

Original.

## THE LOVED TOO LATE.

AN ENGLISH STORY.

Few villages present a richer specimen of fine old English scenery than D——, and few domains are nobler or more princely than that of the Lord of the Manor. The park, with its venerable oaks,—the velvet lawns, the rich preserves,—and, above all, the splendid mansion, the style of whose architecture, from its many and incongruous improvements, it is sometimes difficult to mention, but still looking so grand and so dignified in spite of the shade of the grotesque : these are the bold points of English scenery, and these instil into the mind of the aristocrat the love of nature and the love of home. But these are not the scenes (if we may be allowed the expression) with which the poor can sympathise : it is the neatly-trimmed hedge,—the hill-side with its many flocks,—the pasture, the brook, and the cottage door trellised with its sweet honeysuckle, that call up kindling emotions in the bosom of the peasant, that have something in them akin to virtue. Here his joys, his love, his fears,—nay, here even his ambition is fixed ; his desires reach not to another station, but to the highest enjoyment of that in which he is placed. He is the true sage,—he gathers the rose from life, and sits down content beneath the broad shadow of his vine.

Edward Tracey, the owner of —— Hall, as it was termed, was an orphan. He was of good family, but a fair, unsullied name was not his only heritage. Possessions in the county of Essex, of no mean value, neither encumbered nor curtailed by the improvidence of any profligate heir, descended to him through a long race of simple, yet in their own sphere not undistinguished, country squires. Amid rural scenes his childhood and his youth had been principally spent ; but childhood and youth had now passed away,—and, at the time our story opens, he was just entering his twenty-second year.

There was much in Tracey's character to be pleased with and to admire. Ingenuous, honourable and social, he was, without descending to

the soubriquet of a "good fellow," known and valued as a friend. His mind could scarcely, at present, be said to be of a deeply reflective cast : but it wanted, perhaps, only a few years of gathered experience in the world, from which, like the bee, he might retire to survey the honey extracted from each flower,—to evince—what, had he been of a melancholy temperament, he would already have displayed—a disposition to indulge in day-dreams, in philosophical musings. Yet the common observer would not have been likely to give Tracey credit for the large share of the powers of thought which he in reality possessed, since there was something in his frankness, his sociability, his attention to unimportant matters, nay, in his very simplicity, which is not often found in conjunction with a taste for the ideal,—a conjunction, indeed, which is rarely admitted by the world, except when visible in men of justly earned reputations as philosophers or men of letters. The great fault of Tracey's character, however, was the last of which he would have been suspected—a desire for the brilliant. I do not mean any ambition for personal distinction—no : but the effect of a season or two in town, (under the influence of which, by the way, the slight rusticity of his *manner* had vanished, while its simplicity had been left, happily, unimpaired) had been, to excite a sort of meretricious taste for the glittering, and to evince, that solidity, which had been thought the very foundation of his virtues, rested itself on a very precarious tenure. Had his education been shallow and careless, even his many sterling qualities of heart and mind would have been unable to withstand this, combined with the deficiency we have mentioned ;—but these qualities, joined to the simplicity and deep conscientiousness with which he had been early imbued, had, until now, prevented this important defect from being visible. It is the one chief error in every man's character, whatever that error may be, from which most of the sin