

## THE CHASE OF A FLYING SHADOW,

THAT RESTED NOT UNTIL IT SLEPT IN GLOOM  
AND FOREVER.

BY EDWARD LYTON BULWER.

“Man walketh in a vain shadow : and disquieteth  
himself in vain !”

THERE is one feeling which is the earliest-born with us—which accompanies us through life, in the gradations of friendship, love, and parental attachment—and of which there is scarcely one among us who can say, “It has been realized according to my desire.”—This feeling is the wish to be loved—loved to the amount of the height and the fervour of the sentiments we imagine that we ourselves are capable of embodying into one passion. Thus, who that hath nicely weighed his own heart will not confess that he has never been fully satisfied with the love rendered to him, whether by the friend of his boyhood, the mistress of his youth, or the children of his age. Yet even while we reproach the languor and weakness of the affection bestowed on us, we are reproached in *our* turn with the same charge ; and it would seem as if we all—all and each—possessed within us certain immortal and spiritual tendencies to love, which nothing human and earth-born can wholly excite ; they are instincts which make us feel a power never to be exercised, and a loss doomed to be irremediable.

The simple but singular story which I am about to narrate, is of a man in whom this craving after a love beyond the ordinary loves of earth, was so powerful and restless a passion, that it became in him the source of all the errors and the vices that have usually their origin in the grossness of libertinism ; led his mind through the excess of dissipation to the hardness of depravity—and when at length it arrived at the fruition of dreams so wearying and so anxious—when with that fruition, virtue long stifled by disappointment seemed slowly, but triumphantly to awake—betrayed him only into a punishment he had ceased to deserve, and hurried him into an untimely grave, at the very moment when life became dear to himself, and appeared to promise atonement and value to others.

Rupert de Lindsay was an orphan of ancient family and extensive possessions. With a person that could advance but a slight pretension to beauty, but with an eager desire to please, and a taste the most delicate and refined, he very early learned the art to compensate by the graces of manner for the deficiencies of form ; and before he had reached an age when other men are noted only for their horses or their follies, Rupert de Lindsay was distinguished no less for the brilliancy of his *ton*, and the number of his conquests, than for his acquirements in literature and his honours in the senate. But while every

one favoured him with envy, he was, at heart, a restless and disappointed man.

Among all the delusions of the senses—among all the triumphs of vanity, his ruling passion, to be really, purely, and deeply loved, had never been satisfied. And while this leading and master-desire pined at repeated disappointments, all other gratifications seemed rather to mock than to console him. The exquisite tale of Alcibiades, in Marmontel, was applicable to him. He was loved for his adventurous qualifications, not for himself. One loved his fashion, a second his fortune ; a third, he discovered, had only listened to him out of pique at another ; and a fourth accepted him as her lover because she wished to decoy him from her friend. These adventures, and these discoveries, brought him disgust ; they brought him, also, knowledge of the world ; and nothing hardens the heart more than that knowledge of the world which is founded on a knowledge of its vices—made bitter by disappointment, and misanthropical by deceit.

I saw him just before he left England, and his mind then was sore and feverish. I saw him on his return, after an absence of five years in the various courts in Europe, and his mind was callous and even. He had then reduced the art of governing his own passions, and influencing the passions of others, to a system ; and had reached the second stage of experience, when the deceived becomes the deceiver. He added to his former indignation at the vices of human nature, scorn for its weakness. Still many good, though irregular, impulses, lingered about his heart. Still the appeal, which to a principle would have been useless, was triumphant when made to an affection. And though selfishness constituted the system of his life, there were yet many hours when the system was forgotten, and he would have sacrificed himself at the voice of a single emotion. Few men of ability, who neither marry nor desire to marry, live much among the frivolities of the world after the age of twenty-eight. And De Lindsay, now waxing near to the end of his thirtieth year, avoided the society he had once courted, and lived solely to satisfy his pleasures and indulge his indolence. Women made his only pursuit and sole ambition : and now, at length, arrived the time when, in the possession of an intrigue, he was to become susceptible of a passion ; and the long and unquenched wish of his heart was to be matured into completion.

In a small village not far from London, there dwelt a family of the name of Warner ; the father, piously termed Ebenezer Ephraim, was a merchant, a bigot, and a saint ; the brother, simply and laicallly christened James, was a rake, a boxer, a good fellow. But *she*, the daughter, who claimed the chaste and sweet name of Mary, simple and modest, beautiful in feature and in heart, of a temper rather tender and gay, saddened by the gloom which hung forever upon the home of her childhood, but soften-