturally reverted to the happy scenes of former days, and the friends who made them happy. Her correspondence with Mary Derwent was her chief comfort, and through her she heard of the brilliant successes which had already adorned the career of their early playmate Ferdinand. Many of her books were marked by his pencil, and every advance in intellectual pleasures was accompanied with gratitude for his guidance of her taste in childhood. She was too lowly in heart to imagine that she would remember her amidst the bustle of the world; but in her loneliness, the instinct of her nature needed some object to cling to, and she clung to her memory of him. She did not dream of love, yet she was continually imagining the change which must have passed over the beautiful and high-minded boy, now that he had become the accomplished and admired ornament of society. She bore her seclusion without murmuring, but if ever she desired to mingle with the world, it was that she might witness the triumphs of her friend Mary's beauty, and of Ferdinand's genius. The tone of her letters, though almost unconsciously she omitted all allusion to the idol of her imagination, became so depressed and melancholy, that the anxious Mary rested not until she had persuaded her to make her home for months at Col. Derwent's. The lovely friends had been united again for several weeks before Ferdinand and myself reached S—, and as might be expected, we sought their society with renewed delight.

Grace Innes was the same, and not the same. Still affectionate and guileless, she was no longer the gay laughing child. Her return to familiar scenes and the confidence of assured friends, had relieved her melancholy; but her laugh, though musical, had not the merry joy which used to gush through it. The songs she sung were always sad, and when she chose the page for Cariton to read beside them, as they pined their busy needles, it was always one who spoke of disappointed hopes, and grief which is too deep for tears.—Yet her conversation was cheerful, and she talked much, like one whose thoughts had long been pent up for want of sympathy. She seemed making her last stake for happiness, yet with a foreboding that she would lose it.

Ferdinand was evidently held in awe of the high dignity of Mary Derwent, and his more frequent attentions were given to Grace. The disguised interest she manifested in his opinions, and the frank assent she gave to his glowing reasoning, flattered and encouraged him. I thought the heart of my friend was given to Grace Innes.—But I was deceived. He loved Mary Derwent, but he loved hopelessly. The same elevation of character and nobleness of

bearing that had brought his spirit into captivity, made him despair of winning her affections. Ferdinand was proud, and the prouder because he was poor; and he shrank from the idea of rejection by one, whose lot in life was among the richest of the land. He could not refrain from her society, yet while near her he continually guarded his manner, lest he should betray the state of his heart. Could he have seen the flashing feeling from her eye when his soul was pouring forth its eloquent thoughts; but he dared not so to look upon her, unconsciously he sought refuge in the gentle graces of her friend's manner. The devil was fatal, though his thought was innocent. Poor Grace, it was a happiness too great for her to resist, to believe herself the object of attention from one so worthy of a woman's love. Before she was aware, she had lost all happiness but that derived from the hope of being the chosen of Ferdinand Cariton. But she kept her secret from her who had shared her every other thought.

By what means the diffidence of Ferdinand was overcome, and the return of his passion by Mary discovered to him, I know not, but a few weeks found them affianced to each other with her father's happy consent, and they were looking forward to a blissful union, confident in each other's word. Absorbed in their mutual love, they did not observe the fatal blight which had passed upon sweet Grace Innes. The only charm of her life was gone, and rest from her by the friend of her heart. She could not shade their happiness by her grief, but though she strove to seem cheerful, it was but the semblance of cheerfulness. Mary thought that health was failing her, and redoubled her cares to call back the bloom to her cheek and the light to her eye.—Hopefully, too, did she speak of her accompanying Ferdinand and herself on a proposed tour in Europe, and finding health and joy in sunny Italy. Little did she know that she was only agitating the barbed arrow in the festering heart. Grace Innes faded daily, yet she strove like a martyr to conceal her desolateness;—but she was a martyr.

The day of the marriage came. The wedding was private and in the morning. It was Ferdinand's only attendant, and Grace, Mary's. After the ceremony, the bridal party were to proceed on a visit to some distant friends of the Derwents. Tastefully did poor Grace adorn her friend, and earnest was the kiss she imprinted upon her brow, when her toilet task was done. Yet when I drew her arm within mine to enter the circle of witnessing friends, I felt it tremble, and she clung to me for support. One effort more, and she stood cold and pale like marble, till the nuptial benediction was pronounced, and then fell lifeless to the floor. The heat of the room, the fatigue of preparation, the excitement of the ceremony, were each considered sufficient to account for her swoon; but the suspicions I had long entertained, were now confirmed. I knew Grace Innes could never again be happy on earth.

She entreated that the wedding jaunt might not be deferred, and reluctantly the bride of Ferdinand Cariton left the bed-side of the sufferer, to be conducted across her father's threshold by the husband of her pride and choice.

I heard frequently that she was still an invalid, but many hoped that time would restore strength to Grace Innes. She was affectionately nursed in the house of one of her mother's friends; but her physician confessed he knew not what her disease could be. She never complained of suffering, and only seemed to lament the trouble she gave. In a few months, however, her mind gave way, and Grace Innes was a maniac. Then her physical frame seemed to acquire new health.—Her thoughts seemed happy, though her expressions were incoherent. The name of Mary or Ferdinand never escaped from her lips, but she wandered harmlessly among the scenes where she had been accustomed to meet them, training Mary's favorite plants, or feeding her birds, or touching fitfully her harp, as she sung broken snatches of her song; and every one said she was a maniac for life.