

THE STUDENT.

HE SPECULATETH UPON THE WILL.

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THE Student may have been led to his subject from a conviction that, in one instance of his life, this faculty failed of its office; and he was defeated of success, because he failed in magnanimity to himself. Conversant with books, rather than the world, dreaming, it may be; but, alas, he knew it not. In the solitudes of mountain stream, wildering through the solemn woods of our beautiful state, he knew not he was creating men and women of his own, rather than thinking of such as already existed. He awoke from his slumber to find peace and life itself wrecked.

Let it pass—let us think of this high faculty of the true man, by which he gathers up the different parts belonging to his nature; thought, sentiment, and feeling, all that is his own; and as the strong man, with bit and rein, curbeth the motions of the fiery steed, even so doth his will hold the whole man in subjection. It is thus that he is powerful in himself, thus that he swayeth others. It is the will that imparteth power to subdue circumstances, overcome the elements, and subject the world unto itself. Nothing baffleth, nothing appalleth him of the strong will. Where another might defer, he goeth unflinching onward, and his very faith achieves the conquest. Hence hath the Great Teacher said, "if ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might remove mountains. As your faith is, so is it unto you."

It is the strong will that knoweth not the impossible; that turneth not to the right, nor to the left, in the way of its purposes. It hath strange dreams, and they are realized—for it seeth no lion in the way. It was this that led Caesar across the Rubicon to empire—the want of it, that lost Anthony the world. It was this that made Napoleon sublime. The Student talketh not now of justice, but of the omnipotence of will; and it was this, more concentrated in that one man than in any other of his race, that made men, nay, empires, emulous to bow before it. Napoleon was the man of will everywhere, in the camp, the field, the legislative body, and lady's boudoir. What Napoleon was in energy of purpose, every man may be. Believe, act, and it is done.

There is a path for man—but he shapeth it by his own will. It must be one difficult, and beset with perils, or where were the glory of achievement? He may make it one brightening even to eternity, or dim, and covered with shadows and thick darkness. The student hath found that man treadeth this path, often for many years, idling as it were; then cometh the narrow and difficult pass. He is besieged by passion and circumstance—he feelth now is the

crisis of his destiny—now it is given unto him to choose—to reject. It is as if the Lord God thundered from Sinai, saying, "choose ye this day whom ye will serve." Whichever way his choice lieth, he must feel forever, and forever it resteth with himself. It is the will that must be, is powerful to good, or to evil. It establisheth the monarch upon his throne, and keepeth the beggar in the dust. It lifteth up the one, and casteth down the other.

The student hath found the poets full of illustration. Shakspeare, and he bendeth his head reverently in the utterance, everywhere unfoldeth the principle. Everywhere he maketh the will work itself to its purposes, independent of results, for the will is blind, save to its object.

To Macbeth he hath given all the baseness of an ambitious usurper. He covets the crown, but hesitates as to the means; and this, too, not, it would seem, from moral scruples, so much as a natural tenderness of character. He is the villain at heart, but the coward in action. Hence his wife taunts him with being "less in his own act and valor," than he is in desire. This timid submission to the control of events, where he, looking at the prediction that had promised the crown, is half resolved to wait till time should accomplish it, saying—

"If chance will make me king, why
Chance may crown me, without my stir—"

She reproaches, thus—

"And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting I dare not wait upon I would."

It is not till crime and blood have driven the weak man all lengths, that the will becomes buoyant, and then it is that of desperation, when he cries—

"Hang out our banners on the outward wall,
The cry is still they come."

His whole career is that of an infirm, cowardly assassin, with conscience enough to goad, but not to govern him. A moody, not concentrated will.

Not so his uncompromising wife, whose ambitious will scruples at nothing, and is subdued only when *repose* has brought insanity. She contrasts her own savage energy of purpose with the vacillation of her husband—

"I have given suck; and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me;
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from its boneless gums,
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn."

When the terrified and conscience-stricken Macbeth hath brought the bloody daggers from the room

of death, she orders their return, and to his refusal, upbraids his weakness—

"Infirm of purpose,
Give me the daggers; the sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures."

Iago is another example of unswerving constancy in evil; and the generous Moor and fond-hearted Desdemona struggle in his toils only as the poor bird doomed to destruction.

Hamlet, subjected to a fate too vast for his powers, everywhere deplores his want of energy to enact the avenger.

"It cannot be—
But I am pigeon-livered, and lack gill
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal."

When he should act, he falleth to speculation. He seeketh delay, and resorteth to evasions and expedients, and thus loseth the time for action. He is more intent upon convicting others of crime, than upon revenging it himself. He forgetteth power, love, even, in his deep sense of wrong. At first, affects insanity for his own purpose; finally, becomes half bewildered, and yet is no nearer the great work he hath to accomplish. Conscious of his imbecility, when the ghost reappears, his mournful self-reproach is in this wise—

"Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread commands?
Oh, say!"

And the ghost—
"This visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose."

By a sudden impulse he killeth Polonius, hoping it may have been the king. But he hath no deadly concentration for premeditated vengeance—the will never becomes despotic.

Richard the Third deliberately starts upon his course of action. There is cool self-possession, and unswerving energy of purpose.

"Since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair, well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain!"

He redeems his pledge, through crime and blood, till he is fixed upon the throne. These are touches of Shakespeare only.

The modern poets afford but few instances of this high faculty belonging to man. The Student hath found that few of them deal wisely in strong emotions. Passion becometh with them disgusting in its excess, or its legitimate utterance is lost. A strong will belongeth only to a strong man. The full man must be great in reason, great in moral power, and great in impulsive passion. He may have reason and moral power, and become great as a theologian, a philosopher it may be, but he cannot be the great

man without great passion. This it is that imparteth intensity of will.

In Byron we find the action of this principle, but scarcely powerful enough to control circumstances. Of the Corsair—

"All obey, and few inquire his will."

Despotic, cool, and courageous, governing himself even in his own devotion to love, he still—

"Cared not what he softened, but subdued."

A man must have within himself the elements of what he would wish to describe. He must feel himself, or he can never make others feel.

Of American poets few have the deep earnest feeling requisite for powerful construction of character. Few rise to the dignity of passion. They may be fanciful, just, perfect in their art, but they are not impulsive. The Student can, therefore, cite little from their pages in behalf of his theory of the will.

Hoffman, Dana, and Longfellow have it in the highest degree; the latter displayeth it rather as an incitement, a principle, than any thing else; it is the star of the unconquered will, an ideal—not an action. Dana, in his *Buccaneer*, exhibiteth the principle in action. Others bow down before it, and the good and the lovely become its victims. Hoffman maketh the principle grand in its concentration. It all but usurpeth Omnipotence. There is something fearfully appalling in the fierce will with which he hath endowed his savage lover, by which he subjecteth the mind, body, life itself, of his foe.

"I spoke not, but I gazed upon
That wolf with fangs and courage gone—
Gazed on his quivering features till
Their furtive glance was fixed by mine,
And I could see his writhing will
Her feeble throne to me resign!"

And again—
"He rose an abject, broken man—
He dared not fight—he dared not fly—
His very life in my veins ran,
Who would not let him cast it by."

The Student judgeth from the name, that Hoffman hath the German blood in his veins—he hath the German soul, and his pen telleth of the wild and marvelous. Let him visit the forests of Pennsylvania, would he recall his pre-existence, and his "ghost riders" may people their gloom, even as if the very Hartz were here.

The Student must forbear, lest his subject should grow to a volume, rather than an essay. It is the will that maketh us what we are now, and what we shall be hereafter. It is the will that curbeth the tempest of passion, saying, "peace, be still." It is the will that graspeth the angel of prayer in the stillness of night, and saith, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." It is the will that saith to the dead, even, "Come forth!"

ON SEEING THE GRAVE OF WASHINGTON
AT MOUNT VERNON.

Τὸς Στὺν ὁ Ἀμερικὸς ἄνθρωπος
Καίματα ἔθηκεν πρὸ λόγου τοῦ ἀγνώστου. Callimachus.

Here WASHINGTON in holy slumber lies;
v. O do not say that Patriot Virtue dies.