

The Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction eBook

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LUCIFER.

By J.A. St. John.[3]

[3] We have abridged this tale to suit our limits, though we trust not at the expense of the interest of the author. The style is rich and tender, and well suited to this class of works, although we cannot help thinking some of the details unnecessarily protracted. In the volume it occupies 22 pages.

In an ancient chronicle of Arezzo, which still remains in manuscript in the church of St. Angelo, in that city,[4] there is found the very extraordinary story of the painter Spinello Aretino, to which Lanzi alludes briefly, in his History of Painting in Italy. No farther notice has, I believe, been taken of it by any other writer whatever, although it appears to me to be singularly well calculated to gratify or to excite the curiosity of those who love to pry into the mysteries of human nature, and to mark the strange avenues by which mortals sometimes approach the gates of death.

[4] Vide Catal Manuscript. Sanct Ang. No. 817. 4to. Rom. 1532.

When Spinello first arrived at Arezzo, he took lodgings in the house of an artist, who, although he possessed no great share of genius, had contrived to amass considerable wealth. This artist was no other than Bernardo Daddi, whose son, also named Bernardo, afterwards became the pupil of Spinello, and almost eclipsed his father's reputation. Besides this son, Bernardo had several other children, and among the rest a daughter named Beatrice, then just verging upon womanhood. With this daughter it was to be expected that Spinello would immediately be in love; but our young artist had left behind him, in his native village, a charming girl, to whom he was in a manner betrothed; and he was the last man in the world to look upon another with a wandering heart. He, therefore, lived in the same house, and ate at the same table with Beatrice, without even discovering that she was beautiful; while they who merely caught a glance of her at church, or as she moved, like a vision, along the public walk, pretended to be consumed with passion.

Fathers, whether their children are beautiful or not, are often desirous of preserving an image of them during their golden age, when time, like the summer sun, is only ripening the fruit he will afterwards wither, and cause to drop from the bough. Bernardo was possessed by this desire; and as he never dreamed that any pencil in Arezzo, but his own, could reproduce upon canvass the lovely countenance of Beatrice, he spent, as from his opulence he could now afford to do, a considerable portion of his time in painting her portrait. The girl, however, who was not greatly addicted to meditation and could not read, for books had not then come into fashion, grew melancholy during these

long sittings, and her father perceived it. At first no remedy presented itself. He endeavoured, indeed, to converse with her a little

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in his uncouth way; but he had not cultivated the art of talking, and quickly exhausted his topics. He next introduced his son Bernardo, the junior of Beatrice by one year, whose efforts at creating amusement, being constrained and unnatural, for he came against his will, were little more successful than his own. At length the idea of engaging the services of his lodger, with whom he had observed that Beatrice sometimes laughed and chatted of an evening, occurred to him, and he forthwith mentioned the subject to Spinello. The young man entertained a very strong affection for Bernardo, who, if he wanted genius, was far from being destitute of amiable and endearing qualities; and therefore, notwithstanding that he felt it would greatly interfere with his studies, and trench upon his time, he immediately determined to comply with the old man's desires.

The next morning saw Spinello installed in his new office. Beatrice was seated like a statue in an antique chair with her arms crossed upon her bosom, her eyes fixed upon vacancy, and her features screwed in spite of herself, into an expression of weariness and impatience. By degrees, however, as Spinello conversed with her, now of one trifle, then of another, her eyes involuntarily wandered to that portion of the room in which the young dialectician sat involved in shadow, and exerting all his eloquence and ingenuity to awaken her attention. The experiment succeeded. Spinello was entreated to be present the next day, the day following, and, in fact, every day, until the portrait was completed, or, at least, nearly so. He gazed, as I have said, upon the face of Beatrice, and would sometimes spend a moment in examining the inanimate representation of it, and in instituting a comparison between it and the original; until one day forgetting in his idolatry of loveliness the respect due to old age, he snatched the pencil from the hand of Bernardo, and with singular ardour and impatience exclaimed—"Let me finish it!" Without uttering a word, the old man, awed by the vehemence of his manner, yielded up the pencil; and Spinello proceeded, as if in a dream, to embody upon the canvass the idea of beauty which inhabited his soul.

Spinello, thus entrapped by his own enthusiasm, could do no other than proceed with the portrait. Though infinitely desirous not to wound the feelings of Daddi, he perceived at once that it would be necessary to recast the whole design of the piece to change the style of colouring—in a word, to paint a new picture. Daddi, who loved his child still more than his art, and wished to preserve and transmit to posterity a likeness of her, by whomsoever painted, was not offended, though he was a little hurt, by this freedom, and without murmur or objection allowed Spinello to accomplish his undertaking in whatever manner he pleased. The young man went to work with a satisfaction and alacrity he had never before experienced; and the image of Beatrice, passing into his soul, to be thence reflected, as from one mirror upon another, on the canvass, shed the light of Paradise over his fancy—as the musk-deer perfumes the thicket in which it slumbers.

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Though this picture is greatly celebrated in Italy, and especially at Arezzo, I shall not pause to describe it minutely. Beatrice is represented as reclining, in a chaste and thoughtful attitude, on an antique couch at the foot of a pillar: flowers and flowering shrubs appear to shed their perfume around; and a spreading tree, with a vine loaded with grapes climbing up its trunk and branches, stretches over her. In the back ground the sky only, and a few dusky trees, appear. The design, it will be perceived is meagre enough, but the execution is incomparably beautiful; and it may be safely affirmed, that if immortality upon earth was all that Bernardo coveted for his child, his prayer has been granted. A thousand pens have been employed in celebrating this picture, and Italian literature must perish ere Beatrice be forgotten.

I shall not pretend to say by what means, since it was not by words, Spinello discovered that he was beloved by Beatrice: but assuredly the discovery gave him considerable pain. The form of Beatrice would rise up both in his sleeping and waking dreams before his fancy, among his most cherished associations; and her features, although he observed it not, mingled themselves, as it were, with the elements of every picture he painted.

While this was the state of his mind and feelings, Spinello was engaged to paint his famous picture of the "Fall of the Angels," for the church of St. Angelo at Arezzo. The design of this great work, which has been celebrated by Vasari, Moderni, and other writers on Italian art, was at once magnificent and original; and the countenance and figure of Lucifer, upon which the artist appeared to have concentrated all the rays, as it were, of his genius, were conceived in a manner fearfully sublime. Spinello disdained the vulgar method of binding together, by an arbitrary link, all the attributes of ugliness, which artists have generally pursued when they would represent the greatest of the fallen angels; and, after meditating long upon the best mode of embodying the principle of evil, determined to clothe it with a certain form of beauty, though of a kind not calculated to delight, but on the contrary to awaken in the soul all those feelings of uneasiness, anxiety, apprehension and terror, which usually slumber in the abysses of our nature, and are disturbed only on very extraordinary occasions.

From the moment in which he began to delineate this miraculous figure, a singular change seemed to have taken place in his whole nature. His imagination, like a sea put in motion by the wind, appeared to be in perpetual agitation. He was restless and uneasy when any other occupation kept him away from his picture. As his health was good, and his frame vigorous though susceptible, this state of excitement was at first rather pleasing than otherwise. He indulged himself, therefore, with those agitating visions, as they may be called, which the contemplation or recollection of his Lucifer called up before his mind. At length, however, the idea of the mighty fallen angel, whose form he had delighted to clothe with terror and sublimity, began to present itself under a new character to his mind; and instead of being a subject to be fondled, as it were, and caressed by the imagination, seemed as it approached maturity to manifest

certain mysterious qualities, which, engendered terror and apprehension rather than delight.

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Spinello's *studio* now began to be a place of torture to him, and he turned his eyes towards the amusements of the world, which he had hitherto shunned and scorned. He frequented the society of other young artists, with whom he often strolled into the woods, or rather groves, for which this portion of Etruria was always remarkable, sometimes traversing or descending the Val d'Arno, at others roaming about the ruins, or visiting the site of Pliny's Tuscan Villa. On returning in high spirits from one of these excursions, he learned by the letter of a friend that the object of his first love had proved unfaithful, and been united in marriage to another. This event, though it had no connexion whatever with his former cause of uneasiness, threw a new gloom over his imagination, in the midst of which the figure of Lucifer, dilating, like an image in the mists of the desert, to superhuman dimensions, stood up to scare and torment him afresh.

The unhappy young man, wounded in his feelings, and haunted by the shadow of his own idea, now fled to Beatrice for relief; and her tone of thinking, which had in it something of the Stoic cast, united with a manner at once playful and dignified, delighted him exceedingly. They conversed together on many occasions for whole hours; and the trains of thought which at such times swept like glorious pageants through his mind, followed too rapidly to allow of the existence of melancholy. Sometimes, indeed, Spinello would observe that when he gazed in rapture, rather than in passion, upon the face of Beatrice, a certain something, like a ray of light, or a spark of fire fallen upon an altar, would penetrate his soul, and kindle a sudden and fierce pain; but it usually passed quickly away, and was forgotten. By degrees, however, its recurrence became more frequent, and the pain it inflicted more intense; and consequently there soon mingled a considerable portion of uneasiness in his intercourse with his fair and beautiful friend.

At length the picture was completed, and placed in the church of St. Angelo, above the altar; and Spinello felt relieved, as if the weight of the whole universe had been removed from his spirit. He now chatted with Bernardo, or with his pupil, and the other young artists of Arezzo; or enjoyed the passionate and almost solemn converse of Beatrice, who from a lively, laughing girl, had now been transformed, by some hidden process of nature, into a lofty-minded, commanding woman.

His constant and almost devotional application to his great picture had considerably shattered his nerves, and he felt his natural susceptibility so much increased, that, although it was now summer, the horrible idea which had so long haunted him soon returned; and a cloud spread itself over his imagination, which all the hurricanes that vex the ocean could not have blown away. To dissipate this unaccountable sadness, he wandered forth alone, or with Beatrice, over the sunny fields; but he felt, as he wandered, that his

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heart was a fountain which sent forth two streams,—the one cool, delicious, healing, as the rivers of Paradise; the other dark, bitter, and burning, like the waters of hell; and they gushed forth alternately, accordingly as his thoughts communicated with the recollection of his own picture, or with the landscapes around him, painted in celestial colours by the hand of God. Beatrice, who walked by his side, was herself a mystery. To feel the pressure of her hand, to hear her breathe, to listen to the music of her voice, was a bliss unspeakable; and there was a sovereign beauty in her countenance which seemed to cast forth rays of joy and gladness upon every thing around her, as the sun lights up with smiles the cool waves of the morning. Yet Spinello felt that as often as this fragment of Paradise, as it might justly be termed, was turned towards him, lightnings appeared to gleam from it which dismayed and withered his soul. At such moments a piercing cold darted through his frame; and when it passed away, a tremor and shivering succeeded, which withered all his energies. In fact, whether in the society of Beatrice or not, Spinello now found that the terrible form of Lucifer, which his genius had created, was ever present with him, standing, as it were, like a mighty shadow, between him and the external world, and eclipsing the glory of earth and heaven.

The summer passed away in this manner, and autumn drew near; and as the glories of the sun became dimmer, the figure of Lucifer appeared to increase in dimensions and brilliancy, and acquired more power over the imagination of Spinello. Tortured by an enemy who appeared to have passed by some dreadful process into the very core of his being, Spinello felt his energies and his health departing from him; while his imagination, into which every faculty of his mind appeared to be fast melting, increased in force and volume, as a wintry torrent is increased by the waters of every neighbouring streamlet. At length it occurred to him that perhaps this demon of his fancy, which he was well convinced was an unreal phantom, yet could not banish, might possess no resemblance to the figure his pencil had produced; and might disappear, or at least be reduced to the condition of ordinary ideas, by a comparison with the bodily representative of his original conception. This thought presented itself to his mind one night in October, as he lay tossing about in sleepless agony upon his bed. He instantly started up, dressed, threw on his cloke, which the coolness of the night, windy and dark, rendered necessary; and seizing a lighted torch, issued forth towards the church.

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The holy edifice stood in those days, when Arezzo was but a small place, at some little distance from the dwellings of the citizens, and was surrounded by a thick grove of sycamores mingled with pine trees. The townsfolk had long retired to rest, and the streets were empty and desolate. Not even the shadow of a monk flitted by him as he passed, with his torch flaring in the wind, and casting an awful and almost magical light upon the houses, painted, according to the fashion of the time and country, in broad stripes of deep red and white. As he approached the church, the wind, whistling through the pine branches, which swung to and fro, and flapped against each other, like the wings of the fabled Simoorg, or of some mighty demon struggling with the blast, sounded like numerous voices issuing from the black roof of clouds above him, and shrieking as he passed. At length he entered the church, which in those times stood open day and night to the piety of the people, and drew near the altar. Upon the walls on both sides were suspended rude images of the Saviour carved in wood, and blackened by time, and numerous antique scripture pieces by Giotto, Cimabue, and other fathers of the art, which seemed to start into momentary existence as Spinello's torch cast its red light upon them. At every step, his heart beat violently against his side, and appeared as if it would mount into his throat and choke him. But his courage did not fail, and he ascended the Mosaic steps of the chancel, and, with his torch in one hand, climbed up upon the altar and lifted his eyes towards the picture. As he stood on tip-toe on the altar and passed his torch along the wall, the mighty ranks of the fallen angels, in headlong flight before the thunderbolts of heaven, seemed to emerge from the darkness, with the awful form of Lucifer in the extreme rear reluctantly yielding even to Omnipotence itself, while blasting lightnings played about his brow and eyes, that flashed with the fires of inextinguishable fury. On first casting his eyes over his picture, a feeling of self-complacency and pride stole over the soul of the artist. But as he continued to gaze with a kind of idolatry at the work of his own hands, his imagination became excited by degrees, and life appeared to be infused into the figure of the gigantic demon. In spite of the singular beauty of the features, which looked like those of an archangel, the face before him appeared to be but a mask, beneath which all the passions of hell were struggling, gnawing, and stinging, and devouring the heart of their possessor. "The baleful eyes, that witnessed huge affliction and dismay," appeared to flame in the obscure light, like the fabled carbuncle of the Kaianian king; and the mighty limbs seemed to make an effort to free themselves from the canvass, and spring forth upon the floor of God's temple. As this idea rushed upon the mind of Spinello, the wind, moaning through the aisles, and multiplied by the echoes, sounded like the voices of wailing

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and desolation, which, the imagination may suppose, mingled in dismal concert when the spirits fell from heaven; and the artist, overpowered by the crowd of horrors which fastened like hungry vultures upon his fancy, sprang from the altar, and, stumbling in his haste, extinguished his torch. His imagination, now wrought up to a frenzied pitch by the awful scene, distinguished in every moan of the blast the shrieks of a fallen spirit; and the wind, as if to increase his misery, raised its voice and swept through the sacred building with tremendous power, howling, and shrieking, and gibbering as it passed. The demoniac excitement of the moment now became too great to be endured. Spinello sunk upon the ground, struck his forehead against an angle of the altar, and fainted away. How long he remained in this condition, he could never conjecture; but when he recovered his senses, all around him appeared like the illusion of a dream. The wind had died away, the darkness had disappeared, the moon had risen, and was now throwing in its mild and beautiful light through the long windows upon the checkered pavement; and, rising from the ground, he crawled out of the church and reached his lodgings.

The next day he was too unwell to leave his bed; and Bernardo, with his whole family, who loved the young man, and were anxious to discover and remove the cause of his misery, came to see and console him. Beatrice was the first who entered; and when Spinello heard the sound of her footsteps, which he could most accurately distinguish, a beam of joy visited his heart, a tear of delight trembled in his eye, and he blessed her fervently. When he lifted his eyes to her countenance, however, the vision of the preceding night seemed to be renewed, and the hated form of Lucifer, with all his infernal legions, swept before his fancy. Ignorant of what was passing through his mind, and with a heart yearning towards him with more than a sister's love, Beatrice approached his bed; and, kneeling down beside it, took hold of his hand which was stretched out languidly towards her. She felt that it was burning with fever, and that his whole frame was at that moment agitated in a fearful manner. He spoke not a word; but turned away his face, as if by a desperate effort to recover his composure, while he held her hand with a convulsive grasp. She saw his chest heave, and his eyes roll awfully, as he gradually turned towards her. And at length, finding it was vain to struggle any longer to conceal his feelings, he threw himself upon his face, pressed her trembling hand to his lips, and burst into a passionate and uncontrollable flood of tears. Beatrice, surprised and overcome by the scene, hid her own face in the clothes and wept with him; while her father, her mother, and the whole family, stood motionless upon the floor of the apartment, transfixed with sorrow and oblivious of every other consideration.

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By degrees the young man recovered his composure, as persons generally do after shedding tears, and his heart seemed to be relieved. Beatrice also experienced the same change; and her father, a humane and compassionate old man, supposing that love might have some share in the misery of his lodger, after motioning his whole family to leave the room, drew near the bed, and inquired of Spinello whether his affection for Beatrice had any share in his present unhappiness; and whether her hand, for her heart he perceived was already his, would make any change in the state of his mind. At this new proof of the old man's love, Spinello could scarcely contain himself. For the moment Lucifer left him, while visions of delight and joy painted themselves upon his fancy. To reveal to Bernardo, however, or to any other human being, the real cause of his misery, would, he was fully persuaded, expose him to the suspicion of insanity. His expressions of gratitude, though few and brief, were vehement and sincere; and his mind becoming wholly occupied with this new idea, his fever soon left him; and in a few days he was again able to breathe the balmy air, with his future bride by his side.

His health still appeared, however, to be but feeble; and the benefit of change of residence being understood in those times as well as in our own, Spinello was counselled to remove for a season to some sea-port town on the coast of Naples. Through mere chance, and not from any classical predilection, he chose Gaeta, anciently Cajeta, whither Laelius and Scipio used to retire from the politics of Rome, to amuse themselves with picking up shells upon the sand. To render the excursion more pleasant and profitable, Bernardo determined to accompany his intended son-in-law, and to make Beatrice also a partner of the journey; and their preparations being soon completed, they departed in good spirits, and in due time arrived at the place of their destination.

Lodgings were taken in the neighbourhood of the town, near the beach; and the lovers, now comparatively happy, daily strolled together along the margin of the Tyrrhene sea, which, rolling its blue waves in tranquil succession towards the shore, broke in soft murmurs at their feet.

They had now been some months at Gaeta, when Beatrice was suddenly called home by her mother, who had been seized with a dangerous illness. Her father of course accompanied her on her return: but Spinello, in spite of his entreaties and remonstrances, was compelled to remain where he was; as Beatrice, who feared that Arezzo might recall all his gloomy ideas, peremptorily insisted that he should never return, but settle at Gaeta, or remove to Naples. He therefore submitted, but with a heavy heart; and saw his guardians, as it were, depart from him, and leave him to himself.

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What he seemed to fear when they left him, soon came to pass. With solitude Lucifer returned; and he now presented himself so frequently, and in such awful colours to Spinello's mind, that the little fabric of health which had been reared with so much care, was quickly thrown down, while visions of horror swept over the ruins. His health, which now declined more rapidly than ever, was soon irrecoverably destroyed; his frame wasted visibly away; and as his body grew weaker, his visions increased in horror, until at length the intellect tottered upon its basis, and almost gave way beneath their intolerable pressure. In a few weeks he was shrunk to a skeleton, while his eyes shone with preternatural brilliancy; so that the people of the house where he lodged, were terrified at his appearance and avoided his looks. For his own part, he was scarcely conscious, of the existence of the external world, every thing around him appearing like the creations of a dream—mere shadows with whom he could have no sympathy. There seemed, in fact, to be but two beings in the universe—himself and Lucifer; and he felt that he was engaged in a struggle which must terminate the existence of the one or the other. When he succeeded in freeing himself for a moment from the fangs of this vision, and could repel it to some little distance from his mental eye, he perceived, as distinctly as possible, its illusory nature, and wondered at the power it exerted over his imagination. If, however, he obtained a momentary respite of this kind, it was not, as in the case of Prometheus (whose vulture was of the same brood as his demon), by night, but at sunrise, when the god of the Magi stepped, as it were, upon his throne to receive the homage of the earth. The hour of repose, as night is to the fortunate and the happy, was to him the hour of torture; and he daily lingered about the sea-shore, anxiously watching the setting sun, and trembling more and more as the glorious luminary approached the termination of his career and disappeared behind the purple waves. As soon as darkness descended upon the earth, Lucifer, if absent before, invariably alighted with it, and stood beside his victim, who clapping his hands upon his eyes, would fly with a howl or a shriek towards the habitations of men.

At length he became convinced that his last hour drew near; and he blessed God that his struggle was about to terminate. As soon as this idea took possession of his mind, he grew a little more tranquil; and, excepting when he thought of Beatrice, awaited the final hour with a kind of satisfaction. In this pious mood of mind, he one evening wandered to his usual haunt on the seaside. The sun had set—the moon and all the stars were in heaven—and the earth and the sea were sleeping in the silver light. He set him down on a lofty rock overhanging the sea, which was deep and still in that part; and with the waves on his left, and the earth in all its loveliness on his right, he raised his eyes towards

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heaven, and was absorbed in devotion. At that moment, a face of unutterable beauty presented itself in the bright moonlight before him. With a single glance, he discovered it was that of Lucifer, but softened to angelic loveliness. Uttering a wild and piercing shriek, he started from it towards the edge of the precipice. Beatrice for it was she— instantly caught him by the hand to drag him back; and pronounced his name. The words and the touch dissipated his illusion; and with the rapidity of lightning revealed to his mind the fatal secret of his misery. He now saw that, having been occupied with thoughts of her when he painted his picture, he had lent a portion of her beauty to the fallen archangel; and hence the pain her looks had occasionally inflicted on him. While this conviction darted into his mind, he was already falling over the precipice; but he still grappled at the rock, and made desperate efforts to recover himself. Beatrice, also, finding that he was going and drawing her after him, for she still held him by the hand, caught hold of a tuft of grass which grew on the edge of the cliff and grasped it convulsively. In this situation they hung for an instant, suspended over the abyss; but the grass-tuft by which she clung gradually gave way; and in another instant a sullen plunge in the deep waters below told that the loves and miseries of Spinello and Beatrice were ended.

Note.—The passage of Lanzi, to which I referred at the commencement, is as follows:

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“The ‘Fall of the Angels,’ still remains in St. Angelo, at Arezzo, in which Lucifer is represented so terrible, that it afterwards haunted the dreams of the artist, and, deranging both his mind and body, hastened his death. Bernardo Daddi was his scholar.”—*History of Painting in, Italy*, vol. i. p. 65. *Roscoe’s Translation*.

* * * * *

First in the poetry is the Bechuana Boy, an affecting narrative, by Mr. Pringle, as may be implied from one verse:

He came with open aspect bland,
And modestly before me stood,
Caressing with a kindly hand
That fawn of gentle brood;
Then meekly gazing in my face
Said in the language of his race,
With smiling look yet pensive tone—
“Stranger—I’m in the world alone.”

The Irish Mother to her Child, a Song, by Mr. Banim, has great force and feeling, with the date 1828, significantly appended to this stanza:



Alas! my boy, so beautiful! alas! my love, so brave!
And must your manly Irish limbs still drag it to the grave?
And thou, my son, yet have a son, foredoomed a slave to be?
Whose mother, too, must weep o'er him the tears I weep o'er thee.

Here, too is an exquisite snatch—on Memory:

Fond Memory, like a mockingbird,
Within the widow'd heart is heard,
Repeating every touching tone
Of voices that from earth hath gone.

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Queen Catharine's Sorrow is a ballad of mournful minstrelsy. Next is the Bard's Address to his youngest Daughter, by Mr. Hogg—beginning

Come to my arms, my dear wee pet!
My gleesome, gentle Harriet!

with all the sweetness and affection of shepherd love. The Poet's Oak, by Allan Cunningham, is a beautiful finish to the volume, which is altogether equal to any of its compeers.

The Illustrations, twelve in number, may challenge comparison with those of any similar work. Lyra, the frontispiece, after Wood, by T.A. Dean, is one of the loveliest creations of art; Vesuvius, after Turner, by Jeavons, is a most elaborate picture of that sublime spectacle of Nature; Echo, from Arnald's picture in the last exhibition, is finely executed by Goodall; and with still greater fidelity, Wilkie's Reading the News, is engraved by H. Robinson; but spirited and finished as it is, we must object to the quantity of smoke from the joint on the baker's board, and more especially from the pie; besides which, the bakehouse must be at some distance. The picture has a pleasant accompaniment, by Mr. Charles Knight. Catharine of Arragon, and Mary Queen of Scots and the Commissioners of the Scottish Church, are so purely historical as almost to tell their own tale; the first, after Leslie, by W. Humphreys, is in every line a lesson. The remainder of the plates are of unequal merit, and the elegantly embossed plum-colour leather binding is even an improvement on that of last year.

* * * * *

The Amulet.

This has always been with us a favourite work, and we rejoice to say that the present is equal to any of its predecessors. It is more sprightly than its title implies, and even less sombre than the *Friendship's Offering*; and the interest of most of the prose articles is far from perishable. Two of them by Dr. Walsh—Are there more worlds inhabited than our globe?—and the First Invasion of Ireland,—are excellent papers, though too *azure* for some who have not the philosophical mind of Lady Mary S——d. Among the Tales, the Two Delhis; Annie Leslie, by Mrs. S.C. Hall; the Glen of St. Kylas, by Mr. Carne; the Anxious Wife, by the Editor; a Tale of Pentland, by the Ettrick Shepherd; and the Austral Chief, by the Rev. Mr. Ellis,—may be read and re-read with increasing interest, which is not a general characteristic of "Annual" sketches. Our extract is one of the most buoyant pieces in the volume—

A CASTLE IN THE AIR.

By Miss Mitford.[5]

[5] This ingenious lady is the most indefatigable of all lady-writers of the present day. Her "Sketches" will soon reach the famed "One Thousand and One." At this moment too, our favourite authoress is engaged on two tragedies for the patent

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theatres—one *Inez de Castro*, which has been poetized in half-a-dozen forms of late, and is even in the *Amulet* before us: the subject and title of the second tragedy is *Otho*: both will probably be of a melo-dramatic cast, which founded the success of *Rienzi*. If it should be so, the fault will not rest with the fair authoress, the managers, or admirers of the pure drama; we need not add where the blame lies.

“Can any one tell me of a house to be let hereabouts?” asked I, this afternoon, coming into the room, with an open letter in my hand, and an unusual animation of feeling and of manner. “Our friends, the Camdens, want to live amongst us again, and have commissioned me to make inquiries for a residence.”

This announcement, as I expected, gave general delight; for Mr. Camden is the most excellent and most agreeable person under the sun, except his wife, who is even more amiable than her amiable husband: to regain such neighbours was felt to be an universal benefit, more especially to us who were so happy as to call them friends. My own interest in the house question was participated by all around me, and the usual enumeration of vacant mansions, and the several objections to each (for where ever was a vacant mansion without its objection?) began with zeal and rapidity.

“Cranley Hall,” said one.

“Too large!”

“Hinton Park?”

“Too much land.”

“The White House at Hannonby—the Belvidere, as the late people called it?”

“What! is that flourishing establishment done up? But Hannonby is too far off—ten miles at least.”

“Queen’s Bridge Cottage?”

“Ay, that sweet place would have suited exactly, but it’s let. The Browns took it only yesterday.”

“Sydenham Court?”

“That might have done too, but it’s not in the market. The Smiths intend to stay.”

“Lanton Abbey?”

“Too low; grievously damp.”

By this time, however, we had arrived at the end of our list; nobody could remember another place to be let, or likely to be let, and confessing ourselves too fastidious, we went again over our catalogue *raisonnee* with expectations much sobered, and objections much modified, and were beginning to find out that Cranley Hall was not so very large, nor Lanton Abbey so exceedingly damp, when one of our party exclaimed suddenly, “We never thought of Hatherden Hill! surely that is small enough and dry enough!” and it being immediately recollected that Hatherden was only a mile off, we lost sight of all faults in this great recommendation, and wrote immediately to the lawyer who had the charge of letting the place, whilst I myself and my most efficient assistant, sallied forth to survey it on the instant.

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It was a bright cool afternoon about the middle of August, and we proceeded in high spirits towards our destination, talking, as, we went, of the excellence and agreeableness of our delightful friends, and anticipating the high intellectual pleasure, the gratification to the taste and the affections, which our renewed intercourse with persons so accomplished and so amiable, could not fail to afford; both agreeing that Hatherden was the very place we wanted, the very situation, the very distance, the very size. In agreeing with me, however, my companion could not help reminding me rather maliciously how very much, in our late worthy neighbours, the Norrises' time, I had been used to hate and shun this paragon of places; how frequently I had declared Hatherden too distant for a walk, and too near for a drive; how constantly I had complained of fatigue in mounting the hill, and of cold in crossing the common; and how, finally, my half yearly visits of civility had dwindled first into annual, then into biennial calls, and would doubtless have extended themselves into triennial marks of remembrance, if our neighbours had but remained long enough. "To be sure," added he, recollecting, probably, how he, with his stricter sense of politeness, used to stave off a call for a month together, taking shame to himself every evening for his neglect, retaining 'at once the conscience and the sin!' "To be sure, Norris was a sad bore! We shall find the hill easier to climb when the Camdens live on the top of it." An observation to which I assented most heartily.

On we went gaily; just pausing to admire Master Keep, the shoemaker's farming, who having a bit of garden ground to spare, sowed it with wheat instead of planting it with potatoes, and is now, aided by his lame apprentice, very literally carrying his crop. I fancy they mean to thrash their corn in the woodhouse, at least there they are depositing the sheaves. The produce may amount to four bushels. My companion, a better judge, says to three; and it has cost the new farmer two superb scarecrows, and gunpowder enough for a review, to keep off the sparrows. Well, it has been amusement and variety, however! and gives him an interest in the agricultural corner of the county newspaper. Master Keep is well to do in the world, and can afford himself such a diversion. For my part, I like these little experiments, even if they be not over gainful. They show enterprise: a shoemaker of less genius would never have got beyond a crop of turnips.

On we went—down the lane, over the bridge, up the hill—for there really is a hill, and one of some steepness for Berkshire, and across the common, once so dreary, but now bright and glittering, under the double influence of an August sun, and our own good spirits, until we were stopped by the gate of the lawn, which was of course locked, and obliged to wait until a boy should summon the old woman who had charge of the house, and who was now at work in a neighbouring harvest-field, to give us entrance.

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----- the aged portress (Dame Wheeler, Susan's grandmother) had given us admittance, and we soon stood on the steps in front of the house, in calm survey of the scene before us. Hatherden was just the place to like or not to like, according to the feeling of the hour; a respectable, comfortable country house, with a lawn before, a paddock on one side, a shrubbery on the other; offices and a kitchen garden behind, and the usual ornaments of villas and advertisements, a greenhouse and a veranda. Now my thoughts were *couleur de rose*, and Hatherden was charming. Even the beds intended for flowers on the lawn, but which, under a summer's neglect, were now dismal receptacles of seeds and weeds, did not shock my gardening eye so much as my companion evidently expected. "We must get my factotum, Clarke, here to-morrow," so ran my thoughts, "to clear away that rubbish, and try a little bold transplanting; late hollyhocks, late dahlias, a few pots of lobellias and chrysanthemums, a few patches of coreopsis and china-asters, and plenty of scarlet geraniums, will soon make this desolation flourishing. A good gardener can move any thing now-a-days, whether in bloom or not," thought I, with much complacency, "and Clarke's a man to transplant Windsor forest without withering a leaf. We'll have him to-morrow."

The same good disposition continued after I entered the house. And when left alone in the echoing empty breakfast-room, with only one shutter opened, whilst Dame Wheeler was guiding the companion of my survey to the stableyard, I amused myself with making in my own mind, comparisons between what had been, and what would be. There she used to sit, poor Mrs. Norris, in this large airy room, in the midst of its solid handsome furniture, in a great chair at a great table, busily at work for one of her seven small children; the table piled with frocks, trousers, petticoats, shirts, pinafores, hats, bonnets, all sorts of children's gear, masculine and feminine, together with spelling books, copy books, ivory alphabets, dissected maps, dolls, toys, and gingerbread, for the same small people. There she sat a careful mother, fretting over their naughtiness and their ailments; always in fear of the sun, or the wind, or the rain, of their running to heat themselves, or their standing still to catch cold: not a book in the house fit for a person turned of eight years old! not a grown up idea! not a thought beyond the nursery! One wondered what she could have talked of before she had children. Good Mrs. Norris, such was she. Good Mr. Norris was, for all purposes of neighbourhood, worse still. He was gapy and fidgetty, and prosy and dosy, kept a tool chest and a medicine chest, weighed out manna and magnesia, constructed fishing-flies, and nets for fruit-trees, turned nutmeg-graters, lined his wife's work-box, and dressed his little

daughter's doll; and had a tone of conversation perfectly in keeping with his tastes and pursuits,

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abundantly tedious, thin, and small. One talked down to him, worthy gentleman, as one would to his son Harry. These were the neighbours that had been. What wonder that the hill was steep, and the way long, and the common dreary? Then came pleasant thoughts of the neighbours that were to be. The lovely and accomplished wife, so sweet and womanly; the elegant and highly-informed husband, so spirited and manly! Art and literature, and wisdom and wit, adorning with a wreathy and garlandly splendour all that is noblest in mind and purest in heart! What wonder that Hatherden became more and more interesting in its anticipated charms, and that I went gaily about the place, taking note of all that could contribute to the comfort of its future inhabitants.

Home I came, a glad and busy creature, revolving in my mind the wants of the house and their speediest remedies—new paper for the drawing-room; new wainscoting for the dining parlour; a stove for the laundry; a lock for the wine-cellar; baizing the door of the library; and new painting the hall;—to say nothing of the grand design of Clarke and the flower-beds.

So full was I of busy thoughts, and so desirous to put my plans in train without the loss of a moment, that although the tossing of apples had now resolved itself into a most irregular game of cricket—George Copley being batting at one wicket, with little Sam Roper for his mate at the other;—Sam, an urchin of seven years old, but the son of an old player, full of cricket blood, born, as it were, with a bat in his hand, getting double the notches of his tall partner—an indignity which that well-natured stripling bore with surprising good humour; and although the opposite side consisted of Susan Wheeler bowling at one end, her old competitor of the ragged jacket at the other, and one urchin in trousers, and one in petticoats, standing out; in spite of the temptation of watching this comical parody on that manly exercise, rendered doubly amusing by the scientific manner in which little Sam stood at his wicket, the perfect gravity of the fieldsman in petticoats, and the serious air with which these two worthies called Susan to order whenever she transgressed any rule of the game:—Sam will certainly be a great player some day or other, and so (if he be not a girl, for really there's no telling) will the young gentleman standing out. In spite, however, of the great temptation of overlooking a favourite divertimento, with variations so truly original, home we went, hardly pausing to observe the housing of Master Keep's wheat harvest. Home we went, adding at every step a fresh story to our Castle in the Air, anticipating happy mornings and joyous evenings at dear Hatherden;—in love with the place and all about it, and quite convinced that the hill was nothing, the distance nothing, and the walk by far the prettiest in the neighbourhood.

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Home we came, and there we found two letters: one from Mr. Camden, sent per coach, to say that he found they must go abroad immediately, and that they could not therefore think of coming into Berkshire for a year or more; one from the lawyer, left in charge of Hatherden, to say, that we could not have the place, as the Norrises were returning to their old house forthwith. And my Castle is knocked down, blown up—which is the right word for the demolishing such airy edifices? And Hatherden is as far-off, and the hill as steep, and the common as dreary as ever.

We have already quoted the most striking of the poetical pieces, at page 283. Allan Cunningham has some spirited lines, *My Native Vale*; and the *Ettrick Shepherd*, a touching *Lay of the Martyrs*. Archdeacon Wrangham, one of the most elegant and classical scholars of the day, has translated twenty-three beautiful verses on the *Spider*, from Pignotti, besides a few other little garnishing pieces. The *Brothers*, a *Sketch*, by the Hon. Mrs. Norton, is full of sweet simplicity; and some *Stanzas*, which follow, by Mr. Crofton Croker, are gems of affection. *Thoughts on Flowers*, by H.G. Bell, breathe the same sweet and touching spirit; and the *Banks of the Dove*, written by M.T. Sadler, Esq. on leaving his “native village in early youth,” are not only interesting as gems of talent which has since ripened into literary distinction in honourable public service, but will delight every admirer of genuine feeling.

The Engravings are nearly all of first-rate excellence. The frontispiece, the *Minstrel of Chamouni*, after Pickersgill, by J.H. Robinson, in effect, spirit, and finish, cannot be surpassed. But how shall we describe the *Crucifixion*, engraved by Le Keux, from a drawing by Martin: how can we speak of the light shedding over the Holy City and “Calvary’s wild hill,” the crucified MESSIAH, the living stream, and the thousands and tens of thousands that cluster on this “earthly throne”—the magnificent architectural masses—the vivid light streaming in the distance; and the warlike turmoil of helmet heads, spears and floating banners that aid the shout of blood in the foreground: this must suffice. The *First Interview between the Spaniards and Peruvians*, after Briggs, by Greatbach, is a triumph of art; Wilkie’s *Dorty Bairn* is excellent; the *Fisherman’s Children*, after Collins, by C. Rolls, is exquisitely delicate; and the *Gleaner*, by Finden, after Holmes, has a lovely set of features, which art and fashion may court in vain. But we have outrun our tether, and must halt here.

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The Literary Souvenir.

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From the *Amulet* we turn to Mr. Watts's *El Dorado* of poetry and romance in superb crimson silken sheen and burnished gold edges. Rich as the exterior unquestionably is, it but accords with the rare treasures which it envelopes. We first indulged our early custom of "looking at the pictures," but must, as sober middle-aged persons ought to do—begin at the beginning. Passing over the Advertisement, in which the editor makes some judicious observations on the remuneration of British artists, &c. the first tale is the Love-Draught, in the best style of the author of "Highways and Bye-ways," with many fine touches of Irish humour and sentiment. We next notice a Village Romance, by Miss Mitford, with a host of pretty facts and feelings; and a Calabrian Tale, the Forest of Sant Eufemia, by the author of "Constantinople in 1829:" it is the longest, and perhaps the best story in the volume, and brings the author's descriptive powers into full play in the stirring scenes of brigand life. Next is The Last of the Storm, a tale of deep and thrilling interest, by Mr. Banim. Of the same description is our prose extract—

THE CONFESSION.

By John Galt, Esq.

My furlough had nearly expired; and, as I, was to leave the village the next morning to join my regiment, then on the point of being shipped off at Portsmouth, for India, several of my old companions spent the evening with me, in the Marquess of Granby. They were joyous, hearty lads; but mirth bred thirst, and drinking begot contention.

I was myself the soberest of the squad, and did what I could to appease their quarrels. The liquor, however, had more power than my persuasion, and at last it so exasperated some foolish difference about a song, between Dick Winlaw and Jem Bradley, that they fell to fighting, and so the party broke up.

Bradley was a handsome, bold, fine fellow, and I had more than once urged him to enlist in our corps. Soon after quitting the house, he joined me in my way home, and I spoke to him again about enlisting, but his blood was still hot—he would abide no reason—he could only swear of the revenge he would inflict upon Winlaw. This led to some remonstrance on my part, for Bradley was to blame in the dispute; till, from less to more, we both grew fierce, and he struck me such a blow in the face, that my bayonet leaped into his heart.

My passion was in the same moment quenched. I saw him dead at my feet—I heard footsteps approaching—I fled towards my father's house—the door was left unbolted for me—I crept softly, but in a flutter, to bed—but I could not sleep. I was stunned;—a fearful consternation was upon me;—a hurry was in my brain—my mind was fire. I could not believe that I had killed Bradley. I thought it was the nightmare which had so poisoned my sleep. My tongue became as parched as charcoal: had I been choking

with ashes, my throat could not have been filled with more horrible thirst. I breathed as if I were suffocating with the dry dust into which the dead are changed.

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After a time, that fit of burning agony went off;—tears came into my eyes;—my nature was softened. I thought of Bradley when we were boys, and of the summer days we had spent together. I never owed him a grudge—his blow was occasioned by the liquor—a freer heart than his, mercy never opened; and I wept like a maiden.

The day at last began to dawn. I had thrown myself on the bed without undressing, and I started up involuntarily, and moved hastily—I should rather say instinctively—towards the door. My father heard the stir, and inquired wherefore I was departing so early. I begged him not to be disturbed; my voice was troubled, and he spoke to me kindly and encouragingly, exhorting me to eschew riotous companions. I could make no reply—indeed I heard no more—there was a blank between his blessing and the time when I found myself crossing the common, near the place of execution.

But through all that horror and frenzy, I felt not that I had committed a crime—the deed was the doing of a flash. I was conscious I could never in cold blood have harmed a hair of Bradley's head. I considered myself unfortunate, but not guilty; and this fond persuasion so pacified my alarms, that, by the time I reached Portsmouth, I almost thought as lightly of what I had done, as of the fate of the gallant French dragoon, whom I sabred at Salamanca. But ever and anon, during the course of our long voyage to India, sadder afterthoughts often came upon me. In those trances, I saw, as it were, our pleasant village green, all sparkling again with schoolboys at their pastimes; then I fancied them gathering into groups, and telling the story of the murder; again, moving away in silence towards the churchyard, to look at the grave of poor Bradley. Still, however, I was loth to believe myself a criminal; and so, from day to day, the time passed on, without any outward change revealing what was; passing within, to the observance or suspicions of my comrades. When the regiment was sent against the Burmese, the bravery of the war, and the hardships of our adventures, so won me from reflection, that I began almost to forget the accident of that fatal night.

One day, however, while I was waiting in an outer room of the colonel's quarters, I chanced to take up a London newspaper, and the first thing in it which caught my eye, was an account of the trial and execution of Dick Winlaw, for the murder of Bradley. The dreadful story scorched my eyes;—I read it as if every word had been fire—it was a wild and wonderful account of all. The farewell party at the Granby was described by the witnesses. I was spoken of by them with kindness and commendation; the quarrel between Bradley and Winlaw was described, as in a picture; and my attempt to restrain them was pointed out by the judge, in his charge to the jury, as a beautiful example of loving old companionship. Winlaw had been found near the body, and the presumptions of guilt were so strong

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and manifold, that the jury, without retiring, found him guilty. He was executed on the common, and his body hung in chains. Then it was that I first felt I was indeed a murderer—then it was that the molten sulphur of remorse was poured into my bosom, rushing, spreading, burning, and devouring; but it changed not the bronze with which hardship had masked my cheek, nor the steel to which danger had tempered my nerves.

I obeyed the Colonel's orders as unmoved as if nothing had happened. I did my duty with habitual precision,—my hand was steady, my limbs were firm; but my tongue was incapable of uttering a word. My comrades as they came towards me, suddenly halted, and turned aside,—strangers looked at me, as if I bore the impress of some fearful thing. I was removed, as it were, out of myself—I was in another state of being—I was in hell.

Next morning we had a skirmish, in which I received this wound in the knee; and soon afterwards, with other invalids, I was ordered home. We were landed at Portsmouth, and I proceeded to my native village. But in this I had no will nor choice; a chain was around me, which I could not resist, drawing me on. Often did I pause and turn, wishing to change my route; but Fate held me fast, and I was enchanted by the spell of many an old and dear recollection, to revisit those things which had lost all their innocence and holiness to me.

The day had been sultry, the sun set with a drowsy eye, and the evening air was moist, warm, and oppressive. It weighed heavily alike on mind and body. I was crippled by my wound,—the journey was longer than my strength could sustain much further,—still I resolved to persevere, for I longed to be again in my father's house; and I fancied were I once there, that the burning in my bosom would abate.

During my absence in India, the new road across the common had been opened. By the time I reached it, the night was closed in,—a dull, starless, breezeless, dumb, sluggish, and unwholesome night; and those things which still retained in their shapes some blackness, deeper than the darkness, seemed, as I slowly passed by, to be endowed with mysterious intelligence, with which my spirit would have held communion but for dread.

While I was frozen with the influence of this dreadful phantasy, I saw a pale, glimmering, ineffectual light rising before me. It was neither lamp, fire, nor candle; and though like, it was not yet flame. I took it at first for the lustre of a reflection from some unseen light, and I walked towards it, in the hope of finding a cottage or an alehouse, where I might obtain some refreshment and a little rest. I advanced,—its form enlarged, but its beam became no brighter; and the horror, which had for a moment left me when it was first discovered, returned with overwhelming power. I rushed forward, but soon halted,—for

I saw that it hung in the air, and as I approached, that it began to take a ghastly and spectral form! I discerned the lineaments

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of a head, and the hideous outlines of a shapeless anatomy. I stood rivetted to the spot; for I thought that I saw behind it, a dark and vast thing, in whose hand it was held forth. In that moment, a voice said,—“It is Winlaw the murderer; his bones often, in the moist summer nights, shine out in this way; it is thought to be an acknowledgment of his guilt, for he died protesting his innocence.”—The person who addressed me was your Honor’s gamekeeper, and the story I have told, is the cause of my having desired him to bring me here.

(To be concluded in the next Supplement.)

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We have also received for notice Two Religious Annuals—the *Iris* and *Emmanuel*; both which shall appear in our Second Supplement to be published within two or three weeks.

Two Juvenile Annuals—the *Keepsake* and *Forget-me-not*, have likewise the same claim on our attention. These works, with two or three others not yet published, will form another sheet of interesting extract.

We thank the Correspondent who has forwarded to us a notice of *The Sylph*, a Musical Annual, which justice to ourselves and the public forbids us to insert, as we have not yet seen the work in question and are consequently unable to judge of the writer’s criticism. Humble and unheeded as our opinions of New Works may be, we are always ready to prove that no undue influence is used in the adjudication of their merits. This has uniformly been our maxim, and our success is the best criterion of its policy.