

me to the latter. To replace the money of which I had robbed my sister, I robbed my wife of that, which after events proved she would have given me with all her heart.

Up to this period, I have loved Amelia as much as it was possible for me to love a generous, virtuous woman. Her affection, and the complete acquiescence to my wishes which she exhibited on all occasions, had won all that was left of a heart seared in the fires of mad voluptuousness. But from the moment I robbed, I hated her. With the injustice which I believe ever accompanies the perpetration of injuries, I considered my wife a spy, prying into my actions, and at every moment on the eve of discovering the deception I had practised, the robbery I had committed. All confidence was now at an end, on my part; all pleasure in her society; I began to estrange myself from home, and by degrees, to drink drams, to keep up the courage of dastardly guilt, and make me sufficiently a brute to meet her after my nightly orgies, without sinking into the earth. Now it was that my downhill course became more rapid than ever. I fell in company with some of my old associates of the club; renewed my intimacy with Balty and the ferret-eyed butcher; got half-fuddled, was robbed and cheated every night, and returned to my home every morning, more of a beast than I left it in the evening.

To liquidate the losses now incurred, deeper and deeper draughts are made on his wife's fortune, and to bury the glaring consciousness of his turpitude—still galling to her to beared and indurated heart—she steepes his senses in the stupefaction of brandy. From one excess he proceeds to another, until he at length becomes a mere brute—a bloated mass of disease—and is entirely forsaken even by those who were addicted, but in a less degree, to the hateful vice by which he had been prostrated. He becomes at length reduced to absolute penury, and has only a miserable hovel to shelter himself and ruined family from the storms of heaven. The catastrophe of his fate now draws rapidly on. During all this time his heart broken wife had borne him company, meekly bearing all that was made on his wife's fortune, and endeavoring to force herself into an appearance of cheerfulness which her waning and wasted condition too plainly denied. But, as the author observes, there is a certain state of endurance, a forced elevation of the spirits, which cannot be sustained beyond a stated period, without shaking the intellectual fabric to its foundation. The reason of the uncomplaining partner of the Drunkard at last becomes unsettled. "Her mind was sometimes evidently not mistress of itself, and her vivacity became, at intervals, when she was strongly excited, so misplaced and ungovernable, as to indicate too evidently that the springs which regulated the fine mechanism were deranged or worn out by perpetual exertion." The delimitation of this poor and blighted creature's condition is given with a painful strength and accuracy of touch that cannot but take a deep hold of the reader's sensibility. But we must not dwell on it.—During this wrecked and shattered condition of her intellect, her husband conceives the diabolical thought of making her a participant in his execrable practices, and thus pollute her soul, as he had already forever destroyed her happiness.

"Yet from the bottom of my soul, (says the narrative) I believe my poor Amelia, had she been herself, notwithstanding her mistaken lenity, and mischievous indulgences of my excesses, would never, in her rational moments, have degraded herself by a participation in my orgies. But, however, and by imperceptible degrees, she fell from her high estate, and sunk—no indeed to my dead level of measureless brutality—but low enough to lose herself, and all she once had been. I will not describe the scenes which my home now presented, almost every day. Husband, wife, father, mother, children, all mad; now singing and laughing; now cursing and swearing like the inmates of a mad-house." The dreadful issue of these courses could not long be delayed, and we shall copy the account of the catastrophe from the volume itself.

"One day—it was an ominous day—the anniversary of our marriage—in a fit of savage hilarity, I swore I would celebrate it with more than usual splendor. I got up at twelve the preceding night, and intoxicated myself before sunrise, when I went to bed and slept myself partly sober again before dinner. At dinner I drank, and enticed my poor Amelia to follow my example, till the little reason left us began to stagger on its throne. I proposed a toast—'Our wedding day, and many happy returns of it.' A sudden pang seemed to cross her mind, and produce a train of bitter recollections.

"Was it not a happy day, Amelia?" said I, tauntingly. She burst into tears, and covered her face with her hands for a minute; then slowly removing them, she replied, with a look of agony that still haunts my day and night, 'Yes, it was a happy day; but—' The tone and look irritated my already infuriated spirit, burning as it was in liquid flames. "But what?" replied I: 'Come, speak out; let us have no secrets on this happy day.' 'We have paid dearly for it,' she said—'you with the loss of fortune, fame, and goodness; I with a broken heart and shattered reason.'

"And I alone am to blame for all this, I suppose?"

"No; I blame nothing but my own folly. I had my warnings; but they came too late; or rather, as my conscience tells me, I shut my ears to them. Would I had died, I added she, wringing her hands, 'before that miserable night.' "I hushed aloud. 'Poor soul,' cried I, 'does it mean to say I deceived it. Fish! who would ever believe that her weak and silly sex was a match for men—men of the world—men of experience. Pah! a wife is a mere play thing—"

"A victim," sighed my poor wife. 'But what do you charge me with?'

"Your fortune is gone," said I.

"Who was it wasted it for me?'

"Your beauty is turned to deformity; you have grown as ugly as the —"

"Who spoiled it by robbing me of rest by night, of happiness by day?'

"You are no longer the gay, sprightly, animated; witty thing that won my heart."

"Your heart!" replied she, scornfully; 'but who was it that robbed me of my gaiety; that wrecked my heart, and turned my brain? Do you know the man, the monster I would say?' Her eyes now flashed fire as she continued. 'Do you know the monster, I say? he who deceived my youth; wasted my fortune; destroyed my happiness; degraded the modesty of my sex and station; poured liquid fire down my throat, and heaped coals of fire on the heads of my children? Who rendered the past a recollection of horror; the present yet worse; the future—O my God?'

"I, whom you promised to love and obey all your life. Come, give me an example of obedience," cried I, pouring out a glass of filthy liquor; 'come, one bumper more. I swear you shall drink one bumper more to this happy day—come!'

"I will not; I am already more than half a beast!"

"And half a fool," muttered I, rising and staggering to the other side of the table, where she was sitting; 'I swear by hell you shall drink it.'

"I swear by Heaven I will not!"

"Who shall answer for the actions of a man mad with drink! Not himself, for he is a beast without a soul; not his Maker, for he has abandoned him. A struggle now ensued, during which I gradually became irritated into fury. The children clung aghast about us, but I kicked them away. My poor Amelia at length struck the glass out of my hand; I became furious as a demon, and threw her from me with a diabolical force, against the corner of the fire place. She fell, raised herself half up, gave her children one look, and sank down again. She died."

"I am now the sober tenant of a mad house. The jury that tried me, would not believe a man who acted such scenes as were proved upon me could be in his senses. They acquitted me on the score of insanity. My relatives placed me here to pass the rest of my days, and recover my senses if I can. But I am not mad; the justice of heaven has ordained that I shall live, while I live, in the full perception of my past wickedness. I know not what is become of my children, for no one will answer my inquiries—no one will tell me where they are, whether they are dead or alive. All can understand it, that I shall never see them more. My constant companion day and night, waking and dreaming, is my murdered wife. Every moment of my life is spent in recalling to my mind the history of that ill-fated girl, in the summing up of what I have to answer for to her, her friends and her offspring. Denied the indulgence of all sorts of stimulants, my strength is gone; my body shrunk and shrivelled almost to a skeleton, and my limbs quake with the least exertion. Guilt grins me in the face; infamy barks at my heels; death points her finger at me; disease is gnawing my vitals; scorn already touches me with his icy fingers, and eternity waits to swallow me up. I am going to meet Amelia!"

"The man in whose charge I am committed, has furnished me with the means of fulfilling this my last task, and making the only atonement in my power for what I have done. If there be any one who shall read this, to whom temptation may beckon afar off, at a distance which disguises its deformity, let him contemplate me as I entered on the stage of life; as I pursued my career forward; as I closed or am about to close it forever. Let him not cheat his soul, let him not for a moment believe, that it is impossible for him to become as bad, nay worse than I have been. If we look only at the beginning and the end of a career of infamy and wickedness, the space appears a gulf, which the delinquent has overlooked at a single bound. But if we examine into the particulars of his life and progress, we shall seldom fail to find that the interval has been passed, and the goal attained, step by step, little and little; from good to bad, from bad to worse. The pride of human reason may whisper in our ears that we can never become like the wretch whose career we have just been tracing. But as poor Ophelia says, "We know what we are, but we know not what we may be." It is only to begin as I began; to sow the seeds, and be sure that in good time you will reap the same fruits; drink the same gall and bitterness here, the same fiery draught hereafter." pp. 183-88.

PETER THE GREAT.

In Count Segur's "History of Russia," he gives a most entertaining account of this queer monarch. We find the following incident which we think we remember to have seen dramatized with a remarkable contempt for historical truth:—

"At midnight the blow was to have been struck; and Peter gave orders that, exactly at eleven, the abode of the conspirators should be closely surrounded. Soon after, thinking the hour was come, he went singly to the haunt of these ruffians; he entered boldly, certain he should find nothing but trembling criminals, already fettered by his guards. But his impatience had anticipated the time, and he found himself, single and unarmed, in the midst of their unshackled, daring, well-armed band, at the instant when they were vociferating the last words of an oath that they would achieve his destruction.

"At his unexpected appearance, however, they all arose in confusion. Peter, on his side, comprehending the full extent of his danger, exasperated at the supposed disobedience of his guards, and furious at the violence of his emotion, suppressed nevertheless the violence of his own. Having gone too far to recede, he did not lose his presence of mind; he unhesitatingly advanced among this throng of traitors, greeted them familiarly, and, in a calm and natural tone, said that 'as he was passing by their house, he saw a light in it; that supposing they were amusing themselves he had entered in order to share their pleasures.' He then seated himself, and drank to his assassins, who standing up around him, could not avoid putting the glass about, and drinking his health.

"But soon they began to consult each other by their looks, to make numerous signs, and to grow more daring; one of them even leaned over to Siskanim, and said in a low voice, 'brother, it is time.' The latter, for what reason is unknown, hesitated, and had scarcely replied 'not yet,' when Peter, who heard him, and who also heard at last the footsteps of his guards—started from his seat, knocked him down by a blow in the face, and exclaimed 'if it is not yet time for you, scoundrel, it is for me.' This blow and the sight of the guards threw the assassins into consternation, they fell on their knees and implored forgiveness. 'Chain them,' replied the terrible Tzar. Then, turning to the officer of the guards, he struck him, and reproached him with his want of punctuality; but the latter showed him his order; and the Tzar, perceiving his mistake, clasped him in his arms, kissed him on the forehead, and proclaimed his fidelity, and entrusted him with the custody of the traitors.

"His vengeance was terrible: the punishment was more ferocious than the crime. First, the rack, then the successive mutilation of each member; the death, when not enough of blood and life was left to allow of the sense of suffering. To close the whole, the heads were exposed upon the summit of a column, the members being symmetrically arranged around them as ornaments; a scene well worthy of a government of masters and of slaves, reciprocally beautifying each other, and whose only God was fear."

"The domestic habits of the imperial ruffian, who is our author's lead-star, are thus described:—

"His ways and his manners, it is true, were unpolished, but they were simple, frank and natural; like those of every man who has a great end in view, who presses on to it with a resolute and straight forward spirit, and all whose faculties, in order to attain it, rise above the pompous littleness of pride and of vanity."

"In his humble abode at Petersburg, an abode which a mere artisan would think hardly good enough for himself—a bed, a chair, a table, a lathe, and some books, formed the whole of the furniture.

"When he was not at home, the deck of a ship, the floor of a hut, or the bare ground, served him as a bed; now and then straw, when he could get it; if not, he least of all had on the officer who attended on him, who lay across under it, and whose business it was to remain in that position as motionless as the bolster which he represented.

"Every thing in him was hostile to luxury, and looked to the useful; his clothes were plain, and even of a coarse cloth calculated to wear well—his shoes, which were solid and clumsy, were frequently mended.

"At his table, which was usually a frugal one, nothing came unless to him, except fish, which this naval prince could not bear. His habitual food, that which he preferred, was such as was eaten by the people. He ate little, but, whatever he might chance to eat, he ate no more and no matter with whom.

"He drank, however, to excess, from habit, from taste, perhaps even from vanity. Deplorable orgies, but less frequent than they are supposed to have been, where he was too often seen overcome by a shameful or a furious intoxication, but where, still oftener, proving himself more powerful than his excesses, he kept his senses, and patiently bore the rash language which intemperance prompted to his convivial companions.

"His court, at common times, consisted only of a few officers to convey his orders; luxury was banished from it by sumptuary laws; no plate was seen there. He waited on himself, rose at four in the morning, and lighted his fire with his own hands."

"These private singularities of the first enlightened Russian Emperor were not attended when he went out of doors.

"Such were his habits at home; when he went out, it was generally on foot, or in a hackney coach, and he sometimes borrowed of the first passer-by the money to pay his fare.—He daily spent several hours at the Senate, but particularly at the Admiralty; after which, and always followed, like the great Frederick, by a favorite dog, he went alone and without guards to mingle among the people—preferring the society of foreign and Russian traders and sailors, especially the Dutch, from whom he could scarcely be distinguished by his dress. There, without ceremony he took a part in their business, their pleasures, and their conversation, questioning them continually, and gaining great knowledge from their replies.

"Many a time was he seen working with his own hands in the manufactories which he had established. It is known that he often offered himself to pilot the European vessels which he came to Cronstadt, and that he received, like every pilot the pay of a service which he considered as an honor, and which he was desirous to render honorable.

"Another time, having been compelled by the state of his health, to stop at a forge, he for some hours became a smith."