

ed fixed to the same spot of earth till he and his companion were both out of sight. Then, restless with curiosity, and sick with disappointment, I withdrew to my apartments, plaguing myself on my way with coining a dozen tales of misery for the young creatures I had seen; and resolving if they should die of want to consider myself as their murderer for having suffered them to depart without enquiring into their situation.

After many disagreeable dreams, I awoke at break of day with a determination of searching the whole city for the young man and his sister; and accordingly proceeded to thread all the streets, wynds and closes of the old town, that I could see, or hear of: mounting several dozen of the highest common stairs whither some old shop keeper had directed me as to the abode of a young sickly man who had a sister younger than himself.

As might be expected the only result of my day's fatigues was a fit of ill humor from disappointment, and of rheumatism in every bone of my body from the violent and uncouth exercise of jostling thro' closes and ascending and descending common stairs. Notwithstanding, however the stiffness of my limbs, I resumed the search on the day following, and even the day following that; but as I found myself never the nearer to my purpose, my efforts gradually relaxed; and, in the course of a week, having given up all hope, I entirely gave up pursuit.

One day, in coming out of Parliament square, I observed a girl before me crossing the High Street, who, tho' I saw only her back, brought instantly to my mind the sister of my young stranger. I followed her instantly; and, passing her, tried to gain a sight of her face; but it was so shaded by the hood of her cloak that I could not satisfy myself positively: I resolved, however, on tracing her home; so, falling again behind, I followed her at a few yards distant. Having proceeded some way, she turned into a narrow close leading to some of the highest and oldest buildings between the High Street and the mound. I had, I thought, on the first day of my search, been down every turning, and up every stair, and knocked at every door in this neighborhood; but I now found that this was the only close I had missed.

Having followed the girl up the longest and darkest stair I had yet encountered, keeping always a turn between us to hide me from her observation, I heard at length the closing of a door; and then, having paused a few moments, proceeded in the ascent till I found by the jerk of my foot, for light there was none, that I had mounted the last step in this pile of habitations.

Having felt round the various doors, I tapped at the last. No one answering, I was about to turn to another, when the door gently opened, and I discovered, by means of the imperfect light from within, the young girl I had followed. She asked who was there; and I, not thinking my name would be any satisfactory explanation, stepped forward into the apartment.

The girl, who held the half-opened door with one hand, turned pale and shrunk back; then said in a timid and scarcely audible voice, "I believe, Sir, you are mistaken."

"I hope not, for I have had a very long search, my good girl," I replied in a voice as gentle as I could frame; "and be not alarmed, if I add I think that I am not." One glance indeed had satisfied me that I was right. The face of the girl I had immediately recognised on passing the threshold, her cloak being now untied, and the hood thrown back.

In the opposite corner, at a narrow, bedimmed window pieced in several places with old paper, and the only passage for light that the walls afforded, sat the young man, the original object of my curiosity.

When I entered he was leaning over a small broken table; his right hand supporting his head; while the left held open a book, the story of which had kindled his sunken cheeks with a feverish glow of emotion. The hand on which his forehead rested was immediately before a broken pane, thro' which a sunbeam entering seemed to pierce the thin palm that opposed its passage, showing all its pallid veins and feeble pulses, and staining the book beneath with a faint reflection of its transparent blood. The plaid he had worn on the former evening, hung over his right shoulder as a protection from the wind that blew thro' the broken window. He was so absorbed in the book before him, that he seemed not to have heard the opening of the door, and remained unconscious of my entrance till I spoke in answer to his sister. At the sound of my voice he turned with a start, and gazed on me for a second in bewildered amazement: then suddenly recollecting himself, he rose, with an air that had more of modesty than awkwardness, and asked me, the blood rising higher to his cheeks as he spoke, "If I had any business with him?"

"I have nothing that merits the term of business, my young friend; but if you will allow my years the freedom, I will rest a little with you from the fatigue of climbing your long stair; and I think you will the more readily grant the favor when I add, that I have mounted in the course of the last week some score of equal altitude in search of you."

The young man smiled doubtfully, muttered something of "happiness for the honor but feared I was under a mistake," making an effort at the same time to push forward the chair he had risen from.

I felt a pang at my heart when I saw that his strength was barely adequate to the exertion; and I believe a tear was in my eye, when, advancing, I laid a hand on his arm and told him, with a forced smile, that, having come in character of a Physician, I could not take the chair of my patient. Then, observing a stool by his side, I took possession of it, motioning him gently to resume his former seat. In doing so, he brushed the book from the tottering table. I stooped to raise it, and glancing at the title page, read, "The life of Chatterton." A thought which

I shall not pause to define rushed on me at that moment; and, still holding the book in my hand, I fixed my eyes on the face of the young man. I am sure they had tears in them now, for I felt one roll down my cheek, and drop on my hand. I might possibly have followed the train of ideas which this accident had started, and fallen into a reverie and total forgetfulness of all around me, had not the emotion of the countenance I gazed on recalled me to my senses.

"Pardon" I began "the intrusion of a stranger, who would more willingly claim the title of friend; but tho' not entitled by acquaintance to the name of friend, let me not be refused the pleasure of acting as one."

The young man with mingled surprise and confusion again assured me I must be mistaken.

"No I am not mistaken" I replied, taking his hand as it lay slackly on his knee, "I am not mistaken—I am sure of it. That is, if you are the same youth I saw on the mound a week since at midnight gazing on the moonlight Heavens."

At these words he caught his breath, and the hectic flush which had hitherto stood on his cheeks fled for an instant and then returned. He gazed on me wildly, and then suddenly directed a glance of enquiry to his sister.

My eyes mechanically followed his. The girl, who appeared during the above dialogue to have been leaning against the opposite wall in eager observation, looked at this instant ready to spring at my feet. Her body was bowed forward; her cheeks were flushed with crimson; her lips parted, and her bosom swollen with her arrested breathings. At length with a sudden impulse, which threw her untied cloak from her shoulders, she sprung forward and dropt at my feet.

"You will save him! You will save him!" The words choked in her throat; her clenched hands shook upon my knees; her lips quivered; her brows curled upwards, and knit together in convulsive motion; her uplifted eyes rivetted on my face as if she would have read there the inmost purpose of my soul.

"I will, my child; I will," said I, rising and lifting her from the ground; "I will, if Heaven refuse not to bless my efforts."

The poor girl burst into a flood of tears, seized my hand and pressed it to her lips; then, rushing to a dark corner of the room, hid her face in her tattered gown and sobbed aloud.

I turned to the brother. His head had dropt upon his arm. I heard him heave a sigh. I laid my hand upon his shoulder; and then, in a gentle voice, "From what I observed the other night, I should judge you were a lover of the country: he who wanders forth at midnight to read the Heavens, cannot like to peruse stone walls and chimney tops at mid-day."

The youth turned his eyes upon me, and moved his lips thrice ineffectually: at length, commanding his voice and trying to command his manner, he replied: "Excuse me, Sir,—"