

CHAPTER 13 - THE HOUSE IN THE SUBURBS

Retracing some hours, we turn from the rifted wall to the suburbs and the country which its ramparts overlook; abandoning the footsteps of the maimed and darkly-plotting Ulpius, our attention now fixes itself on the fortunes of Hermanric, and the fate of Antonina.

Although the evening had as yet scarcely closed, the Goth had allotted to the warriors under his command their different stations for the night in the lonely suburbs of the city. This duty performed, he was left to the unbroken solitude of the deserted tenement which now served him as a temporary abode.

The house he occupied was the last of the wide and irregular street in which it stood; it looked towards the wall beneath the Pincian Mount, from which it was separated by a public garden about half a mile in extent. This once well-thronged place of recreation was now totally unoccupied. Its dull groves were brightened by no human forms; the chambers of its gay summer houses were dark and desolate; the booths of its fruit and flower-sellers stood vacant on its untrodden lawns. Melancholy and forsaken, it stretched forth as a fertile solitude under the very walls of a crowded city.

And yet there was a charm inexpressibly solemn and soothing in the prospect of loneliness that it presented, as its flower-beds and trees were now gradually obscured to the eye in the shadows of the advancing night. It gained in its present refinement as much as it had lost of its former gaiety; it had its own simple attraction still, though it failed to sparkle to the eye with its accustomed illuminations, or to please the ear by the music and laughter, which rose from it in times of peace. As he looked forth over the view from the terrace of his new abode, the remembrance of the employments of his past and busy hours deserted the memory of the young Goth, leaving his faculties free to welcome the reflections which night began insensibly to awaken and create.

Employed under such auspices, whither would the thoughts of Hermanric naturally stray?

From the moonlight that already began to ripple over the topmost trembling leaves of the trees beyond him, to the delicate and shadowy flowers that twined up the pillars of the deserted terrace where he now stood, every object he beheld connected itself, to his vivid and uncultured imagination, with the one being of whom all that was beautiful in nature, seemed to him the eloquent and befitting type. He thought of Antonina whom he had once

protected; of Antonina whom he had afterwards abandoned; of Antonina whom he had now lost!

Strong in the imaginative and weak in the reasoning faculties; gifted with large moral perception and little moral firmness; too easy to be influenced and too difficult to be resolved, Hermanric had deserted the girl's interests from an infirmity of disposition, rather than from a determination of will. Now, therefore, when the employments of the day had ceased to absorb his attention; now when silence and solitude led his memory back to his morning's abandonment of his helpless charge, that act of fatal impatience and irresolution inspired him with the strongest emotions of sorrow and remorse. If during her sojourn under his care, Antonina had insensibly influenced his heart, her image, now that he reflected on his guilty share in their parting scene, filled all his thoughts, at once saddening and shaming him, as he remembered her banishment from the shelter of his tent.

Every feeling which had animated his reflections on Antonina on the previous night, was doubled in intensity as he thought on her now. Again he recalled her eloquent words, and remembered the charm of her gentle and innocent manner; again he dwelt on the beauties of her outward form. Each warm expression; each varying intonation of voice that had accompanied her petition to him for safety and companionship; every persuasion that she had used to melt him, now revived in his memory and moved in his heart with steady influence and increasing power. All the hurried and imperfect pictures of happiness which she had drawn to allure him, now expanded and brightened, until his mind began to figure to him visions that had been hitherto unknown to faculties occupied by no other images than those of rivalry, turbulence, and strife. Scenes called into being by Antonina's lightest and hastiest expressions, now rose vague and shadowy before his brooding spirit. Lovely places of earth that he had visited and forgotten now returned to his recollection, idealised and refined as he thought of her. She appeared to his mind in every allurement of action, fulfilling all the duties and enjoying all the pleasures that she had proposed to him. He imagined her happy and healthful, journeying gaily by his side in the fresh morning, with rosy cheek and elastic step; he imagined her delighting him by her promised songs, enlivening him by her eloquent words, in the mellow stillness of evening; he imagined her sleeping, soft and warm and still, in his protecting arms--ever happy and ever gentle; girl in years, and woman in capacities; at once lover and companion, teacher and pupil, follower and guide!

Such she might have been once! What was she now?

Was she sinking under her loneliness, perishing from exposure and fatigue, repulsed by the cruel, or mocked by the unthinking? To all these perils and miseries had he exposed her; and to what end? To maintain the uncertain favour, to preserve the unwelcome friendship, of a woman abandoned even by the most common and intuitive virtues of her sex; whose frantic craving for revenge, confounded justice with treachery, innocence with guilt, helplessness with tyranny; whose claims of nation and relationship should have been forfeited in his estimation, by the openly-confessed malignity of her designs, at the fatal moment when she had communicated them to him in all their atrocity, before the walls of Rome. He groaned in despair, as he thought on this, the most unworthy of the necessities, to which the forsaken girl had been sacrificed.

Soon, however, his mind reverted from such reflections as these, to his own duties and his own renown; and here his remorse became partially lightened, though his sorrow remained unchanged.

Wonderful as had been the influence of Antonina's presence and Antonina's words over the Goth, they had not yet acquired power enough to smother in him entirely the warlike instincts of his sex and nation, or to vanquish the strong and hostile promptings of education and custom. She had gifted him with new emotions, and awakened him to new thought; she had aroused all the dormant gentleness of his disposition to war against the rugged indifference, the reckless energy, that teaching and example had hitherto made a second nature to his heart. She had wound her way into his mind, brightening its dark places, enlarging its narrow recesses, beautifying its unpolished treasures. She had created, she had refined, during her short hours of communication with him, but she had not lured his disposition entirely from its old habits and its old attachments; she had not yet stripped off the false glitter from barbarian strife, or the pomp from martial renown; she had not elevated the inferior intellectual, to the height of the superior moral faculties, in his inward composition. Submitted almost impartially to the alternate and conflicting dominion of the two masters, Love and Duty, he at once regretted Antonina, and yet clung mechanically to his old obedience to those tyrannic requirements of nation and name, which had occasioned her loss.

Oppressed by his varying emotions, destitute alike of consolation and advice, the very inaction of his present position sensibly depressed him. He rose impatiently, and buckling on his weapons, sought to escape from his thoughts, by abandoning the scene under the influence of which they had been first aroused. Turning his back upon the city, he directed his steps at random, through the complicated labyrinth of streets, composing the extent

of the deserted suburbs.

After he had passed through the dwellings comprised in the occupation of the Gothic lines, and had gained those situated nearer to the desolate country beyond, the scene around him became impressive enough to have absorbed the attention of any man not wholly occupied by other and more important objects of contemplation.

The loneliness he now beheld on all sides, was not the loneliness of ruin--the buildings near him were in perfect repair; it was not the loneliness of pestilence--there were no corpses strewn over the untrodden pavements of the streets; it was not the loneliness of seclusion--there were no barred windows, and few closed doors; it was a solitude of human annihilation. The open halls were unapproached; the benches before the wine-shops were unoccupied; remains of gaudy household wares still stood on the counters of the street booths, watched by none, bought by none; particles of bread and meat (treasures, fated to become soon of greater value than silver and gold, to beleaguered Rome) rotted here in the open air, like garbage upon dunghills; children's toys, women's ornaments, purses, money, love-tokens, precious manuscripts, lay scattered hither and thither in the public ways, dropped and abandoned by their different owners, in the hurry of their sudden and universal flight. Every deserted street was eloquent of darling projects desperately resigned, of valued labours miserably deserted, of delighting enjoyments irretrievably lost. The place was forsaken even by those household gods of rich and poor, its domestic animals. They had either followed their owners into the city, or strayed, unhindered and unwatched, into the country beyond. Mansion, bath, and circus, displayed their gaudy pomp and luxurious comfort in vain; not even a wandering Goth was to be seen near their empty halls. For, with such a prospect before them as the subjugation of Rome, the army had caught the infection of its leader's enthusiasm for his exalted task, and willingly obeyed his commands for suspending the pillage of the suburbs, disdainingly the comparatively worthless treasures around them, attainable at any time, when they felt that the rich coffers of Rome herself were now fast opening to their eager hands. Voiceless and noiseless, unpeopled and unravaged, lay the far-famed suburbs of the greatest city of the universe, sunk alike in the night of Nature, the night of Fortune, and the night of Glory!

Saddening and impressive as was the prospect thus presented to the eyes of the young Goth, it failed to weaken the powerful influence that his evening's meditations yet held over his mind. As, during the hours that were passed, the image of the forsaken girl had dissipated the remembrance of the duties he had performed, and opposed the contemplation of the commands he was

yet to fulfil, so it now denied to his faculties any impressions from the lonely scene, beheld, yet unnoticed, which spread around him. Still, as he passed through the gloomy streets, his vain regrets and self-accusations, his natural predilections and acquired attachments, ruled over him and contended within him, as sternly and as unceasingly as in the first moments when they had arisen with the evening, during his sojourn in the terrace of the deserted house.

He had now arrived at the extremest boundary of the buildings in the suburbs. Before him lay an uninterrupted prospect of smooth, shining fields, and soft, hazy, indefinable woods. At one side of him were some vineyards and cottage gardens; at the other was a solitary house, the outermost of all the abodes in his immediate vicinity. Dark and cheerless as it was, he regarded it for some time with the mechanical attention of a man more occupied in thought than observation,--gradually advancing towards it in the moody abstraction of his reflections, until he unconsciously paused before the low range of irregular steps which led to its entrance door.

Startled from its meditations by his sudden propinquity to the object that he had unwittingly approached, he now, for the first time, examined the lonely abode before him with real attention.

There was nothing remarkable about the house, save the extreme desolateness of its appearance, which seemed to arise partly from its isolated position, and partly from the unusual absence of all decoration on its external front. It was too extensive to have been the dwelling of a poor man, too void of pomp and ornament to have been a mansion of the rich. It might, perhaps, have belonged to some citizen, or foreigner, or the middle class--some moody Northman, some solitary Egyptian, some scheming Jew. Yet, though it was not possessed, in itself, of any remarkable or decided character, the Goth experienced a mysterious, almost an eager curiosity to examine its interior. He could assign no cause, discover no excuse for the act, as he slowly mounted the steps before him. Some invisible and incomprehensible magnet attracted him to the dwelling. If his return had been suddenly commanded by Alaric himself; if evidences of indubitable treachery had lurked about the solitary place, at the moment when he thrust open its unbarred door, he felt that he must still have proceeded upon his onward course. The next instant he entered the house. The light streamed through the open entrance into the gloomy hall; the night-wind, rushing upon its track, blew shrill and dreary among the stone pillars, and in the hidden crevices and untenanted chambers above. Not a sign of life appeared, not a sound of a footstep was audible, not even an article of household use was to be seen. The deserted suburbs rose without, like a

wilderness; and this empty house looked within, like a sepulchre--void of corpses, and yet eloquent of death!

There was an inexplicable fascination to the eyes of the Goth about this vault-like, solitary hall. He stood motionless at its entrance, gazing dreamily at the gloomy prospect before him, until a strong gust of wind suddenly forced the outer door further backwards, and at the same moment admitted a larger stream of light.

The place was not empty. In a corner of the hall, hitherto sunk in darkness, crouched a shadowy form. It was enveloped in a dark garment, and huddled up into an indefinable and unfamiliar shape. Nothing appeared on it, as a denoting sign of humanity, but one pale hand, holding the black drapery together, and relieved against it in almost ghastly contrast under the cold light of the moon.

Vague remembrances of the awful superstitions of his nation's ancient worship, hurried over the memory of the young Goth, at the first moment of his discovery of the ghost-like occupant of the hall. As he stood in fixed attention before the motionless figure, it soon began to be endowed with the same strange influence over his will, that the lonely house had already exerted. He advanced slowly towards the crouching form.

It never stirred at the noise of his approach. The pale hand still held the mantle over the compressed figure, with the same rigid immobility of grasp. Brave as he was, Hermanric shuddered as he bent down and touched the bloodless, icy fingers. At that action, as if endowed with instant vitality from contact with a living being, the figure suddenly started up.

Then, the folds of the dark mantle fell back, disclosing a face as pale in hue as the stone pillars around it; and the voice of the solitary being became audible, uttering in faint, monotonous accents, these words:--

'He has forgotten and abandoned me!--slay me if you will!--I am ready to die!'

Broken, untuned as it was, there yet lurked in that voice a tone of its old music, there beamed in that vacant and heavy eye a ray of its native gentleness. With a sudden exclamation of compassion and surprise, the Goth stepped forward, raised the trembling outcast in his arms; and, in the impulse of the moment quitting the solitary house, stood the next instant on the firm earth, and under the starry sky, once more united to the charge that he had abandoned--to Antonina whom he had lost.

He spoke to her, caressed her, entreated her pardon, assured her of his future care; but she neither answered nor recognised him. She never looked in his face, never moved in his arms, never petitioned for mercy. She gave no sign of life or being, saving that she moaned at regular intervals in piteous accents:--'He has forgotten and abandoned me!' as if that one simple expression comprised in itself, her acknowledgment of the uselessness of her life, and her dirge for her expected death.

The Goth's countenance whitened to his very lips. He began to fear that her faculties had sunk under her trials. He hurried on with her with trembling steps towards the open country, for he nourished a dreamy, intuitive hope, that the sight of those woods and fields and mountains which she had extolled to him, in her morning's entreaty for protection, might aid in restoring her suspended consciousness, if she now looked on them.

He ran forward, until he had left the suburbs at least half a mile behind him, and had reached an eminence, bounded on each side by high grass banks and clustering woods, and commanding a narrow, yet various prospect, of the valley ground beneath, and the fertile plains that extended beyond.

Here the warrior paused with his burden; and, seating himself on the bank, once more attempted to calm the girl's continued bewilderment and terror. He thought not on his sentinels, whom he had abandoned--on his absence from the suburbs, which might be perceived and punished by an unexpected visit, at his deserted quarters, from his superiors in the camp. The social influence that sways the world; the fragile idol at whose shrine pride learns to bow, and insensibility to feel; the soft, grateful influence of yielding nature yet eternal rule--the influence of woman, source alike of virtues and crimes, of earthly glories and earthly disasters--had, in this moment of anguish and expectation, silenced in him every appeal of duty, and overthrown every obstacle of selfish doubt. He now spoke to Antonina as alluringly as a woman, as gently as a child. He caressed her as warmly as a lover, as cheerfully as a brother, as kindly as a father. He--the rough, northern warrior, whose education had been of arms, and whose youthful aspirations had been taught to point towards strife and bloodshed and glory--even he was now endowed with the tender eloquence of pity and love--with untiring, skilful care--with calm, enduring patience.

Gently and unceasingly he plied his soothing task; and soon, to his joy and triumph, he beheld the approaching reward of his efforts, in the slow changes that became gradually perceptible in the girl's face and manner.

She raised herself in his arms, looked up fixedly and vacantly into his face, then round upon the bright, quiet landscape, then back again more stedfastly upon her companion; and at length, trembling violently, she whispered softly and several times the young Goth's name, glancing at him anxiously and apprehensively, as if she feared and doubted while she recognised him.

'You are bearing me to my death,'--said she suddenly. 'You, who once protected me--you, who forsook me!--You are luring me into the power of the woman who thirsts for my blood!--Oh, it is horrible--horrible!'

She paused, averted her face, and shuddering violently, disengaged herself from his arms. After an interval, she continued:--

'Through the long day, and in the beginning of the cold night, I have waited in one solitary place for the death that is in store for me! I have suffered all the loneliness of my hours of expectation, without complaint; I have listened with little dread, and no grief, for the approach of my enemy who has sworn that she will shed my blood! Having none to love me, and being a stranger in the land of my own nation, I have nothing to live for! But it is a bitter misery to me to behold in you the fulfiller of my doom; to be snatched by the hand of Hermanric from the heritage of life that I have so long struggled to preserve!'

Her voice had altered, as she pronounced these words, to an impressive lowness and mournfulness of tone. Its quiet, saddened accents were expressive of an almost divine resignation and sorrow; they seemed to be attuned to a mysterious and untraceable harmony with the melancholy stillness of the night-landscape. As she now stood looking up with pale, calm countenance, and gentle, tearless eyes, into the sky whose moonlight brightness shone softly over her form, the Virgin watching the approach of her angel messenger could hardly have been adorned with a more pure and simple loveliness, than now dwelt over the features of Numerian's forsaken child.

No longer master of his agitation; filled with awe, grief, and despair, as he looked on the victim of his heartless impatience; Hermanric bowed himself at the girl's feet, and, in the passionate utterance of real remorse, offered up his supplications for pardon and his assurances of protection and love. All that the reader has already learned--the bitter self-upbraidings of his evening, the sorrowful wanderings of his night, the mysterious attraction that led him to the solitary house, his joy at once more discovering his lost charge--all these confessions he now poured forth in the simple yet powerful

eloquence of strong emotion and true regret.

Gradually and amazedly, as she listened to his words, Antonina awoke from her abstraction. Even the expression of his countenance and the earnestness of his manner, viewed by the intuitive penetration of her sex, wrought with kind and healing influence on her mind. She started suddenly, a bright flush flew over her colourless cheeks; she bent down, and looked earnestly and wistfully into the Goth's face. Her lips moved, but her quick convulsive breathing stifled the words that she vainly endeavoured to form.

'Yes,' continued Hermanric, rising and drawing her towards him again, 'you shall never mourn, never fear, never weep more! Though you have lost your father, and the people of your nation are as strangers to you, though you have been threatened and forsaken, you shall still be beautiful--still be happy; for I will watch you, and you shall never be harmed; I will labour for you, and you shall never want! People and kindred--fame and duty, I will abandon them all to make atonement to you!'

Its youthful freshness and hope returned to the girl's heart, as water to the long-parched spring, when the young warrior ceased. The tears stood in her eyes, but she neither sighed nor spoke. Her frame trembled all over with the excess of her astonishment and delight, as she still steadfastly looked on him and still listened intently as he proceeded:--

'Fear, then, no longer for your safety--Goisvintha, whom you dread, is far from us; she knows not that we are here; she cannot track our footsteps now, to threaten or to harm you! Remember no more how you have suffered and I have sinned! Think only how bitterly I have repented our morning's separation, and how gladly I welcome our meeting of to-night! Oh, Antonina! you are beautiful with a wondrous loveliness, you are young with a perfected and unchildlike youth, your words fall upon my ear with the music of a song of the olden time; it is like a dream of the spirits that my fathers worshipped, when I look up and behold you at my side!'

An expression of mingled confusion, pleasure, and surprise, flushed the girl's half-averted countenance as she listened to the Goth. She rose with a smile of ineffable gratitude and delight, and pointed to the prospect beyond, as she softly rejoined:--

'Let us go a little further onward, where the moonlight shines over the meadow below. My heart is bursting in this shadowy place! Let us seek the light that is yonder; it seems happy like me!'

They walked forward; and as they went, she told him again of the sorrows of her past day; of her lonely and despairing progress from his tent to the solitary house where he had found her in the night, and where she had resigned herself from the first to meet a death that had little horror for her then. There was no thought of reproach, no utterance of complaint, in this renewal of her melancholy narration. It was solely that she might luxuriate afresh in those delighting expressions of repentance and devotion, which she knew that it would call forth from the lips of Hermanric, that she now thought of addressing him once more with the tale of her grief.

As they still went onward; as she listened to the rude fervent eloquence of the language of the Goth; as she looked on the deep repose of the landscape, and the soft transparency of the night sky; her mind, ever elastic under the shock of the most violent emotions, ever ready to regain its wonted healthfulness and hope--now recovered its old tone, and re-assumed its accustomed balance. Again her memory began to store itself with its beloved remembrances, and her heart to rejoice in its artless longings and visionary thoughts. In spite of all her fears and all her sufferings, she now walked on blest in a disposition that woe had no shadow to darken long, and neglect no influence to warp; still as happy in herself; even yet as forgetful of her past, as hopeful for her future, as on that first evening when we beheld her in her father's garden, singing to the music of her lute.

Insensibly as they proceeded, they had diverged from the road, had entered a bye-path, and now stood before a gate which led to a small farm house, surrounded by its gardens and vineyards, and, like the suburbs that they had quitted, deserted by its inhabitants on the approach of the Goths. They passed through the gate, and arriving at the plot of ground in front of the house, paused for a moment to look around them.

The meadows had been already stripped of their grass, and the young trees of their branches by the foragers of the invading army, but here the destruction of the little property had been stayed. The house with its neat thatched roof and shutters of variegated wood, the garden with its small stock of fruit and its carefully tended beds of rare flowers, designed probably to grace the feast of a nobleman or the statue of a martyr, had presented no allurements to the rough tastes of Alaric's soldiery. Not a mark of a footstep appeared on the turf before the house door; the ivy crept in its wonted luxuriance about the pillars of the lowly porch; and as Hermanric and Antonina walked towards the fish-pond at the extremity of the garden, the few water-fowl placed there by the owners of the cottage, came swimming towards the bank, as if to welcome in their solitude the appearance of a

human form.

Far from being melancholy, there was something soothing and attractive about the loneliness of the deserted farm. Its ravaged outhouses and plundered meadows, which might have appeared desolate by day, were so distanced, softened, and obscured, by the atmosphere of night, that they presented no harsh contrast to the prevailing smoothness and luxuriance of the landscape around. As Antonina beheld the brightened fields and the shadowed woods, here mingled, there succeeding each other, stretched far onward and onward until they joined the distant mountains, that eloquent voice of nature, whose audience is the human heart, and whose theme is eternal love, spoke inspiringly to her attentive senses. She stretched out her arms as she looked with steady and enraptured gaze upon the bright view before her, as if she longed to see its beauties resolved into a single and living form--into a spirit human enough to be addressed, and visible enough to be adored.

'Beautiful earth!' she murmured softly to herself, 'Thy mountains are the watch-towers of angels, thy moonlight is the shadow of God!'

Her eyes filled with bright, happy tears; she turned to Hermanric, who stood watching her, and continued:--

'Have you never thought that light, and air, and the perfume of flowers, might contain some relics of the beauties of Eden that escaped with Eve, when she wandered into the lonely world? They glowed and breathed for her, and she lived and was beautiful in them! They were united to one another, as the sunbeam is united to the earth that it warms; and could the sword of the cherubim have sundered them at once? When Eve went forth, did the closed gates shut back in the empty Paradise, all the beauty that had clung, and grown, and shone round her? Did no ray of her native light steal forth after her into the desolateness of the world? Did no print of her lost flowers remain on the bosom they must once have pressed? It cannot be! A part of her possessions of Eden must have been spared to her with a part of her life. She must have refined the void air of the earth when she entered it, with a breath of the fragrant breezes, and gleam of the truant sunshine of her lost Paradise! They must have strengthened and brightened, and must now be strengthening and brightening with the slow lapse of mortal years, until, in the time when earth itself will be an Eden, they shall be made one again with the hidden world of perfection, from which they are yet separated. So that, even now, as I look forth over the landscape, the light that I behold has in it a glow of Paradise, and this flower that I gather a breath of the fragrance that once stole over the senses of my first mother, Eve!'

Though she paused here, as if in expectation of an answer, the Goth preserved an unbroken silence. Neither by nature nor position was he capable of partaking the wild fancies and aspiring thoughts, drawn by the influences of the external world from their concealment in Antonina's heart.

The mystery of his present situation; his vague remembrance of the duties he had abandoned; the uncertainty of his future fortunes and future fate; the presence of the lonely being so inseparably connected with his past emotions and his existence to come, so strangely attractive by her sex, her age, her person, her misfortunes, and her endowments; all contributed to bewilder his faculties. Goisvintha, the army, the besieged city, the abandoned suburbs, seemed to hem him in like a circle of shadowy and threatening judgments; and in the midst of them stood the young denizen of Rome, with her eloquent countenance and her inspiring words, ready to hurry him, he knew not whither, and able to influence him, he felt not how.

Unconsciously interpreting her companion's silence into a wish to change the scene and the discourse, Antonina, after lingering over the view from the garden for a moment longer, led the way back towards the untenanted house. They removed the wooden padlock from the door of the dwelling, and guided by the brilliant moonlight, entered its principal apartment.

The homely adornments of the little room had remained undisturbed, and dimly distinguishable though they now were, gave it to the eyes of the two strangers, the same aspect of humble comfort which had probably once endeared it to its exiled occupants. As Hermanric seated himself by Antonina's side on the simple couch which made the principal piece of furniture in the place, and looked forth from the window over the same view that they had beheld in the garden, the magic stillness and novelty of the scene now began to affect his slow perceptions, as they had already influenced the finer and more sensitive faculties of the thoughtful girl. New hopes and tranquil ideas arose in his young mind, and communicated an unusual gentleness to his expression, an unusual softness to his voice, as he thus addressed his silent companion:--

'With such a home as this, with this garden, with that country beyond, with no warfare, no stern teachers, no enemy to threaten you; with companions and occupations that you loved--tell me, Antonina, would not your happiness be complete?'

As he looked round at the girl to listen to her reply, he saw that her countenance had changed. Their past expression of deep grief had again

returned to her features. Her eyes were fixed on the short dagger that hung over the Goth's breast, which seemed to have suddenly aroused in her a train of melancholy and unwelcome thoughts. When she at length spoke, it was in a mournful and altered voice, and with a mingled expression of resignation and despair.

'You must leave me--we must be parted again,' said she; 'the sight of your weapons has reminded me of all that until now I had forgotten, of all that I have left in Rome, of all that you have abandoned before the city walls. Once I thought we might have escaped together from the turmoil and the danger around us, but now I know that it is better that you should depart! Alas! for my hopes and my happiness, I must be left alone once more!'

She paused for an instant, struggling to retain her self-possession, and then continued:--

'Yes, you must quit me, and return to your post before the city; for in the day of assault there will be none to care for my father but you! Until I know that he is safe, until I can see him once more, and ask him for pardon, and entreat him for love, I dare not remove from the perilous precincts of Rome! Return, then, to your duties, and your companions, and your occupations of martial renown; and do not forget Numerian when the city is assailed, nor Antonina, who is left to think on you in the solitary plains!'

She rose from her place, as if to set the example of departing; but her strength and resolution both failed her, and she sank down again on the couch, incapable of making another movement, or uttering another word.

Strong and conflicting emotions passed over the heart of the Goth. The language of the girl had quickened the remembrance of his half-forgotten duties, and strengthened the failing influence of his old predilections of education and race. Both conscience and inclination now opposed his disputing her urgent and unselfish request. For a few minutes he remained in deep reflection; then he rose and looked earnestly from the window; then back again upon Antonina and the room they occupied. At length, as if animated by a sudden determination, he again approached his companion, and thus addressed her:--

'It is right that I should return. I will do your bidding, and depart for the camp (but not till the break of day), while you, Antonina, remain in concealment and in safety here. None can come hither to disturb you. The Goths will not revisit the fields they have already stripped; the husbandman who owns this dwelling is imprisoned in the beleaguered city; the peasants

from the country beyond dare not approach so near to the invading hosts; and Goisvintha, whom you dread, knows not even of the existence of such a refuge as this. Here, though lonely, you will be secure; here you can await my return, when each succeeding night gives me the opportunity of departing from the camp; and here I will warn you beforehand, if the city is devoted to an assault. Though solitary, you will not be abandoned--we shall not be parted one from the other. Often and often I shall return to look on you, and to listen to you, and to love you! You will be happier here, even in this lonely place, than in the former home that you have lost through your father's wrath!

'Oh! I will willingly remain--I will joyfully await you!' cried the girl, raising her beaming eyes to Hermanric's face. 'I will never speak mournfully to you again; I will never remind you more of all that I have suffered, and all that I have lost! How merciful you were to me, when I first saw you in your tent--how doubly merciful you are to me here! I am proud when I look on your stature, and your strength, and your heavy weapons, and know that you are happy in remaining with me; that you will succour my father; that you will return from your glittering encampments to this farm-house, where I am left to await you! Already I have forgotten all that has happened to me of woe; already I am more joyful than ever I was in my life before! See, I am no longer weeping in sorrow! If there are any tears still on my cheeks, they are the tears of gladness that every one welcomes--tears to sing and rejoice in!'

She ceased abruptly, as if words failed to give expression to her new delight. All the gloomy emotions that had oppressed her but a short time before had now completely vanished; and the young, fresh heart, superior still to despair and woe, basked as happily again in its native atmosphere of joy as a bird in the sunlight of morning and spring.

Then, when after an interval of delay their former tranquility had returned to them, how softly and lightly the quiet hours of the remaining night flowed onward to the two watchers in the lonely house! How gladly the delighted girl disclosed her hidden thoughts, and poured forth her innocent confessions, to the dweller among other nations and the child of other impressions than her own! All the various reflections aroused in her mind by the natural objects she had secretly studied, by the mighty imagery of her Bible lore, by the gloomy histories of saints' visions and martyrs' sufferings, which she had learnt and pondered over by her father's side, were now drawn from their treasured places in her memory, and addressed to the ear of the Goth. As the child flies to the nurse with the story of its first toy; as the girl resorts to the sister with the confession of her first love; as the poet hurries to the friend with the plan of his first composition; so did Antonina

seek the attention of Hermanric with the first outward revealings enjoyed by her faculties and the first acknowledgment of her emotions liberated from her heart.

The longer the Goth listened to her, the more perfect became the enchantment of her words, half struggling into poetry, and her voice half gliding into music. As her low, still, varying tones wound smoothly into his ear, his thoughts suddenly and intuitively reverted to her formerly expressed remembrances of her lost lute, inciting him to ask her, with new interest and animation, of the manner of her acquisition of that knowledge of song, which she had already assured him that she possessed.

'I have learned many odes of many poets,' said she, quickly and confusedly avoiding the mention of Vetrano, which a direct answer to Hermanric's question must have produced, 'but I remember none perfectly, save those whose theme is of spirits and of other worlds, and of the invisible beauty that we think of but cannot see. Of the few that I know of these, there is one that I first learned and loved most. I will sing it, that you may be assured I will not fail to you in my promised art.'

She hesitated for a moment. Sorrowful remembrances of the events that had followed the utterance of the last notes she sang in her father's garden, swelled within her, and held her speechless. Soon, however, after a short interval of silence, she recovered her self-possession, and began to sing, in low tremulous tones, that harmonised well with the character of the words and the strain of the melody which she had chosen.

THE MISSION OF THE TEAR

I.

The skies were its birth-place--the TEAR was the child Of the dark
maiden SORROW, by young JOY beguil'd; It was born in convulsion;
'twas nurtur'd in woe; And the world was yet young when it wander'd
below.

II.

No angel-bright guardians watch'd over its birth, Ere yet it was suffer'd
to roam upon earth; No spirits of gladness its soft form caress'd; SIGHS
mourned round its cradle, and hush'd it to rest.

III.

Though JOY might endeavour, with kisses and wiles, To lure it away to his household of smiles: From the daylight he lived in it turn'd in affright, To nestle with SORROW in climates of night.

IV.

When it came upon earth, 'twas to choose a career, The brightest and best that is left to a TEAR; To hallow delight, and bestow the relief Denied by despair to the fulness of grief.

V.

Few repell'd it--some bless'd it--wherever it came; Whether soft'ning their sorrow, or soothing their shame; And the joyful themselves, though its name they might fear, Oft welcom'd the calming approach of the TEAR!

VI.

Years on years have worn onward, as--watch'd from above-- Speeds that meek spirit yet on its labour of love; Still the exile of Heav'n, it ne'er shall away, Every heart has a home for it, roam where it may!

For the first few minutes after she had concluded the ode, Hermanric was hardly conscious that she had ceased; and when at length she looked up at him, her mute petition for approval had an eloquence which would have been marred to the Goth at that moment, by the utterance of single word. A rapture, an inspiration, a new life moved within him. The hour and the scene completed what the magic of the song had begun. His expression now glowed with a southern warmth; his words assumed a Roman fervour. Gradually, as they discoursed, the voice of the girl was less frequently audible. A change was passing over her spirit; from the teacher, she was now becoming the pupil.

As she still listened to the Goth, as she felt the birth of new feelings within her while he spoke, her cheeks glowed, her features lightened up, her very form seemed to freshen and expand. No intruding thought or awakening remembrance disturbed her rapt attention. No cold doubt, no gloomy hesitation, appeared in her companion's words. The one listened, the other spoke, with the whole heart, the undivided soul. While a world-wide revolution was concentrating its hurricane forces around them; while the city of an Empire tottered already to its tremendous fall; while Goisvintha plotted new revenge; while Ulpus toiled for his revolution of bloodshed and

ruin; while all these dark materials of public misery and private strife seethed and strengthened around them, they could as completely forget the stormy outward world, in themselves; they could think as serenely of tranquil love; the kiss could be given as passionately and returned as tenderly, as if the lot of their existence had been cast in the pastoral days of the shepherd poets, and the future of their duties and enjoyments was securely awaiting them in a land of eternal peace!