

HALIFAX PEARL,

A VOLUME DEVOTED TO POLITE LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Published every Friday evening, at Fifteen Shillings per Annam, in advance.

VOLUME TWO.

FRIDAY EVENING, MAY 4, 1838.

NUMBER EIGHTEEN.

SUNSHINE.

BY MARY HOWITT.

I love the sunshine every where,—
In wood, and field, and glen;
I love it in the busy haunts
Of town-imprisoned men.

I love it when it streameth in
The humble cottage door,
And casts the chequered pavement shade
Upon the red-brick floor.

I love it where the children lie
Deep in the clovery grass,
To watch among the twining roots
The gold-green beetles pass.

I love it on the breezy sea,
To glance on sail and oar,
While the great waves, like molten glass,
Come leaping to the shore.

I love it on the mountain-tops,
Where lies the thawless snow,
And half a kingdom, bathed in light,
Lies stretching out below.

And when it shines in forest glades,
Hidden, and green, and cool,
Through mossy boughs, and veined leaves,
How is it beautiful!

How beautiful on little streams,
When sun and shade at play
Make silvery meshes, while the brook
Goes singing on its way!

How beautiful, where dragon-flies
Are wondrous to behold,
With rainbow wings of gauzy pearl,
And bodies blue and gold!

How beautiful, on harvest slopes,
To see the sunshine lie;
Or on the paler reaped fields,
Where yellow shocks stand high!

Oh, yes? I love the sunshine,
Like kindness or like mirth,
Upon a human countenance,
Is sunshine on the earth.

Upon the earth—upon the sea—
And through the crystal air,
On piled-up clouds—the glorious sun
Is glorious every where!

From Bentley's Miscellany for March.

THE TWO SISTERS.

An Artless Tale.

No wonder that the great lyric poet should have given the epithet of "molesta" to "pituita," or that the Romans erected temples to the goddess Tussis. Both prove that the famed climate of Italy was not proof, even in ancient times, against the most deadly of maladies.

There is an importunate guest, who comes unbidden; first knocks gently at the door, then with more assurance, after a time will admit of no denial, and at last makes the house her home. Shall I draw her portrait? It is not a prepossessing one. She is a "death in life," an age in youth; her face is "white as leprosy;" her eyes are lustrous and glassy; her breath, of fire; her step inaudible, yet sure.

She delights in the keen blasts of the wintry wind, the bleak and unsheltered mountain, a wide extent of coast open to all the fury of the north-east, the autumnal woods with their fallen and decaying leaves, the stagnant and weed-overgrown pool, the putrid waste of tremulous marshes: these are some of her haunts!

Yet does she not disdain the resort of man. Go to the gas-lit theatre, linger in the draught of its corridors; enter the crowded and unventilated ball-room; kneel in the vaulted aisle of some church, steaming putrefaction; she is there, in her multiplicity of form, and ubiquity of evil. Yes; in all and each of these places she is to be found.

Oh! the vulture that she is. To use the words of the Greek dramatist, "The scent of human prey sends up a grateful odour to make glad her nostrils, as laughter does the heart;" and, like the bloodhounds of Orestes, she never loses sight of her prey till she has tracked it to earth.

She is no respecter of persons, has no predilection for dresses: sometimes she clothes herself in the robe of pride and sometimes is seen in rags. She pretends to be the most affectionate of brides; tells her lover "Be happy!" winds him in her chilly

arms, and, wriathe as he may, he cannot escape from her horrid embraces.

You shall be acquainted presently with her name: may you only hear it! Be strangers to each other, but avoid her as you would a pestilence!

I will let you into the secret of those whom she loves best. Listen!

If there is a father who has an only son, the last scion of his stock, the staff of his declining years, his idol, the object of his worship, one on whom he gazes till he sheds tears of tenderest delight, a youth "the observed of all observers," who has ennobled his mind, cultivated his talents, and purified his affections,—it is on him she casts her longing eye, she breathes on him with her breath of flame. The artist at his easel, the student in his closet, the author in his garret, the manufacturer at his loom,—these are the objects of her fond regard. But for the bloated epicure, the half-starved miser, the gripping usurer, the painted harridan,—these, with a singular caprice, she passes by unobserved; whilst from youth and beauty—youth, ere it comes to its prime; not as it displays itself in the muscular vigour of limb, the rosy bloom on the unchanging cheek, or elastic vigour of the step; no! no!—like an unseasonable frost, she chooses to cut off the fairest flowers, and nip the tenderest shoots.

She is called Consumption. Yet comes she not alone. Disease, Desolation, and Despair,—these are her familiars, she brings them with her in her imperial train: they thrust themselves into the chariot, they accompany her to the public gardens, they intrude on the secluded walk, they seat themselves at the table, drug the wine with gall, mix poison in the viands, haunt the couch of restlessness, and quit not their victims till the cup of bitterness is full,—till they have found a refuge from pain, sorrow, regret, in that last resting-place of the wretched, the grave.

Such were my reflections as in March, many, many years ago, I was lounging leisurely in the "Invalids' Walk" at Torbay. It is the office or Pisa of England, and the great refuge of consumptive patients from all parts of the three kingdoms. The spot is protected from the north-easterly winds by range behind range of hills: here carpeted with turf of eternal verdure; and there, surmounted by towers covered with plantations to their tops, or showing, denuded of the slightest vestige of vegetation, their bald scalps, of most fantastic forms, and rich in colour as those of the lakes of Cumberland or Killarney. So that Torbay is not only the most picturesque, but the most desirable residence on the coast of Devonshire. But if the environs are beautiful, what shall I say of the place itself, with its basin, like a small sea-port scooped out of the rock, artificially formed by means of two piers or moles, the miniature of those of Genoa; terrace above terrace, its buildings and villas of the most elegant construction, with their verandas and balconies commanding a view of Torbay, seen from between two rival wooded cones, where many a thatched cottage peeps like a bird's nest out of the thick foliage of evergreens that embower them? I have called Torbay a winter residence; no! winter there is none: so mild is the climate, that the ilex, the arbutus, and the philarea, here grow to a size that they never elsewhere attain. The myrtle is seen clambering over the windows; and the China rose has, throughout the year, a constant succession of buds and flowers.

The group that gave occasion to my sombre apostrophe consisted of a father and his two daughters, whom I had met for some time in my rambles, and with whom I afterwards became acquainted. Would I had not! for the latter were doomed within a few months, to become victims to an hereditary malady that had proved fatal to their mother.

The father, at least sixty years of age, in his gait and air bore the appearance of what he had been—a soldier. He had served in the East Indies; and it might be perceived that, in common with other long residents in that country, he had not escaped the effects of its destructive climate, but that his constitution was much impaired. Some deep sorrow seemed imprinted on his fine and noble features, which had lately taken a still deeper shade, from a presentiment of evil,—a conviction that a premature fate menaced the lives of those dearer to him even than his own; that it hung suspended, like a sword by a single thread, over the heads of his daughters. They were drawn in chairs of a light and fragile form, which, as they sat, gave a peculiar elegance and grace to their attitude; being such a Canova, modelling from the antique, has chosen for one of his statues. The general was walking between them, and his eye turned occasionally from one to the other: neither spoke; his heart was too full to give utter-

ance to his feelings; and to them, the effort would have been painful, even had they been permitted by their physician, to converse in the open air. They held at times their handkerchiefs—one was, I perceived, spotted with blood,—to their mouths, as though the atmosphere respired was too keen for their lacerated lungs. Now and then they interchanged glances, which seemed to be mutually understood; and I thought I could read in their countenances a sense of the loveliness of the scenery around them, a pleasure tinged with melancholy, whenever a ray of sunshine through some opening in the trees smiled on them. Then, too, they smiled; but it was a faint smile, like that of the March sun,—a mockery of joy.

Julia, the eldest, was a brunette: her figure was above the common height; and her hair, which she wore in long depending ringlets on each side of her face, was, like her eyes, black as jet.

Caroline, the youngest, in no way resembled her sister; and the singular contrast between them, a foil to the beauty of each, gained them the appellation of the Celestial and Terrestrial Hemispheres. Caroline had just attained that critical period of life when the girl gives place to the woman; she was in her seventeenth year. Like the shoot of some parasite plant that is scarcely able to support itself, thin, tall, and delicate was her form. For some months she had been unequal to walking, even for a few yards, without fatigue; and her father always carried in his hand a camp-seat, on which, whenever she had crawled out on the jettee, or to the strand, at every twenty or thirty yards she was obliged to rest; while Julia leant affectionately over her, and watched every turn of her sisters changing countenance, her own sweet and angelic as that of some divine messenger sent to comfort a dying martyr. No murmur or complaint ever escaped Caroline's lips; nothing could be more affecting than to see the effort she made to disguise her sufferings, in order to quiet the apprehensions of those beings whose lives hung upon hers.

I have said she was beautiful: what words can describe her loveliness!—It was that of an embodied spirit. In a portrait, such a complexion would have seemed the flattery of the art; enamel could give a faint idea of its clearness, its brilliancy, its transparency. It was pure as herself, the reflex of her soul without a taint of earth. Her eyes were what the Spaniards call *adormidillos*; an epithet the most endearing and significant, and which, for want of a diminutive in our language, admits of no synonyme. To make it intelligible by a paraphrase, I should say they were eyes which, under the veil of their long silken lashes express, not that the soul is asleep, but dreaming of love,—divine rather than human love, for who was worthy of inspiring it? But when she raised those dark blue orbs, they shone with the light of genius, the fire of intelligence; and yet there was, at times, in them an unnatural lustre, like that of a lamp that burns the brighter as it is about to lose its vivifying oil. In proportion as the malady became more inveterate her spirits increased; and the pure emanation of her mind seemed to throw a halo about her, making her look like an angel—with all, save wings, for heaven.

I saw, with a regret as if she had been my own sister, Death approach with stealthy pace, and foresaw that she would at last sink into his arms, calmly and peaceably as a child is hushed to slumber on its nurse's breast. And yet every day did her cheek assume a livelier hectic; and a common observer would have fancied he observed symptoms of convalescence; like the gala-day in the East, it was only a fluttering revelation.

This contest between mind and matter, this strife between the powers of life and death, reminded me of a picture of Guido, representing a rosy infant lying on a winding-sheet, and playing with a skull; or rather, of two paintings in one of the collections at Bologna, the same that contains the *Ecce Homo* of Correggio; but I have forgotten the name of the gallery, nor is it important. The custode himself, though familiarly might have blunted his feelings, shrunk from it in disgust; for myself, it not only made a deep impression on me at the time, but has never recurred to me since without causing me to shudder. On one side of a double case is a large miniature in oil, representing a girl: she is in the very zenith of life, and youth, and health, and radiant with all the rich glow of southern beauty. She died, it appears, shortly after sitting for this portrait. Now for the reverse. The father, with a strange caprice, long after she was conveyed to the family vault, had her disinterred, and employed the same artist to draw her then likeness. The work of putrefaction has begun, the lips