

affliction, and had breathed into it the very soul of sorrow. The wild and beautiful scenery amid which he dwelt, and which he loved and knew so well, had also given its hues to the language and the thoughts of his muse: his rich and now cultivated taste imparted elegance and harmony to his numbers; the poem was at once original, chaste, and imaginative; it gained him the esteem of the highest literary circles in Edinburgh, and he became a cherished guest in the houses of many distinguished men for whom he had never hoped to indulge any feelings save those of distant and respectful admiration. He emerged into a new world, too beautiful and dazzling for him at first to see his way clearly through its mazes. His undoubted genius commanded the respect of the men—his manly feelings, and the ingenious eloquence of his address, presently made him a distinguished favourite with the female portion of his acquaintance. The tone of his thoughts and feelings underwent a perfect revolution. Once introduced into the society of the polite and learned, the bashfulness and awkwardness of the shepherd lad seemed to fall off from him, without effort of his own, but naturally, like the crustaceous envelop in the metamorphosis of insects. He felt as if he were a denizen of the clime in which he now luxuriated, and as if, till now, he had been living in a foreign land. He discovered, to his amazement, that those great men, whose very names he had been wont to utter with reverence, and before whose glance his eye had been accustomed to fall abashed, were the most easy, familiar, and communicative companions possible—that scarcely one of them was so severe in their morality as his old father—that they listened to his opinions with attention, and replied to them with respect.

At the period to which we refer, the literary society of Edinburgh was by no means distinguished for its abstemiousness. A "good" fellow and a clever one, were almost synonymous terms. Sir Walter Scott, in his novel of "Guy Mannering," has matchlessly described the convivial habits of the Scotch advocates: the habits of the whole literary society of Edinburgh were pretty similar. Why should I detail the circumstances of William's seduction from sobriety? The example of those whom he had been accustomed to admire, respect, and love; the gay sallies of his younger associates; the witchery of the society of genius; the flowing feeling which followed the circulation of the bowl; the song, the speech, the story, the flash of wit, the jocose roll of humour, and, above all, the forgiving approval (for how else shall we designate it?) of the ladies—all assailed him at once, and, beneath their attacks, his reason and resolve,

"That column of true majesty in man,"

fell. Age, wisdom, youth, wit, humour, friendship, love, and beauty—what could a raw shepherd lad oppose to all these?

We will pass rapidly over this part of our departed friend's career. He mingled, at first sparingly, at length more freely, in the convivial habits of his new friends. Unfortunately, he engaged to write for a new periodical which some of his friends were then attempting to establish. He had pledged himself to support it to a certain extent; and, in order to fulfil his promise, at the instigation of an acquaintance, he stimulated himself to its accomplishment by means of brandy. This was the first time he had ever drunk ardent spirits for the sake of the effect which they produce. The paper which he had written was universally admired, the sale of the periodical was very much increased by its influence, and he was plied by the proprietors with new and lucrative engagements.

On the very morning on which he had received these proposals, he also received a letter from his aged father, informing him, that the brother of an old man, who was engaged in commerce, and for whom he had some time ago become surety, had failed, and that the whole of the little earnings of his past life would be required to liquidate the debt.

William closed with the proposal of the proprietors of the magazine, and wrote to the old man a letter, partly of condolence, but more of triumph. He was almost glad that the resources of his father were destroyed, now that he himself had the means of supporting him; and it was with a joyous heart that he sat down to write his paper for the new periodical. But, alas! he felt what all who have so occupied themselves have felt, how the mind becomes weak, and the fancy flags, when compelled to action. He rushed into society to escape from the dreadful depression which follows high mental excitement; the warmth of friendship with

which he was met, fell gratefully on his spirit; the glee and glory of social intercourse first relieved his wearied faculties, and then pleasantly excited them; the titillation of gratified vanity, and the exercise of intellectual power, combined to make the scene fascinating; he went more and more into society; it became more and more necessary to him—he was a social man.

William Riddle passed the whole of his examinations, and was, as the students say, "ready for a church." Nor was he long in procuring one. Among the friends to whom his genius and character had recommended him, was a nobleman, who had the gift of the very kirk to which William and his father had been accustomed to resort. The incumbent died; the nobleman presented the living to William. With the new duties which now devolved upon him, came a crowd of new feelings and springs of action. He gave up his engagement with the literary periodical, he retired from his social companions, and he devoted himself to grave and worthy study and contemplation. The struggle was severe; but he bore up against it under the excitement of the new responsibility which had fallen upon him. He went down to the country with some of the most distinguished members of the Scottish church, who officiated at his ordination. A proud, a tumultuously happy day was it for old David Riddle, who, with wonder and awe, felt his horny hand grasped by the great men whose very names he had considered subservient to his happiness of old time, and beheld his son, little William, the boy whom he had taught the alphabet upon Saurhope hill, with the pabbles that lie there,—behold him holding high discourse with these same dignitaries, saw that his opinions were listened to with respect, and that his thoughts, according as they were solemn or ludicrous, were responded to by these great men with gravity or broad grins. A delightful day was it to the old shepherd, as he beheld the first man in the General Assembly—the greatest man in the Scottish Kirk—lay his hand upon the youthful head of his beloved son, and consecrate him to the care of the souls who dwell in the very valley where he had been born and reared, in which his genius was known, and his family, though humble, respected.

There was another, and an equally strong reason for William's giving up his convivial habits and boisterous companions. He was in love.

It was at that least romantic of all places for a lover, a ball in Edinburgh, that William Riddle, the new pastor of Moskirk, had first met Ellen Ogilvie, the daughter of the principal heritor of his parish, the owner of the hills on which his father had watched the sheep for above threescore years. Ellen had beheld him moving, a gay and welcome visitant, in noble halls: her hand had met his in the dance, in exchange with those of countesses and duchesses; she had heard his praise echoed from house to house, and from mouth to mouth; she was now alone in the country, with nothing but ignorant or coarse men around her: let it not seem wonderful that she, though the only daughter of a wealthy landholder, should bestow her love on the poor, hand-ome, manly, eloquent pastor of Moskirk. And if this does not seem wonderful, it will surely not appear singular that the proud, haughty, bigoted, and ignorant father of Ellen should forbid the match, and should threaten with his vengeance the usurper of his daughter's love. William Riddle, the minister of Moskirk, was out of the canons of the duello, and the laird, therefore, instead of calling him out, was compelled to be satisfied with dis-inheriting Ellen, who, under circumstances which fully exonerated her from her father's tyrannical wishes, became William's wife.

In the parish of Moskirk, as in most of the country parishes in Scotland, there were a number of intelligent men who associated frequently together for the sake of cultivating scientific knowledge, and conversing on various subjects of interest in literature and philosophy. At the time that William was inducted into Moskirk, all the ministers of the neighbouring parishes were members of this society, and it was generally held on a convivial footing. Into this society William Riddle was welcomed with enthusiastic honours, and was at once made perpetual president. His fame as a poet had gone before him, and his genial warmth as a man followed up with general applause the sensation which he had created. He had natural powers capable of supporting him in the sphere to which his reputation had raised him. He had wit, humour, pathos, and fluency—and, eager to earn the kind opinion of his parishioners, he exerted himself to gain it, and he succeeded. Throughout