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THE SCRIBBLER.

MONTREAL. THURSDAY, 12th JULY, 1821.

No. III.

.....Thou shalt stand
A Deity, sweet WOMAN, and be worship'd. —FORD.

*Liber enim, servus, plebs, princeps, dives, egenus,
Junior atque senex, seu mas, seu femina, —
Nullus abit venia.* —GRECURTIUS.

Freedman and Slave, Prince, People, Pauper, all,
The wealthy, and the abject, young and old,
All ranks and sexes, ages and degrees,
None are excused. —

THE same thought that constitutes the point of the verse with which my last number concluded, but imaged in a nobler and more extended form, appears in the following imitation of Me-leager.

TO WOMAN.

Oh! Thou by Heaven ordain'd to be
Arbitress of man's destiny!
From thy dear breast one tender sigh—
One glance from thine approving eye—
Can raise or bend him at thy will,
To virtue's noblest flights, or worst extremes of ill.

Woman! 'tis thine to cleanse his heart
From every gross, unholy part;
Thine, in domestic solitude,
To win him to be wise and good;
His pattern, guide, and friend to be,
And give him back the Heaven he forfeited for thee.

'Tis not the paradise of Mahomet that is alone to be found in woman, but, added to the intoxicating

delights of love and rapture that are promised through the voluptuous forms of his blackeyed Houris to the faithful Moslem, the sex are endeared to men of sense as patterns of every virtue; for truly it is said in the quaint verse of Sir Aston Cockayne,

Why are the *virtues* every one
Pictured as woman be,
If not to shew that they in them
Do more excel than we;

powerful, and almost omnipotent on earth is woman; the guide to Heaven on high, if left to her own ingenuous nature; the doomster of man to misery unutterable, if made by him a curse; she is the mother, the nurse, the preceptress, the solace, the friend, the consolation, of man, "proud man," from earliest infancy to decrepid age, and to the bed of death.

"One charm exists, and only one below,
To heighten pleasure and to lessen woe—
'Tis woman's smile, that gilds the cheerful day,
'Tis woman's love that laughs the storm away."

Well was it said by a French author, whose name I do not recollect, and whose words I quote from memory, that without woman, *les deux extrêmes de la vie seraient sans secours, et le milieu sans plaisirs.*

From the contemplation of the sex, as faithfully and amiably depicted by the muse of Marmion:

"When pain and sickness wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou,"

the transition of idea is easy to the solemn one of Death, "last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history."

"Death," says Epicurus, "is nothing to us, because when Death is, we are not, and when

we are, Death is not." But the vulgar confound Death with the act of dying, which they consider as an accumulation, or rather as the acme, of the evils of life. Every thing that is called into existence is subject to the sentence of Death. Fate is inexorable and impartial, and from his Court there is no appeal.

"Then die, O, mortal man, for thou wast born."

"It is impossible," says Swift, "that so universal a thing as Death can be intended as an evil." Yet was he for many years daily tormented with the fear of death, "my earliest visitation and my last at even." The same weakness is confessed by Erasmus, at a certain time of his life, in a letter to a friend,

"Cowards die many times before their deaths,
The valiant never taste of death but once."

The debt of nature, incurred by our grant of the lease of life, (which some men, wise in their own conceit, have said they would not perhaps have asked for had it not descended to them as an inheritance,) must be paid by every one. No merit, no excuses can avail: "for all is possible to Heaven but this," says our English Homer. Death is the great leveller of the world. Other claims have been put in, but Love, and Night, and Danger, are only temporary or occasional levellers. The first, indeed, may make "king Cophetua love the beggar-maid," and under the sable canopy of Night, "all colours and distinctions are forgot," but the fever of the one subsides, and the dawn restores each hue to its wonted splendour; whilst Danger is only one of the shades of Death. Education, habits, constitution, and events, place Death in different points of view, sometimes as a friend, sometimes as an enemy.

but never in reality is it looked on with indifference. The Stoic may affect to contemn it, but he is either acting a part, or his contempt is not of Death but of Life. The thought of Lucan is poetical, but not persuasive, that "the Gods conceal from men the happiness of Death that they may endure life." Hobbes, afraid both of Night and Death, and associating those ideas in a mind, notwithstanding its scepticism, not wholly divested of the dreams of the nursery, used to call the latter "the leap in the dark." Where the apprehension of Death, prepared to strike, perpetually haunts the imagination, life can afford no happiness. The horror of death is finely depicted in Claudio's speech:

" Ah! but to die, and go we know not where,
 To lie in cold obstruction and to rot;
 This sensible warm motion to become
 A kneaded clod: and the delighted spirit
 To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
 In thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;
 To be imprison'd in the viewless winds,
 And blown with restless violence round about
 The pendent world——
 The weariest and most loathed worldly life,
 That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
 Can lay on nature, 's a paradise
 To what we fear of Death."

From these distressing images the poetry of Garth tries to relieve us, (himself dying in that faith,) assuring us that,

" To die is landing on a friendly shore,
 Where billows never beat or tempests roar;
 E'er we can feel the fatal stroke 'tis o'er."

It has been often said and seen that weeping friends, the tolling bell, the plumed hearse, the opening grave, are awful, but purely dramatic terrors—

Pompa mortis magis terret quam mors ipsa.

Th'external pomp of death more awes the mind
Than all that we in death itself can find.

These, as Young says,

“ Are the bugbears of a winter's eve,
The horrors of the living, not the dead.”

But where nature is permitted to wear out by insensible decay, and disease does not immaturally carry us off, as it does at all ages, our departure may be said to resemble falling asleep, for Death and Sleep are very near relations. The Hindoos have a saying which, though it has a smack of the indolence of mind and of body produced by an oriental climate, traces the similarity with wonderful accuracy. “ It is better,” say their books, “ to walk than to run, it is better to sit than to walk, it is better to lie down than to sit, it is better to sleep than to wake, but Death is the best of all.” If we do not fall asleep in the noon, or evening of life, old age, like night, let the hour be ever so protracted, closes our eyes at last, and may in the terse language used in an old play of John Heywood's, be ranked with the heroes, the conquerors, and devastators of the earth; for if they be deserving of high honour and renown, then let men, says one of his interlocutors,

“ celebrate the plagne;
Or study glorious titles for OLD AGE,
That kills all those, whom nothing else can kill.”

Some men, and as has been instanced, wise and clever men too, are tormented with the personification of Death, as if it had a positive existence, though, like Night, it has only a negative being. Yet Death is no such formidable enemy.—Revenge despises it—Love slights it—Honour aspires to it—Grief flies to it—Fear pre-occupies it,

say observation and Lord Bacon—and Christianity triumphs over it says Holy writ. "O death where is thy sting; O, grave, where is thy victory!" Poets, painters, prose and pulpit declaimers, have helped to make Death appear more terrible. But much as it may become man to prepare for Death, it is perhaps more his duty, and will even best prepare him for the change, to perform his part steadily and usefully in the drama of life. An active life, diversified by hurry, amusement, and a seasoning of difficulties, is the best preservative against any dreary opinions of the dissolution of the body. Yet perhaps those who have most reason to be pleased with sublunary things, would not wish their time to come over again. Many who rise from the feast of life, satisfied or cloyed with the length and variety of the entertainment, (for life, like wine should not be drank to the lees,) may consider Death as a smaller evil than a continuation of existence. Scarcely one in a thousand, it may be conjectured, how happy soever his life may have been, would be willing to return from the verge of the grave, to desire a repetition of pleasure from his sensations or reflections, and to go through anew precisely the same scenes he has already passed. Human beings are not only made to look upwards, as Ovid has it, but to look forward. Curiosity and hope, both powerful and enlivening feelings of human nature, establish, independently even of philosophy and religion, a belief in the immortality of the soul, and confidence in the beneficence of our Creator. But as this world is the only one its inhabitants have been in, or can have any accurate conception of, very few wish to change their certainty for the prospect of a better; and very few are in haste to perform the last scene of the mortal drama. Calm and unruffled in mind, firm and

healthy in nerve, and confident in hope and virtue, must the mortal be who can at all times exclaim with courage and with truth, "welcome life, whatever it brings, welcome Death whatever it is."

"Then tell me, frightened reason, what is Death,
Blood only stopp'd, and interrupted breath."

Epitaph on the monument of lady Paston in the church of Paston, an obscure village in Norfolk, in England.

"To the reviving memory of the virtuous and right worthy lady, Dame Katherine Paston, daughter unto the right worshipful Sir Thomas Knevitt, Knt. and wife to Sir Edmund Paston, Knt. with whom she lived in wedlock twenty-six years, and had issue two sons yet surviving viz: William and Thomas; she departed this life 10th day of March, 1628, and lieth here intomb-ed, expecting a joyful resurrection.

Not that she nedeth monnment of stone
For her well gotten fame to rest upon,
But this was rear'd to testify that shee
Lives in their loves that yet surviving be;
For unto virtue, who first raised her name,
She left the preservation of her fame,
And to posterity remain it shall
When marble monuments decaye shall all.

Upon the base of the monument are the following lines:

Can man be silent, and not praises find,
For her who liv'd the praise of womankind?
*Whose outward frame was lent the world to guess
What shapes our souls shall wear in happiness.*

I have presented my readers with this epitaph, as a close to this rather serious paper, for the

sake of the exquisite beauty of the concluding lines.

When the printer's devil brought me the proof of this number, I found the last page was not full; that I may not let it run to waste, I put in the annexed:

Epitaph in a chapel at Stean, belonging to the Arran family, on a lady of that name.

*Conjux casta, parens felix, matrona pudica;
Sara viro, mundo Martha, Maria Deo.*

A chaste wife, a happy mother, a modest matron, a Sarah to her husband, a Martha to the world, a Mary to God.

Another in the same chapel, likewise on a lady, tells us

“She was a constant lover of the best;”

to which, Lord Orford remarks, time has given a droll sense far wide of the meaning of the inditer.

L. L. M.

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