

## FAITH AND LOVE.

BY ERNEST HELFENSTEIN.

"The soul is the essence of a man; and you cannot have the true man against his inclination."

[SEE WALTER RALEIGH.

ONE of the most agreeable companions I ever knew, was Edward Gilbert. Thoroughly well-bred, he was of course punctiliously considerate where the individuality of another was concerned; exempt from caviling, curiosity, and interference in every shape. His own address was free even to carelessness; yet beneath this external manifestation dwelt a vein of deep and thorough reserve, an under-current that might be felt but never penetrated.

There was nothing like gloom or mystery it would seem in this; on the contrary, it was a holy and beautiful light emanating from an inward shrine, revealing a benign radiance, yet veiled and indistinct. In the midst of others, he was one ever possessing his spirit in peace, one sustained by an invisible ministry. Some called him a devotee, but whether in worship of the Divine and the Infinite, or of an earthly idol, none knew, so similar are each in their results.

I had known him for many years, had conceived the most devotional and reverential affection for him, and yet had never sought to penetrate this mystery of his character; judge, then, of my surprise when he himself opened to me the secret of his life.

We had traveled much together, and our intercourse being of the most unconstrained and cordial kind, I was not long in learning that there were frequent occasions on which he was totally silent, even for an hour, and that, too, in the midst of gayety, when circumstances rendered it impossible to separate himself from the group. One day in a year he always passed alone in his room. I learned this day to be the twelfth of August. After this period of seclusion he was not gloomy, as one might be led to suppose; instead, a gentle serenity was diffused over him, a hopefulness and trust that seemed to have received a higher impulse.

We were within one day's journey of Philadelphia, and business of some importance there claimed my attention, yet did I linger amid the gorgeous scenery of the Susquehanna, with its primeval woods hanging like a canopy above me, for a new and solemn sense of beauty was entering my very soul. The conversation of Gilbert, too, was instructive and ennobling in the highest degree; and there was a vein of spirituality running through it rarely found.

We were riding a sequestered road, where the branches of the trees often caused us to bend to

the saddle-bow, when Gilbert, after a long silence, asked:

"Did it ever occur to you, Ernest, that when one who is dear to us, whose existence is indeed a part of our own, has ceased to be a dweller on earth, we feel, as it were, a loosening of the senses, and the soul hears an utterance that saith: 'Arise; let us go hence?'"

At this moment a butterfly alighted upon his forehead, paused an instant, and then floated lightly upward into the thin air. Gilbert followed it with his eyes, and, to my amazement, turned deadly pale.

"Blessed Psyche, one moment stay," he murmured, and but for my arm would have fallen from his saddle.

After this little incident we rode many hours in utter silence; Gilbert was very pale, and mechanically reined his horse beside my own; the most beautiful scenery, to which he was ever so keenly susceptible, failed to awaken his attention, or rouse him from an abstraction that seemed well nigh to suspend the powers of vitality.

At length we reached our inn, and I was giving orders to the groom that we might be in readiness for an early start in the morning, when Gilbert arrested me.

"Pardon me, Ernest, but I shall remain here to-morrow."

I was annoyed, and endeavored to deter him from his purpose; I hinted his depression as an urgent reason why he should resume his social intercourse; that Nature became oppressive in our moments of despondency, that she forced upon us at such times the urgencies of the heart, and we need the conventionalism, and cold turmoil of restless humanity to recall us from egotism. Suddenly it flashed upon my mind—"the morrow is the 12th of August;" and I was silent.

Every one is aware of the extreme dullness of a country inn. The poverty of furniture, books, and all the little accessories of refined life. Then there is the dry dust upon the window-pane; the invariable silt at the corner of the dimity curtain, showing that listless travelers, again and again, have lifted it like yourself; the revolting soap stains upon the pine stand, and about the table, all reminding you of prior use, which naturally is suggestive of unpleasant associations. Then time, after his hurry elsewhere, seems resting here; and the great bottle-flies that buzz slowly about the room and then bounce two or three times against the ceiling, seem created as express reminders of heat and lassitude, and lingering time. To these annoyances are often superadded a barrenness of situ-

ation; as if nothing but flies, poultry and swine half buried in the moist gravel, could find anything pleasurable in it.

That was a long wearisome day in the little inn at —. Despite all my efforts to the contrary, I found myself nervously interested in the seclusion of Gilbert; I could not refrain frequently glancing at his windows, and pausing in the small entry to see if he were moving; and then I blushed and checked myself in this unmanly scrutiny; yet the total silence pervading his room grew appalling. Not a curtain was stirred, not a footfall heard. Through the long, long hours, a stillness like death was about him. Then the long, long night, with its lagging seconds, made audible by the heavy tick of the old German clock, and the hours pealed out by its lengthened toll, as it would never cease—the breath grew labored in listening; and the brain counted as by necessity, one—two—three—and onward, with a vexed and yet mechanical curiosity. The senses acquired a painful intensity. I remember starting at the tramp of feet over my pillow, which proved only those of a fly—there was a confused sound at one time near my own breast, which gave a fearful dread of new organic disease—it was a rising and falling as with my own breath; a guttural quiver that thrilled along my nerves, and seemed a part of them. I opened my eyes and a large black cat was purring in the moonlight beside me. The senses had a distinct and preternatural activity, totally independent of the reason. That night was an eternity of hours to my mind; for apart from my interest in Gilbert, my own spirit had its sorrow, which the solitude, the night, and silence brought home to me with terrific energy. Life seemed a gray, hopeless blank, and even the spiritual aspirations, which rarely desert me, grew dim and vague, and a cold skepticism was settling upon me. Thank God I arose and prayed for deliverance from this subtle ingratitude, this violence done to the utterance of the Holy Spirit within me, and then tears came to my relief, and I felt my child-nature return, and I slept—feeling the wings of the Eternal folding me as in a garment whose texture was love.

Morning at length came, and with it I heard a mechanical step upon the stair. I hastened forward to meet the morning welcome of my friend, that friend hitherto so calm, so beautiful in his manliness, and I started involuntarily back at the changes of a single night. His cheek and eye were hollow, and his lips thin and rigid. His complexion had a grayness that was cold and uncouthly. I pressed his hand, for I could only look my sympathy.

"She is dead, dear Ernest, lead me wherever you list."

For hours we rode on in utter silence—for days even—for weeks we kept aloof from the great thoroughfares of men, and dwelt amid the solitary pithings of Nature, where her balm is so breathed into the soul that we are healed and yet are unconscious of the ministry. I made no attempts to console him—I would not worry him with unavailing sympathy. "Let me alone," is the heart's remonstrance, when words are thrust into its desolate chambers. Unconsciously I followed the example so pathetically beautiful in the friends of the man of Uz, when they sat beside him "seven days and seven nights, and opened not their mouth, for they saw that his grief was great."

At length we alighted beside a mountain stream, and seated ourselves upon one of those rounded masses of stone that so frequently puzzle the unlearned, and are of such interest to the scientific. Gilbert was the first to break silence.

"Ernest, there is that in the human mind forbidding it to hold within itself a solitary secret. We are made for fellowship with our kind, and our instincts revolt at whatever is buried in silence. We are made to impart our joyfulness, and to divide our burdens with others. Pardon me, dear Ernest, if I confess that I seek your confidence from a necessity of our being, rather than from a desire of sympathy. One who must henceforth live above humanity should check his yearnings for companionship. I must tell you the one fact of my life, which for years has imparted its coloring to the rest.

"It is now fifteen years since I first met Agnes Gordon. She was then a widow of perhaps twenty-five, or she might have been older, for I never thought upon the subject, any more than I did upon her beauty, which must have been of a high order; but she was so free from all vanity that my mind was rarely drawn to the fact; and there is that about a nobly-constituted woman, that at once divests a man of sensuality and makes him superior to the fascinations of mere external attractiveness. There was around her a radiance of soul, a halo as of an inner life, investing her with a glory. She seemed to breathe of devotedness, if such a sentiment may be embodied in a human form and dwell in the air of a human movement.

"I need not tell where nor how we first met, for I will not dwell upon the common-placisms of events, momentous although to ourselves, and involving rare contingencies, yet apparently natural and of every-day occurrence. Neither

will I dwell upon the progress of a love that soon absorbed the soul of each, for neither of us could tell when nor how it grew between us. It was as if two spirits, each with a single wing had met, and folding their arms together became one, and perfect in their power of flight heavenward.

"When I first told my love, Agnes listened with a sweet downcast look, and then her clear eyes met mine, like soul answering to soul; her gentle lips trembled, and her cheek was pale, but so holy, so loving, was the whole expression of her childlike face, that I started as at a new and sublime revelation.

"She placed her two hands within mine own, and I called her 'Wife.'

"Agnes looked earnestly in my face, and burst into tears.

"'Thine, Gilbert—one with thee, like unto the angels of God,' she replied; and then she spoke of those mysterious affinities of soul, by which two beings are imperceptibly blended into one; how love between such is a necessity of their being, an ordainment, a fact. They are conjoined by God, although often put asunder by men. She told of that yearning for companionship felt by every human being—a craving of the spirit harder to be borne than any material necessity; and to love, to be beloved, became a conservation to the soul. She went on.

"'Can you love me, Gilbert, and yet never seek to bind me other than by this strong bond of affinity? Love me as thy spirit-wife only?'

"I smiled at a spiritualism I scarcely believed real. Her hands trembled, and I saw the blood steal through the transparency of her cheek, her eyelids drooped, and the tears started from beneath them.

"'Gilbert, I must tell thee all, even at the hazard of losing thee in this life, although I solemnly believe that in the sight of God we are one. Gilbert, I am bound by a solemn vow, never to give this hand in marriage bonds. I can never be thine in the face of the world.'

"I sprang from my seat, and cast her blessed hand from me; and then I caught her wildly to my breast. 'My God, you shall be mine, even if'—. I was silent, for Agnes fell as one dead in my arms.

"Never, never shall I forget the emotions that swayed me in that brief period of her unconsciousness. I held the beautiful material within my grasp, and a cold terror seized me lest the finer essence had departed at my fearful threat, and I, but half awakened to a sublime sympathy, was to be at once bereft, as a penalty for my impious love. She revived, and

the music of her voice, the sweet eloquence of her lips, the endearing pathos of her every word, and the subtle winningness of her gentle air, ere long won me to her noble creed, and made me her worshiper, devoted and spiritual.

"She had been married in her early girlhood, before the strength of her own nature had been revealed to her; while her heart was as a pearl, buried in its purity, sealed up, cold and tranquil. She was a child careless of the morrow, and unconscious of the fearful momentousness of the vows she assumed; and not till their weight pressed upon her as a doom; not till she found herself yearning wildly for companionship and sympathy, did she realize how totally she was forever bereft of these. Then came the long period of depression and hopeless despondency—life without aim or joy, existence borne as a dread necessity—days and months in which gloom was only relieved by a deeper gloom, and but for principle and duty, the thread of life might have been voluntarily severed.

"But she was trustful, dependent, spiritual, and soon these affections, destined to be idly wasted in this world, were transferred to Heaven. A depth of religious emotion soon absorbed all others. Duty, self-sacrifice, constancy, and devotion, filled up the waste places of life.

"Gently and forbearingly she spoke of the blind selfishness of Gordon—how the consciousness that he held a place in her duty, but no place in her love, often goaded him to fury. He became distrustful, and the natural selfishness of his nature grew tenfold more exacting. Petty jealousy, and habitual discontent, took possession of the unhappy man. Fretful and morose, he was content only while she was in his presence, while her slightest gayety filled him with suspicion. A tenacity of power, an assertion of claims, an imperceptible legality of mind, so to say, usurped the place of love. She belonged to him by legal bonds, and these should be recognized to the utmost.

"As the religious impressions of Agnes deepened, she learned to compassionate the deluded man, who had made so fearful a wreck of his peace—who, in the bewilderment of fancy, had conjoined his maturity of character to one inexperienced, undeveloped, and altogether unlike his own. She pitied him for having lavished his soul upon one who could not respond to the boon. She ceased to think upon the wrong done to herself; ceased to blame him who had availed himself of her gentleness and ignorance of life to bind her in the fearful bonds that await only the severance of death; and a nobleness of sacrifice grew upon her. She felt as if

called upon to make an atonement for that perversity of nature that failed to find content where the law directed.

"She sometimes grew bewildered in the study of herself—feared she might be peculiar; one too coldly intellectual, too abstractly spiritual for human sympathy—and the restless void of the heart, the wild craving for companionship that so often oppressed her, might be only the strugglings for the Infinite.

"It was in this state of mind that she was called to the dying pillow of Gordon. Even at the threshold of the grave, the fearful selfishness of his passion held its ascendancy. Even there he who had debarred her fine nature from its free exercise; had shackled its freedom of choice, dared to go further, and fetter his victim after death should have canceled the former bond. Yes, he, he, to whom the vistas of this world were closing forever, took her hand, warm with health, and youth, and vitality, within his cold, dying grasp, and bound her by a perilous oath never to yield that hand to another. And then he died.

"Years passed away, and we met. My God! the gulf that his selfishness had cast between us and happiness! I would not willingly believe such an oath to be binding. I used all the subtleties of logic to convince her that a promise extorted under such circumstances must be a nullity. That her state of mind was unnatural; that the mind itself was weakened by the preponderance of compassion, and therefore she had become, as it were, irresponsible for its doings. Heaven forgive me! even while uttering this, I trembled lest it should corrupt her sense of truth—I hoped, and feared, and shuddered, for the vehemence of my love was bewildering my own clearness of perception, and I was in danger of wresting truth from its legitimate bearing, to meet the wants of mine own blind will. Alas! alas! what human enormity might not in this way find an apology.

"But the mind of Agnes was clear as a sunbeam where truth was involved. She had taken the oath voluntarily upon herself—coolly, dispassionately—from what she had conceived at the time duty. She had taken it in the maturity of her judgment; and understanding, in part, from her fearful craving for sympathy, the sacrifice it might involve. Yet had she taken it in her sound mind and clear judgment, and she dared not reverse its doom.

"Enough! enough! We parted to meet no more on this earth. The sacrifice, to be a sacrifice, must be entire, complete. The love, the devotedness of this noblest of beings, became

superhuman in its elevated purity. She lifted me above myself, and gave my soul an assertion of its high claims, such as I had never before conceived to be possible. Certain hours of the day we devoted to intercommunion. One day, likewise, in the year, was passed by each in solitude—the anniversary of our meeting. And so perfect has been our sympathy, that we are often apprised through our own consciousness each of the state of the other's mind.

"Our letters were written and marked, when designed to be opened on this anniversary of our meetings. The letters of yesterday were of this character, and accompanied by one from her only female friend who shared her confidence, announcing the fatal news. Alas! I needed it not. Blessed spirit! I felt in my own frame the shiver of thy disavowal.

"Ernest, you have shared my joy and my grief. God bless you. Few know the holiness of such a trust."

Gilbert lived on, a graver man, it may be. When the sacred twelfth of August arrived, there were no sweet records of affection to meet his eye; and when I waited the long day of silence for his reappearance, my heart misgave me that all might not be well. The hour of breakfast arrived, and all was yet silent. Trembling with apprehension, I entered his room. Gilbert was seated at the table, with his two hands folded together, and his head resting upon them. I lifted up his face—a miniature met my eye. Great God! it was that of my noble, my sainted mother; and Gilbert—he was dead.

#### PARISIAN LIFE.

TRANSLATED FOR THE UNITED STATES MAGAZINE BY E. W. R.

"PRAY tell me who is that tremendously large woman dancing," said I to the Parisian friend, piloting me for the first time across the ball-room.

"She is my aunt," replied he; "a very gay, very young, and, as you see by her diamonds, a very rich woman."

"Very rich and very gay she may well be," thought I; "but very young? impossible!" I looked at her in amazement, and not being able to discover the slightest marks of youth in her appearance, I ventured to inquire her age.

"What an absurd question!" exclaimed Arthur, laughing at my stupidity. "I am my aunt's heir, my dear fellow; I do not tell her age, for I have no particular wish to be disinherited. But come, let me present you to my mother; she was formerly well acquainted with yours, and will be most happy to extend the acquaintance to the son."

I followed Arthur, and in the vicinity of a