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THE VICTIMS OF PASSION.*

A TALE OF THE EAST.

A man does not feel while he fancies. The young priest had nearly finished his homeward journey, before his senses had so far pierced the thick mists of imagination as to receive from beyond them the impressions of disappointment. Still he did not feel aggrieved or vexed; hopes, such as he had scaffolded about his being, were not to be dashed down by so slight a repulse. He imputed the denial to some mistake or accident, and looked forward to his next visit as assuredly successful. That second visit he made a few days after, and met with the same cold refusal. This time, he was stung and irritated. He was convinced that Chatrya must be resolved not to meet him again; for certainly, she might either have appeared or offered some explanation. He rode home in a savage humour, and felt mad and desperate all the evening. From these annoyances of "reality's dark dream" he took refuge in airy visions of success: he imagined himself in her company, happy and beloved, and thus his equanimity was soon restored. Pleasing fancies soon renewed pleasing hopes. He began to think that he had been hasty in his conclusion of failure. It was very probable that Chatrya was really absent from home, at the time of his last visit, and that the case in fact stood where his first repulse had placed it. Dropping that from the consideration, there was no reason whatever to despond or be surprised. He might almost return to the full satisfaction of his first fresh hope. He determined, however, for the sake of bringing matters to a point, that when he called again, he would make an appointment for bringing her to look at the temple, according to her promise, which, till now he had almost forgotten was the avowed object and pretext of his visits.

Accordingly, after some days he again took his way through the forest, which afforded the only approach from the temple to the residence of Chatrya. After riding a little way, he fell in with the king. By the established law no one was allowed to pass through that wood except the king, and though the prohibition was not penally enforced, yet as it was known that the king loved to be there alone, all who went through it took care to keep as much as possible out of his way: Godari therefore felt a little awkward in intruding upon him. The priesthood, however, constituted a high elevation in rank, and the family of Godari was so much connected with the court, that there had always existed as much familiarity between himself and the king as was practicable between a subject and his sovereign; these considerations and the affable bearing of the monarch soon set him at ease and they rode on together in familiar conversation. After a little while the king turned to him and said, that he had an appointment at his lodge at that hour which would render it necessary for him to leave his companion; and smiling with a peculiar expression, rode off through a narrow path and left Godari alone. The latter suspected the nature of the engagement, but his own thoughts were too much interested in a similar manner to suffer him to blame the conduct of the king.

A brisk canter soon brought him to the brow of a hill from which there issued a fine spring of water. He stopped his horse to let him drink, and in the silence of the breezeless air, he presently heard a sound of motion among the leaves and branches at a little distance, which he at first imputed to a playful squirrel. In a moment, however, he heard the low humming of a sweet human voice, that floated, flake-like, on the yellow air, and seemed the vocal incense of a happy heart. He raised his eyes, and at the bottom of the hill saw his own Chatrya. With one hand she was swinging her bonnet by its string and carrying in the other a choice bunch of flowers. The first impulse of Godari's gladness to spring forward and embrace her, was arrested by a feeling of wonder at her presence in this place, and curiosity to discover the object of her walk. A vague feeling of suspicion, too shadowy to be combatted, and too dark to be forgotten, crept over his mind. He stood motionless till she was out of sight, and then dismounting, walked quickly in the direction which she had taken, until he again came up with her. He followed her till they came within view of the royal lodge. The heart of Godari sank within him, and a sense of inexpressible mortification came upon him, as he saw that her steps were directed towards it. She tripped gaily along, as soon as she saw the house, and running up the steps, the door opened to her as to one expected.

Godari leaned against a tree, breathless with dismay. His frame grew rigid with the force of unutterable feelings. Scarcely master of his actions, he walked towards the lodge, and observing a

window in one end, accessible by a little effort, he climbed noiselessly up, and looked within. In the midst of a room, furnished as became the secret place of royal luxury, on a couch of richest crimson, he saw Goroyen and Chatrya lying in the tenderest embraces of love. He looked for one moment, and in that moment the curdling coldness of a demon's temper crept over his spirit and froze his soul to adamant. It was one of those instants that are epochs in the calendar of the soul, transforming it thenceforward. Godari sprang to the ground, another creature. In Chatrya had been "garnered up" his happiest memories, his purest thoughts, his holiest hopes. In her had been hooded all his spiritual being; she was the inner world of loveliness wherein his gentler feelings were sheltered and expanded; her memory was the air his virtues breathed; she was his youthful heart; his stainless mind; she was the flower upon his stalk of life. She was.

"to his soul
Its soul; was to his fancy its bound world
In which it lived; and moved; all else beyond
Darkness, annihilation."

When her idea had been fixed in his thought, it related back through all his life, and absorbed into itself all that was good in all his musings or experience; with her, these perished. As when the autumnal blast whirls through a yellow tree, and what it found a rich and leaf-clad plant, is left a dry and wintry trunk, was the awful desolation wrought in the breast of Godari. He felt no regret or pain: stern and destructive violence of mind devoured all softness. He cursed himself for having been the bubble of a weak and womanish feeling, and the dupe of what now seemed the most trivial passion in the world. Till this moment he had been a boy, begirt with boyhood's self-forming atmosphere of tenderness: but now he waved and whistled down the wind all gentleness of thought, and thrilled with unblenching manhood's steel-nerved force.

Godari felt that he had staked his destiny upon a single cast, and that had gone against him. Henceforth his portion was such selfish gain as, by the onward might of abandoned fury, he could work out for himself. He rode home calm and composed; one might almost say, happy. Feeling in him was crushed and swept away; and feeling is, to a man of sensibility, a source of far more misery than joy. All that system of perception and impression, of which the beating heart is the centre and support, was paralyzed; and his whole consciousness resolved itself into a cold, impassable and scheming intellect. His former susceptibility from opinion and his relations to others, was gone. His feelings had been wrenched into utter numbness.

Days passed on and the young priest grew sterner and more relentless; for the sources of moral vitality were dried up within him. Religion perished with the softness of his heart; for when impressibility is gone, belief is a dream: we acknowledge and deride or defy. The only passion which burned within him, was ambition; and that attached to him, rather from the mental pleasure which intrigue afforded, than from the prospect of grateful desire which success held forth.

To detach the king from Chatrya, revenge as well as restlessness suggested; to marry the king to his own sister, was a purpose following close upon. The first of these objects he saw an easy manner of accomplishing. To the sect of Seva, of which Godari was a priest, it was usual for the king and nobles of the country to be at some time admitted; for the order was honourable, and held forth high promise of favour in a world to come. This was the religion professed by the ancestral family of Goroyen, who had vanquished and exiled the race of Samide kings; and in the oath taken by the king at his admission, there was inserted a promise never to speak to, or sit or eat with any of the tribe of the Samides. It was not usual for the lay members, of this sect, to take the vows till late in life, for they imposed a greater strictness of life, and austerity of conduct than was usually agreeable to the eagerness of youth; some solicitation and management on the part of Godari was therefore necessary, to prevail upon the king to be initiated into this sect. His consent, however, was at length obtained, and he yielded to the wishes of his friend, profoundly ignorant of the existence of the prohibitory clause, which we have spoken of, in the oath.

A day was accordingly appointed for the ceremony to take place, and at the appointed time there assembled in the temple all that the country held of distinguished, beautiful and great. By the private order of the king, a favourable place for viewing the scene was reserved for Chatrya, who, being informed of all the proceedings by Goroyen, looked forward to the event with great curiosity and interest. When she occupied her seat on the antici-

pated day, her heart beat high with gentle pride and gratified desire: she cherished the delightful thought that she was the sole object of all the affections of that envied personage, upon whom so many admiring eyes in that bright company were fixed. By the identifying doubleness of love, appropriating to herself the silent tribute of regard which was visibly offered to the youthful monarch, she felt, as one mingling unseen among the crowd may feel, the unknown author of an act which all the crowd applauds. Goroyen, meanwhile, went through the successive ceremonies with grace and dignity, and at length arrived at the solemn oath. The high-priest recited the successive clauses, and Goroyen pronounced them after him. When he came to that part in which it was necessary to renounce all connexion and communication with the Samides, the king started with surprise and embarrassment. To repeat those words with that sincerity with which he was performing the entire service, was utterly inconsistent with that relation to Chatrya, which nothing would induce him to renounce; to mar the order of the solemn ceremonies, and break up the assembly by refusing to continue his part, was not to be thought of. His brain grew dizzy with the perplexity; the clearness of his thoughts was confused by the influence of the observant multitude, and the holy and venerable countenance of the officiating hierarch; his head swam round with overpowering disturbance, and he insensibly pronounced the words that divorced him for ever from Chatrya.

The disorder and agitation of mind with which Goroyen sought his chamber, when the services were over, cannot be easily described. Bred in the strictest integrity of principle, he could not tolerate the idea of violating so sacred an oath; yet, on the other hand, honour and affection, and every impulse of piety, duty and desire, forbade him to desert one upon whom his love would soon entail the cares and sorrows of a mother. He paced his room in distraction of thought, and distress of heart, during the remainder of the day, and meeting with no suggestion that afforded him light or consolation, finally resolved on sending for his friend Godari, to obtain the benefit of his counsel in this difficulty.

Godari listened to his disclosures with gratifying interest: sympathized with him in his distress: pitied his unfortunate position: and pondered profoundly upon the best course to pursue. He showed him that this was a case in which inclination and duty were opposed to one another, and pointed out to him the necessity which always existed of disregarding one's own feelings whenever they were at variance with the dictates of duty. To this principle the well-regulated mind of Goroyen cordially assented; but between the obligation of his oath, and that of his connexion with Chatrya there arose apparently a conflict of equivalent duties. Godari went on to say that as far as the king himself was concerned, the paramount force of his vow was manifest; and that as respected Chatrya, every obligation was performed if by any means her happiness was secured. If, therefore, the king would provide for her all those things which would promote her comfort and enjoyment, he might fairly consider himself as absolved from the duty which rested upon him. This seemed to clear the difficulty very well, and Goroyen was delighted with this satisfactory exposition of the case. His own sufferings occasioned by the separation from the only person whom he loved, he threw totally out of view, resolving to cling to the right at all possible events and hazards. He gave directions to Godari to assign the lodge as the residence and property of Chatrya, determining himself never to visit it again; and he placed in his hands a liberal sum of money for her use. Satisfied by his own judgment, and the assurance of the priest that he had performed his duty, he determined to conquer the feeling of attachment which had held him to Chatrya, and as a mean of succeeding more fully in this, to fix them, if possible, on some other object. This state of inclination was exactly that which was required for the effecting of Godari's ambitious intentions. While the affections of the king were hovering, as it were, at large, doubtful upon what to alight, and willing to adopt any object that should present itself, Godari directed one of his creatures to represent delicately to Goroyen that the sister of the former cherished an ardent but concealed attachment for him. Such a representation, when made to a man of kind nature, will almost invariably accomplish its purpose; with one of Goroyen's refined sense of honor, and especially at a time when he was peculiarly susceptible, it was certain of success.

Goroyen was deeply touched by the statement which was made to him, and lost no time in presenting himself to the lady, and offering his hand. The wish to forget Chatrya in the ardour of another pursuit, united with the attractions of the person herself; and

* Concluded from our last.