Pierre; or The Ambiguities

By

Herman Melville

TO

Greylock's Most Excellent Majesty.

In old times authors were proud of the privilege of dedicating their works to Majesty. A right noble custom, which we of Berkshire must revive. For whether we will or no, Majesty is all around us here in Berkshire, sitting as in a grand Congress of Vienna of majestical hill-tops, and eternally challenging our homage.

But since the majestic mountain, Greylock--my own more immediate sovereign lord and king--hath now, for innumerable ages, been the one grand dedicatee of the earliest rays of all the Berkshire mornings, I know not how his Imperial Purple Majesty (royal-born: Porphyrogenitus) will receive the dedication of my own poor solitary ray.

Nevertheless, forasmuch as I, dwelling with my loyal neighbors, the Maples and the Beeches, in the amphitheater over which his central majesty presides, have received his most bounteous and unstinted fertilizations, it is but meet, that I here devoutly kneel, and render up my gratitude, whether, thereto, The Most Excellent Purple Majesty of Greylock benignantly incline his hoary crown or no.

Pittsfield, Mass.

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BOOK I.

PIERRE JUST EMERGING FROM HIS TEENS.

I.

There are some strange summer mornings in the country, when he who is but a sojourner from the city shall early walk forth into the fields, and be wonder-smitten with the trance-like aspect of the green and golden world. Not a flower stirs; the trees forget to wave; the grass itself seems to have ceased to grow; and all Nature, as if suddenly become conscious of her own profound mystery, and feeling no refuge from it but silence, sinks into this wonderful and indescribable repose.

Such was the morning in June, when, issuing from the embowered and high-gabled old home of his fathers, Pierre, dewily refreshed and spiritualized by sleep, gayly entered the long, wide, elm-arched street of the village, and half unconsciously bent his steps toward a cottage, which peeped into view near the end of the vista.

The verdant trance lay far and wide; and through it nothing came but the brindled kine, dreamily wandering to their pastures, followed, not driven, by ruddy-cheeked, white-footed boys.

As touched and bewitched by the loveliness of this silence, Pierre

neared the cottage, and lifted his eyes, he swiftly paused, fixing his glance upon one upper, open casement there. Why now this impassioned, youthful pause? Why this enkindled cheek and eye? Upon the sill of the casement, a snow-white glossy pillow reposes, and a trailing shrub has softly rested a rich, crimson flower against it.

Well mayst thou seek that pillow, thou odoriferous flower, thought Pierre; not an hour ago, her own cheek must have rested there. "Lucy!"

"Pierre!"

As heart rings to heart those voices rang, and for a moment, in the bright hush of the morning, the two stood silently but ardently eying each other, beholding mutual reflections of a boundless admiration and love.

"Nothing but Pierre," laughed the youth, at last; "thou hast forgotten to bid me good-morning."

"That would be little. Good-mornings, good-evenings, good days, weeks, months, and years to thee, Pierre;--bright Pierre!--Pierre!"

Truly, thought the youth, with a still gaze of inexpressible fondness; truly the skies do ope, and this invoking angel looks down.--"I would return thee thy manifold good-mornings, Lucy, did not that presume thou had'st lived through a night; and by Heaven, thou belong'st to the

regions of an infinite day!"

"Fie, now, Pierre; why should ye youths always swear when ye love!"

"Because in us love is profane, since it mortally reaches toward the heaven in ye!"

"There thou fly'st again, Pierre; thou art always circumventing me so. Tell me, why should ye youths ever show so sweet an expertness in turning all trifles of ours into trophies of yours?"

"I know not how that is, but ever was it our fashion to do." And shaking the casement shrub, he dislodged the flower, and conspicuously fastened it in his bosom.--"I must away now, Lucy; see! under these colors I march."

"Bravissimo! oh, my only recruit!"

II.

Pierre was the only son of an affluent, and haughty widow; a lady who externally furnished a singular example of the preservative and beautifying influences of unfluctuating rank, health, and wealth, when joined to a fine mind of medium culture, uncankered by any inconsolable grief, and never worn by sordid cares. In mature age, the rose still

miraculously clung to her cheek; litheness had not yet completely uncoiled itself from her waist, nor smoothness unscrolled itself from her brow, nor diamondness departed from her eyes. So that when lit up and bediademed by ball-room lights, Mrs. Glendinning still eclipsed far younger charms, and had she chosen to encourage them, would have been followed by a train of infatuated suitors, little less young than her own son Pierre.

But a reverential and devoted son seemed lover enough for this widow Bloom; and besides all this, Pierre when namelessly annoyed, and sometimes even jealously transported by the too ardent admiration of the handsome youths, who now and then, caught in unintended snares, seemed to entertain some insane hopes of wedding this unattainable being; Pierre had more than once, with a playful malice, openly sworn, that the man--gray-beard, or beardless--who should dare to propose marriage to his mother, that man would by some peremptory unrevealed agency immediately disappear from the earth.

This romantic filial love of Pierre seemed fully returned by the triumphant maternal pride of the widow, who in the clear-cut lineaments and noble air of the son, saw her own graces strangely translated into the opposite sex. There was a striking personal resemblance between them; and as the mother seemed to have long stood still in her beauty, heedless of the passing years; so Pierre seemed to meet her half-way, and by a splendid precocity of form and feature, almost advanced himself to that mature stand-point in Time, where his pedestaled mother so long

had stood. In the playfulness of their unclouded love, and with that strange license which a perfect confidence and mutual understanding at all points, had long bred between them, they were wont to call each other brother and sister. Both in public and private this was their usage; nor when thrown among strangers, was this mode of address ever suspected for a sportful assumption; since the amaranthiness of Mrs. Glendinning fully sustained this youthful pretension.--Thus freely and lightsomely for mother and son flowed on the pure joined current of life. But as yet the fair river had not borne its waves to those sideways repelling rocks, where it was thenceforth destined to be forever divided into two unmixing streams.

An excellent English author of these times enumerating the prime advantages of his natal lot, cites foremost, that he first saw the rural light. So with Pierre. It had been his choice fate to have been born and nurtured in the country, surrounded by scenery whose uncommon loveliness was the perfect mould of a delicate and poetic mind; while the popular names of its finest features appealed to the proudest patriotic and family associations of the historic line of Glendinning. On the meadows which sloped away from the shaded rear of the manorial mansion, far to the winding river, an Indian battle had been fought, in the earlier days of the colony, and in that battle the paternal great-grandfather of Pierre, mortally wounded, had sat unhorsed on his saddle in the grass, with his dying voice, still cheering his men in the fray. This was Saddle-Meadows, a name likewise extended to the mansion and the village. Far beyond these plains, a day's walk for Pierre, rose the

storied heights, where in the Revolutionary War his grandfather had for several months defended a rude but all-important stockaded fort, against the repeated combined assaults of Indians, Tories, and Regulars. From before that fort, the gentlemanly, but murderous half-breed, Brandt, had fled, but had survived to dine with General Glendinning, in the amicable times which followed that vindictive war. All the associations of Saddle-Meadows were full of pride to Pierre. The Glendinning deeds by which their estate had so long been held, bore the cyphers of three Indian kings, the aboriginal and only conveyancers of those noble woods and plains. Thus loftily, in the days of his circumscribed youth, did Pierre glance along the background of his race; little recking of that maturer and larger interior development, which should forever deprive these things of their full power of pride in his soul.

But the breeding of Pierre would have been unwisely contracted, had his youth been unintermittingly passed in these rural scenes. At a very early period he had begun to accompany his father and mother--and afterwards his mother alone--in their annual visits to the city; where naturally mingling in a large and polished society, Pierre had insensibly formed himself in the airier graces of life, without enfeebling the vigor derived from a martial race, and fostered in the country's clarion air.

Nor while thus liberally developed in person and manners, was Pierre deficient in a still better and finer culture. Not in vain had he spent long summer afternoons in the deep recesses of his father's fastidiously

picked and decorous library; where the Spenserian nymphs had early led him into many a maze of all-bewildering beauty. Thus, with a graceful glow on his limbs, and soft, imaginative flames in his heart, did this Pierre glide toward maturity, thoughtless of that period of remorseless insight, when all these delicate warmths should seem frigid to him, and he should madly demand more ardent fires.

Nor had that pride and love which had so bountifully provided for the youthful nurture of Pierre, neglected his culture in the deepest element of all. It had been a maxim with the father of Pierre, that all gentlemanhood was vain; all claims to it preposterous and absurd, unless the primeval gentleness and golden humanities of religion had been so thoroughly wrought into the complete texture of the character, that he who pronounced himself gentleman, could also rightfully assume the meek, but kingly style of Christian. At the age of sixteen, Pierre partook with his mother of the Holy Sacraments.

It were needless, and more difficult, perhaps, to trace out precisely the absolute motives which prompted these youthful vows. Enough, that as to Pierre had descended the numerous other noble qualities of his ancestors; and as he now stood heir to their forests and farms; so by the same insensible sliding process, he seemed to have inherited their docile homage to a venerable Faith, which the first Glendinning had brought over sea, from beneath the shadow of an English minister. Thus in Pierre was the complete polished steel of the gentleman, girded with Religion's silken sash; and his great-grandfather's soldierly fate had

taught him that the generous sash should, in the last bitter trial, furnish its wearer with Glory's shroud; so that what through life had been worn for Grace's sake, in death might safely hold the man. But while thus all alive to the beauty and poesy of his father's faith, Pierre little foresaw that this world hath a secret deeper than beauty, and Life some burdens heavier than death.

So perfect to Pierre had long seemed the illuminated scroll of his life thus far, that only one hiatus was discoverable by him in that sweetly-writ manuscript. A sister had been omitted from the text. He mourned that so delicious a feeling as fraternal love had been denied him. Nor could the fictitious title, which he so often lavished upon his mother, at all supply the absent reality. This emotion was most natural; and the full cause and reason of it even Pierre did not at that time entirely appreciate. For surely a gentle sister is the second best gift to a man; and it is first in point of occurrence; for the wife comes after. He who is sisterless, is as a bachelor before his time. For much that goes to make up the deliciousness of a wife, already lies in the sister.

"Oh, had my father but had a daughter!" cried Pierre; "some one whom I might love, and protect, and fight for, if need be. It must be a glorious thing to engage in a mortal quarrel on a sweet sister's behalf! Now, of all things, would to heaven, I had a sister!"

Thus, ere entranced in the gentler bonds of a lover; thus often would

Pierre invoke heaven for a sister; but Pierre did not then know, that if there be any thing a man might well pray against, that thing is the responsive gratification of some of the devoutest prayers of his youth.

It may have been that this strange yearning of Pierre for a sister, had part of its origin in that still stranger feeling of loneliness he sometimes experienced, as not only the solitary head of his family, but the only surnamed male Glendinning extant. A powerful and populous family had by degrees run off into the female branches; so that Pierre found himself surrounded by numerous kinsmen and kinswomen, yet companioned by no surnamed male Glendinning, but the duplicate one reflected to him in the mirror. But in his more wonted natural mood, this thought was not wholly sad to him. Nay, sometimes it mounted into an exultant swell. For in the ruddiness, and flushfulness, and vain-gloriousness of his youthful soul, he fondly hoped to have a monopoly of glory in capping the fame-column, whose tall shaft had been erected by his noble sires.

In all this, how unadmonished was our Pierre by that foreboding and prophetic lesson taught, not less by Palmyra's quarries, than by Palmyra's ruins. Among those ruins is a crumbling, uncompleted shaft, and some leagues off, ages ago left in the quarry, is the crumbling corresponding capital, also incomplete. These Time seized and spoiled; these Time crushed in the egg; and the proud stone that should have stood among the clouds, Time left abased beneath the soil. Oh, what quenchless feud is this, that Time hath with the sons of Men!

III.

It has been said that the beautiful country round about Pierre appealed to very proud memories. But not only through the mere chances of things, had that fine country become ennobled by the deeds of his sires, but in Pierre's eyes, all its hills and swales seemed as sanctified through their very long uninterrupted possession by his race.

That fond ideality which, in the eyes of affection, hallows the least trinket once familiar to the person of a departed love; with Pierre that talisman touched the whole earthly landscape about him; for remembering that on those hills his own fine fathers had gazed; through those woods, over these lawns, by that stream, along these tangled paths, many a grand-dame of his had merrily strolled when a girl; vividly recalling these things, Pierre deemed all that part of the earth a love-token; so that his very horizon was to him as a memorial ring.

The monarchical world very generally imagines, that in demagoguical America the sacred Past hath no fixed statues erected to it, but all things irreverently seethe and boil in the vulgar caldron of an everlasting uncrystalizing Present. This conceit would seem peculiarly applicable to the social condition. With no chartered aristocracy, and no law of entail, how can any family in America imposingly perpetuate itself? Certainly that common saying among us, which declares, that be a

family conspicuous as it may, a single half-century shall see it abased; that maxim undoubtedly holds true with the commonalty. In our cities families rise and burst like bubbles in a vat. For indeed the democratic element operates as a subtile acid among us; forever producing new things by corroding the old; as in the south of France verdigris, the primitive material of one kind of green paint, is produced by grape-vinegar poured upon copper plates. Now in general nothing can be more significant of decay than the idea of corrosion; yet on the other hand, nothing can more vividly suggest luxuriance of life, than the idea of green as a color; for green is the peculiar signet of all-fertile Nature herself. Herein by apt analogy we behold the marked anomalousness of America; whose character abroad, we need not be surprised, is misconceived, when we consider how strangely she contradicts all prior notions of human things; and how wonderfully to her, Death itself becomes transmuted into Life. So that political institutions, which in other lands seem above all things intensely artificial, with America seem to possess the divine virtue of a natural law; for the most mighty of nature's laws is this, that out of Death she brings Life.

Still, are there things in the visible world, over which ever-shifting Nature hath not so unbounded a sway. The grass is annually changed; but the limbs of the oak, for a long term of years, defy that annual decree. And if in America the vast mass of families be as the blades of grass, yet some few there are that stand as the oak; which, instead of decaying, annually puts forth new branches; whereby Time, instead of subtracting, is made to capitulate into a multiple virtue.

In this matter we will--not superciliously, but in fair spirit--compare pedigrees with England, and strange as it may seem at the first blush, not without some claim to equality. I dare say, that in this thing the Peerage Book is a good statistical standard whereby to judge her; since the compilers of that work can not be entirely insensible on whose patronage they most rely; and the common intelligence of our own people shall suffice to judge us. But the magnificence of names must not mislead us as to the humility of things. For as the breath in all our lungs is hereditary, and my present breath at this moment, is further descended than the body of the present High Priest of the Jews, so far as he can assuredly trace it; so mere names, which are also but air, do likewise revel in this endless descendedness. But if Richmond, and St. Albans, and Grafton, and Portland, and Buccleugh, be names almost old as England herself, the present Dukes of those names stop in their own genuine pedigrees at Charles II., and there find no very fine fountain; since what we would deem the least glorious parentage under the sun, is precisely the parentage of a Buccleugh, for example; whose ancestress could not well avoid being a mother, it is true, but had accidentally omitted the preliminary rite. Yet a king was the sire. Then only so much the worse; for if it be small insult to be struck by a pauper, but mortal offense to receive a blow from a gentleman, then of all things the bye-blows of kings must be signally unflattering. In England the Peerage is kept alive by incessant restorations and creations. One man, George III., manufactured five hundred and twenty-two peers. An earldom, in abeyance for five centuries, has suddenly been assumed by some

commoner, to whom it had not so much descended, as through the art of the lawyers been made flexibly to bend in that direction. For not Thames is so sinuous in his natural course, not the Bridgewater Canal more artificially conducted, than blood in the veins of that winding or manufactured nobility. Perishable as stubble, and fungous as the fungi, those grafted families successively live and die on the eternal soil of a name. In England this day, twenty-five hundred peerages are extinct; but the names survive. So that the empty air of a name is more endurable than a man, or than dynasties of men; the air fills man's lungs and puts life into a man, but man fills not the air, nor puts life into that.

All honor to the names then, and all courtesy to the men; but if St. Albans tell me he is all-honorable and all-eternal, I must still politely refer him to Nell Gwynne.

Beyond Charles II. very few indeed--hardly worthy of note--are the present titled English families which can trace any thing like a direct unvitiated blood-descent from the thief knights of the Norman. Beyond Charles II. their direct genealogies seem vain as though some Jew clothesman, with a tea-canister on his head, turned over the first chapter of St. Matthew to make out his unmingled participation in the blood of King Saul, who had long died ere the career of the Cæsar began.

Now, not preliminarily to enlarge upon the fact that, while in England an immense mass of state-masonry is brought to bear as a buttress in

upholding the hereditary existence of certain houses, while with us nothing of that kind can possibly be admitted; and to omit all mention of the hundreds of unobtrusive families in New England who, nevertheless, might easily trace their uninterrupted English lineage to a time before Charles the Blade: not to speak of the old and oriental-like English planter families of Virginia and the South; the Randolphs for example, one of whose ancestors, in King James' time, married Pocahontas the Indian Princess, and in whose blood therefore an underived aboriginal royalty was flowing over two hundred years ago; consider those most ancient and magnificent Dutch Manors at the North, whose perches are miles--whose meadows overspread adjacent countries--and whose haughty rent-deeds are held by their thousand farmer tenants, so long as grass grows and water runs; which hints of a surprising eternity for a deed, and seem to make lawyer's ink unobliterable as the sea. Some of those manors are two centuries old; and their present patrons or lords will show you stakes and stones on their estates put there--the stones at least--before Nell Gwynne the Duke-mother was born, and genealogies which, like their own river, Hudson, flow somewhat farther and straighter than the Serpentine brooklet in Hyde Park.

These far-descended Dutch meadows lie steeped in a Hindooish haze; an eastern patriarchalness sways its mild crook over pastures, whose tenant flocks shall there feed, long as their own grass grows, long as their own water shall run. Such estates seem to defy Time's tooth, and by conditions which take hold of the indestructible earth seem to

contemporize their fee-simples with eternity. Unimaginable audacity of a worm that but crawls through the soil he so imperially claims!

In midland counties of England they boast of old oaken dining-halls where three hundred men-at-arms could exercise of a rainy afternoon, in the reign of the Plantagenets. But our lords, the Patroons, appeal not to the past, but they point to the present. One will show you that the public census of a county is but part of the roll of his tenants. Ranges of mountains, high as Ben Nevis or Snowdon, are their walls; and regular armies, with staffs of officers, crossing rivers with artillery, and marching through primeval woods, and threading vast rocky defiles, have been sent out to distrain upon three thousand farmer-tenants of one landlord, at a blow. A fact most suggestive two ways; both whereof shall be nameless here.

But whatever one may think of the existence of such mighty lordships in the heart of a republic, and however we may wonder at their thus surviving, like Indian mounds, the Revolutionary flood; yet survive and exist they do, and are now owned by their present proprietors, by as good nominal title as any peasant owns his father's old hat, or any duke his great-uncle's old coronet.

For all this, then, we shall not err very widely if we humbly conceive, that--should she choose to glorify herself in that inconsiderable way--our America will make out a good general case with England in this short little matter of large estates, and long pedigrees--pedigrees I

mean, wherein is no flaw.

IV.

In general terms we have been thus decided in asserting the great genealogical and real-estate dignity of some families in America, because in so doing we poetically establish the richly aristocratic condition of Master Pierre Glendinning, for whom we have before claimed some special family distinction. And to the observant reader the sequel will not fail to show, how important is this circumstance, considered with reference to the singularly developed character and most singular life-career of our hero. Nor will any man dream that the last chapter was merely intended for a foolish bravado, and not with a solid purpose in view.

Now Pierre stands on this noble pedestal; we shall see if he keeps that fine footing; we shall see if Fate hath not just a little bit of a small word or two to say in this world. But it is not laid down here that the Glendinnings dated back beyond Pharaoh, or the deeds of Saddle-Meadows to the Three Magi in the Gospels. Nevertheless, those deeds, as before hinted, did indeed date back to three kings--Indian kings--only so much the finer for that.

But if Pierre did not date back to the Pharaohs, and if the English farmer Hampdens were somewhat the seniors of even the oldest

Glendinning; and if some American manors boasted a few additional years and square miles over his, yet think you that it is at all possible, that a youth of nineteen should--merely by way of trial of the thing--strew his ancestral kitchen hearth-stone with wheat in the stalk, and there standing in the chimney thresh out that grain with a flail, whose aerial evolutions had free play among all that masonry; were it not impossible for such a flailer so to thresh wheat in his own ancestral kitchen chimney without feeling just a little twinge or two of what one might call family pride? I should say not.

Or how think you it would be with this youthful Pierre, if every day descending to breakfast, he caught sight of an old tattered British banner or two, hanging over an arched window in his hall; and those banners captured by his grandfather, the general, in fair fight? Or how think you it would be if every time he heard the band of the military company of the village, he should distinctly recognize the peculiar tap of a British kettle-drum also captured by his grandfather in fair fight, and afterwards suitably inscribed on the brass and bestowed upon the Saddle-Meadows Artillery Corps? Or how think you it would be, if sometimes of a mild meditative Fourth of July morning in the country, he carried out with him into the garden by way of ceremonial cane, a long, majestic, silver-tipped staff, a Major-General's baton, once wielded on the plume-nodding and musket-flashing review by the same grandfather several times here-in-before mentioned? I should say that considering Pierre was quite young and very unphilosophical as yet, and withal rather high-blooded; and sometimes read the History of the Revolutionary

War, and possessed a mother who very frequently made remote social allusions to the epaulettes of the Major-General his grandfather;--I should say that upon all of these occasions, the way it must have been with him, was a very proud, elated sort of way. And if this seem but too fond and foolish in Pierre; and if you tell me that this sort of thing in him showed him no sterling Democrat, and that a truly noble man should never brag of any arm but his own; then I beg you to consider again that this Pierre was but a youngster as yet. And believe me you will pronounce Pierre a thoroughgoing Democrat in time; perhaps a little too Radical altogether to your fancy.

In conclusion, do not blame me if I here make repetition, and do verbally quote my own words in saying that it had been the choice fate of Pierre to have been born and bred in the country. For to a noble American youth this indeed--more than in any other land--this indeed is a most rare and choice lot. For it is to be observed, that while in other countries, the finest families boast of the country as their home; the more prominent among us, proudly cite the city as their seat. Too often the American that himself makes his fortune, builds him a great metropolitan house, in the most metropolitan street of the most metropolitan town. Whereas a European of the same sort would thereupon migrate into the country. That herein the European hath the better of it, no poet, no philosopher, and no aristocrat will deny. For the country is not only the most poetical and philosophical, but it is the most aristocratic part of this earth, for it is the most venerable, and numerous bards have ennobled it by many fine titles. Whereas the town is

the more plebeian portion: which, besides many other things, is plainly evinced by the dirty unwashed face perpetually worn by the town; but the country, like any Queen, is ever attended by scrupulous lady's maids in the guise of the seasons, and the town hath but one dress of brick turned up with stone; but the country hath a brave dress for every week in the year; sometimes she changes her dress twenty-four times in the twenty-four hours; and the country weareth her sun by day as a diamond on a Queen's brow; and the stars by night as necklaces of gold beads; whereas the town's sun is smoky paste, and no diamond, and the town's stars are pinchbeck and not gold.

In the country then Nature planted our Pierre; because Nature intended a rare and original development in Pierre. Never mind if hereby she proved ambiguous to him in the end; nevertheless, in the beginning she did bravely. She blew her wind-clarion from the blue hills, and Pierre neighed out lyrical thoughts, as at the trumpet-blast, a war-horse paws himself into a lyric of foam. She whispered through her deep groves at eve, and gentle whispers of humanness, and sweet whispers of love, ran through Pierre's thought-veins, musical as water over pebbles. She lifted her spangled crest of a thickly-starred night, and forth at that glimpse of their divine Captain and Lord, ten thousand mailed thoughts of heroicness started up in Pierre's soul, and glared round for some insulted good cause to defend.

So the country was a glorious benediction to young Pierre; we shall see if that blessing pass from him as did the divine blessing from the

Hebrews; we shall yet see again, I say, whether Fate hath not just a little bit of a word or two to say in this world; we shall see whether this wee little bit scrap of latinity be very far out of the way--Nemo contra Deum nisi Deus ipse.

V.

"Sister Mary," said Pierre, returned from his sunrise stroll, and tapping at his mother's chamber door:--"do you know, sister Mary, that the trees which have been up all night, are all abroad again this morning before you?--Do you not smell something like coffee, my sister?"

A light step moved from within toward the door; which opened, showing Mrs. Glendinning, in a resplendently cheerful morning robe, and holding a gay wide ribbon in her hand.

"Good morning, madam," said Pierre, slowly, and with a bow, whose genuine and spontaneous reverence amusingly contrasted with the sportive manner that had preceded it. For thus sweetly and religiously was the familiarity of his affections bottomed on the profoundest filial respect.

"Good afternoon to you, Pierre, for I suppose it is afternoon. But come, you shall finish my toilette;--here, brother--" reaching the ribbon--"now acquit yourself bravely--" and seating herself away from

the glass, she awaited the good offices of Pierre.

"First Lady in waiting to the Dowager Duchess Glendinning," laughed Pierre, as bowing over before his mother, he gracefully passed the ribbon round her neck, simply crossing the ends in front.

"Well, what is to hold it there, Pierre?"

"I am going to try and tack it with a kiss, sister,--there!--oh, what a pity that sort of fastening won't always hold!--where's the cameo with the fawns, I gave you last night?--Ah! on the slab--you were going to wear it then?--Thank you, my considerate and most politic sister--there!--but stop--here's a ringlet gone romping--so now, dear sister, give that Assyrian toss to your head."

The haughtily happy mother rose to her feet, and as she stood before the mirror to criticize her son's adornings, Pierre, noticing the straggling tie of her slipper, knelt down and secured it. "And now for the urn," he cried, "madam!" and with a humorous gallantry, offering his arm to his mother, the pair descended to breakfast.

With Mrs. Glendinning it was one of those spontaneous maxims, which women sometimes act upon without ever thinking of, never to appear in the presence of her son in any dishabille that was not eminently becoming. Her own independent observation of things, had revealed to her many very common maxims, which often become operatively lifeless from a

vicarious reception of them. She was vividly aware how immense was that influence, which, even in the closest ties of the heart, the merest appearances make upon the mind. And as in the admiring love and graceful devotion of Pierre lay now her highest joy in life; so she omitted no slightest trifle which could possibly contribute to the preservation of so sweet and flattering a thing.

Besides all this, Mary Glendinning was a woman, and with more than the ordinary vanity of women--if vanity it can be called--which in a life of nearly fifty years had never betrayed her into a single published impropriety, or caused her one known pang at the heart. Moreover, she had never yearned for admiration; because that was her birthright by the eternal privilege of beauty; she had always possessed it; she had not to turn her head for it, since spontaneously it always encompassed her. Vanity, which in so many women approaches to a spiritual vice, and therefore to a visible blemish; in her peculiar case--and though possessed in a transcendent degree--was still the token of the highest health; inasmuch as never knowing what it was to yearn for its gratification, she was almost entirely unconscious of possessing it at all. Many women carry this light of their lives flaming on their foreheads; but Mary Glendinning unknowingly bore hers within. Through all the infinite traceries of feminine art, she evenly glowed like a vase which, internally illuminated, gives no outward sign of the lighting flame, but seems to shine by the very virtue of the exquisite marble itself. But that bluff corporeal admiration, with which some ball-room women are content, was no admiration to the mother of Pierre.

Not the general homage of men, but the selected homage of the noblest men, was what she felt to be her appropriate right. And as her own maternal partialities were added to, and glorified the rare and absolute merits of Pierre; she considered the voluntary allegiance of his affectionate soul, the representative fealty of the choicest guild of his race. Thus, though replenished through all her veins with the subtlest vanity, with the homage of Pierre alone she was content.

But as to a woman of sense and spirit, the admiration of even the noblest and most gifted man, is esteemed as nothing, so long as she remains conscious of possessing no directly influencing and practical sorcery over his soul; and as notwithstanding all his intellectual superiority to his mother, Pierre, through the unavoidable weakness of inexperienced and unexpanded youth, was strangely docile to the maternal tuitions in nearly all the things which thus far had any ways interested or affected him; therefore it was, that to Mary Glendinning this reverence of Pierre was invested with all the proudest delights and witcheries of self-complacency, which it is possible for the most conquering virgin to feel. Still more. That nameless and infinitely delicate aroma of inexpressible tenderness and attentiveness which, in every refined and honorable attachment, is cotemporary with the courtship, and precedes the final banns and the rite; but which, like the bouquet of the costliest German wines, too often evaporates upon pouring love out to drink, in the disenchanting glasses of the matrimonial days and nights; this highest and airiest thing in the whole compass of the experience of our mortal life; this heavenly

evanescence--still further etherealized in the filial breast--was for Mary Glendinning, now not very far from her grand climacteric, miraculously revived in the courteous lover-like adoration of Pierre.

Altogether having its origin in a wonderful but purely fortuitous combination of the happiest and rarest accidents of earth; and not to be limited in duration by that climax which is so fatal to ordinary love; this softened spell which still wheeled the mother and son in one orbit of joy, seemed a glimpse of the glorious possibility, that the divinest of those emotions, which are incident to the sweetest season of love, is capable of an indefinite translation into many of the less signal relations of our many chequered life. In a detached and individual way, it seemed almost to realize here below the sweet dreams of those religious enthusiasts, who paint to us a Paradise to come, when etherealized from all drosses and stains, the holiest passion of man shall unite all kindreds and climes in one circle of pure and unimpairable delight.

VI.

There was one little uncelestial trait, which, in the opinion of some, may mar the romantic merits of the gentlemanly Pierre Glendinning. He always had an excellent appetite, and especially for his breakfast. But when we consider that though Pierre's hands were small, and his ruffles white, yet his arm was by no means dainty, and his complexion inclined

to brown; and that he generally rose with the sun, and could not sleep without riding his twenty, or walking his twelve miles a day, or felling a fair-sized hemlock in the forest, or boxing, or fencing, or boating, or performing some other gymnastical feat; when we consider these athletic habitudes of Pierre, and the great fullness of brawn and muscle they built round about him; all of which manly brawn and muscle, three times a day loudly clamored for attention; we shall very soon perceive that to have a bountiful appetite, was not only no vulgar reproach, but a right royal grace and honor to Pierre; attesting him a man and a gentleman; for a thoroughly developed gentleman is always robust and healthy; and Robustness and Health are great trencher-men.

So when Pierre and his mother descended to breakfast, and Pierre had scrupulously seen her supplied with whatever little things were convenient to her; and had twice or thrice ordered the respectable and immemorial Dates, the servitor, to adjust and re-adjust the window-sashes, so that no unkind current of air should take undue liberties with his mother's neck; after seeing to all this, but in a very quiet and inconspicuous way; and also after directing the unruffled Dates, to swing out, horizontally into a particular light, a fine joyous painting, in the good-fellow, Flemish style (which painting was so attached to the wall as to be capable of that mode of adjusting), and furthermore after darting from where he sat a few invigorating glances over the river-meadows to the blue mountains beyond; Pierre made a masonic sort of mysterious motion to the excellent Dates, who in automaton obedience thereto, brought from a certain agreeable little

side-stand, a very prominent-looking cold pasty; which, on careful inspection with the knife, proved to be the embossed savory nest of a few uncommonly tender pigeons of Pierre's own shooting.

"Sister Mary," said he, lifting on his silver trident one of the choicest of the many fine pigeon morsels; "Sister Mary," said he, "in shooting these pigeons, I was very careful to bring down one in such a manner that the breast is entirely unmarred. It was intended for you! and here it is. Now Sergeant Dates, help hither your mistress' plate. No?--nothing but the crumbs of French rolls, and a few peeps into a coffee-cup--is that a breakfast for the daughter of yonder bold General?"--pointing to a full-length of his gold-laced grandfather on the opposite wall. "Well, pitiable is my case when I have to breakfast for two. Dates!"

"Sir."

"Remove that toast-rack, Dates; and this plate of tongue, and bring the rolls nearer, and wheel the stand farther off, good Dates."

Having thus made generous room for himself, Pierre commenced operations, interrupting his mouthfuls by many sallies of mirthfulness.

"You seem to be in prodigious fine spirits this morning, brother Pierre," said his mother.

"Yes, very tolerable; at least I can't say, that I am low-spirited exactly, sister Mary;--Dates, my fine fellow, bring me three bowls of milk."

"One bowl, sir, you mean," said Dates, gravely and imperturbably.

As the servitor left the room, Mrs. Glendinning spoke. "My dear Pierre, how often have I begged you never to permit your hilariousness to betray you into overstepping the exact line of propriety in your intercourse with servants. Dates' look was a respectful reproof to you just now. You must not call Dates, My fine fellow. He is a fine fellow, a very fine fellow, indeed; but there is no need of telling him so at my table. It is very easy to be entirely kind and pleasant to servants, without the least touch of any shade of transient good-fellowship with them."

"Well, sister, no doubt you are altogether right; after this I shall drop the fine, and call Dates nothing but fellow;--Fellow, come here!--how will that answer?"

"Not at all, Pierre--but you are a Romeo, you know, and so for the present I pass over your nonsense."

"Romeo! oh, no. I am far from being Romeo--" sighed Pierre. "I laugh, but he cried; poor Romeo! alas Romeo! woe is me, Romeo! he came to a very deplorable end, did Romeo, sister Mary."

"It was his own fault though."

"Poor Romeo!"

"He was disobedient to his parents."

"Alas Romeo!"

"He married against their particular wishes."

"Woe is me, Romeo!"

"But you, Pierre, are going to be married before long, I trust, not to a Capulet, but to one of our own Montagues; and so Romeo's evil fortune will hardly be yours. You will be happy."

"The more miserable Romeo!"

"Don't be so ridiculous, brother Pierre; so you are going to take Lucy that long ride among the hills this morning? She is a sweet girl; a most lovely girl."

"Yes, that is rather my opinion, sister Mary.--By heavens, mother, the five zones hold not such another! She is--yes--though I say it--Dates!--he's a precious long time getting that milk!"

"Let him stay.--Don't be a milk-sop, Pierre!"

"Ha! my sister is a little satirical this morning. I comprehend."

"Never rave, Pierre; and never rant. Your father never did either; nor is it written of Socrates; and both were very wise men. Your father was profoundly in love--that I know to my certain knowledge--but I never heard him rant about it. He was always exceedingly gentlemanly: and gentlemen never rant. Milk-sops and Muggletonians rant, but gentlemen never."

"Thank you, sister.--There, put it down, Dates; are the horses ready?"

"Just driving round, sir, I believe."

"Why, Pierre," said his mother, glancing out at the window, "are you going to Santa Fe De Bogota with that enormous old phaeton;--what do you take that Juggernaut out for?"

"Humor, sister, humor; I like it because it's old-fashioned, and because the seat is such a wide sofa of a seat, and finally because a young lady by the name of Lucy Tartan cherishes a high regard for it. She vows she would like to be married in it."

"Well, Pierre, all I have to say, is, be sure that Christopher puts the coach-hammer and nails, and plenty of cords and screws into the box. And

you had better let him follow you in one of the farm wagons, with a spare axle and some boards."

"No fear, sister; no fear;--I shall take the best of care of the old phaeton. The quaint old arms on the panel, always remind me who it was that first rode in it."

"I am glad you have that memory, brother Pierre."

"And who it was that next rode in it."

"Bless you!--God bless you, my dear son!--always think of him and you can never err; yes, always think of your dear perfect father, Pierre."

"Well, kiss me now, dear sister, for I must go."

"There; this is my cheek, and the other is Lucy's; though now that I look at them both, I think that hers is getting to be the most blooming; sweeter dews fall on that one, I suppose."

Pierre laughed, and ran out of the room, for old Christopher was getting impatient. His mother went to the window and stood there.

"A noble boy, and docile"--she murmured--"he has all the frolicsomeness of youth, with little of its giddiness. And he does not grow vain-glorious in sophomorean wisdom. I thank heaven I sent him not to

college. A noble boy, and docile. A fine, proud, loving, docile, vigorous boy. Pray God, he never becomes otherwise to me. His little wife, that is to be, will not estrange him from me; for she too is docile,--beautiful, and reverential, and most docile. Seldom yet have I known such blue eyes as hers, that were not docile, and would not follow a bold black one, as two meek blue-ribboned ewes, follow their martial leader. How glad am I that Pierre loves her so, and not some dark-eyed haughtiness, with whom I could never live in peace; but who would be ever setting her young married state before my elderly widowed one, and claiming all the homage of my dear boy--the fine, proud, loving, docile, vigorous boy!--the lofty-minded, well-born, noble boy; and with such sweet docilities! See his hair! He does in truth illustrate that fine saying of his father's, that as the noblest colts, in three points--abundant hair, swelling chest, and sweet docility--should resemble a fine woman, so should a noble youth. Well, good-bye, Pierre, and a merry morning to ye!"

So saying she crossed the room, and--resting in a corner--her glad proud eye met the old General's baton, which the day before in one of his frolic moods Pierre had taken from its accustomed place in the pictured-bannered hall. She lifted it, and musingly swayed it to and fro; then paused, and staff-wise rested with it in her hand. Her stately beauty had ever somewhat martial in it; and now she looked the daughter of a General, as she was; for Pierre's was a double revolutionary descent. On both sides he sprang from heroes.

"This is his inheritance--this symbol of command! and I swell out to think it. Yet but just now I fondled the conceit that Pierre was so sweetly docile! Here sure is a most strange inconsistency! For is sweet docility a general's badge? and is this baton but a distaff then?--Here's something widely wrong. Now I almost wish him otherwise than sweet and docile to me, seeing that it must be hard for man to be an uncompromising hero and a commander among his race, and yet never ruffle any domestic brow. Pray heaven he show his heroicness in some smooth way of favoring fortune, not be called out to be a hero of some dark hope forlorn;--of some dark hope forlorn, whose cruelness makes a savage of a man. Give him, O God, regardful gales! Fan him with unwavering prosperities! So shall he remain all docility to me, and yet prove a haughty hero to the world!"