

THE FATAL PASSION,—A DRAMATIC SKETCH.

BY WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING.

HENRY GRAY. CHESTER. WILLIAM GRAY, *the father.* MURRAY, *friend to Gray.* VINCENT. MARY. ADELINE.

ACT I.—SCENE I.

A Wood.—HENRY. (*Alone.*)

How like a part too deeply fixed in me,
A shadow where the substance lies behind,
Is this sweet wood. I cannot grasp my thought,
But see it swell around me in these trees,
These layers of glistening leaves, and swimming full
In the blue, modulated heaven o'er all.
I would embrace you kindred tenements,
Where dwells the soul by which I deeply live.
But ye are silent; they call you emblems,
The symbols of creation, whose memory
Has failed in its behest, and so ye stand
Merely dumb shadows of what might have been,
Or hints of what may be beyond these days.

(Enter Chester and observes Henry.)

CHES. (*to himself.*) I love these moods of youth, I love the
might
Of untamed nature battling with despair.
How firmly grasps the iron-handed earth
The youthful heart, and lugs it forth to war
With calm, unmoving woods, or silent lakes,
Making it dastard in the sun's light dance.
Brave on, ye unbarked saplings, soon your boughs
Shall wing the arrows of red manhood's life,
And then, as your low depths of ignorance
Unfold, how shall you wonder at your youth.
How flaunt the banners in the light of morn,
How torn and trailing when the day-god sets.
'T is a brave sight with all sails up, to see
The shining bark of youth dash through the foam,
And sickening to the most, to look upon

Her planks all started, and her rigging split,
When she hugs closeiy to the beach in age.
But I console myself for my gray hairs,
By spinning such warm fancies in my brain,
That I become a little thing again,
And totter o'er the ground, as when I whipped my top.

(Approaches Henry.)

Your servant, sir, the day goes bravely down.
HEN. Through the red leaves, I see the mornings' glow.
CHES. 'T is but the picture of some morning scene;

A fair conceit the sun has in his head,
And when he sets makes fatal flourishes.
HEN. I hear you jest with nature, that you mock,
And fling queer faces at her holy calm,
Write witty volumes that demoralize;

Pray Mr. Chester, do you fear the devil?
CHES. As I do nightfall. I have some night-fears,
Some horrid speculations in my brain;
And when the mice play hangmen in the wall,
Or out the house the pretty frost-toes creep,
I think, pest o'nt, what dark and doleful sounds,
If it were safe I'd raise the curtain's hem.
And when I puff away the cheerful light,
The moonbeam makes a thief's dark-lantern fit;
My head is filled with horribund designs,
And on myself I pack damned Macbeth's part.
I love to nourish such complexed conceits;
I have a vein of dreadful longing in me,
Was born to murder, and excel in arson,
And so I love the devil, though broad day
Has all the devilish aspects that I know.

See, comes the gentle Mary, know you her?
HEN. Not I, my solitude hath its own figures.

(Enter Mary.)

CHES. (*to Mary.*) God speed thee, lady, it was opportune
Your footsteps led you up this sheltered walk,
For here is Henry Gray, my friend at least,
And now is yours.

MARY. I willingly would know what Chester does,
And Mr. Gray, I trust, will but forgive me.
I rarely venture in these forest walks,
Where leads that prithe? *(To Henry.)*

HEN. 'T is by the lake, which gleaming like a sword,
One edge of this green path, a peacock lance,
Crosses in sport, and then descends away,
And vanishes among the outspread moors.

CHES. And Mr. Gray, sweet Mary, knows the path,
 All paths that frolic in these devious woods,
 For he's sworn friends with squirrels, steals their nuts,
 Divides with other beasts their favorite meat,
 Can show you hungry caves, whose blackening jaws
 Breathe out a little night into the air,
 Will stand you on the dizzy precipice,
 Where all whirls round you like a whizzing wheel,
 In truth his skill is perfect, so farewell.

(Exit Chester.)

SCENE II.

HENRY AND MARY.—(By the Lake.)

MARY. Those hills you say are lofty.

HEN. Most lofty.

I have clomb them, and there stood gazing
 On villages outspread, and larger towns
 Gleaming like sand-birds on the distant beach.
 I love the mountains, for a weight of care
 Falls off his soul, who can o'erlook this earth.

MARY. And there you passed the night?

HEN. I have passed weeks

Upon their very tops, and thought no more
 To fall upon the low, dark days of earth.
 Above, the clouds seemed welcome faces to me,
 And near the raging storms, came giant-like,
 And played about my feet. Yet even there,
 I feared for my own heart, lest I should grow
 Too careless of myself. Yonder the town,—
 You must excuse my absence, for the clock
 Rounds the small air-balls into leaden weights.

(Exit Henry.)

MARY, (alone.) I breathe, and yet how hardly,—a moment,
 What a thing am I,—a passing moment,
 Lifting from the earth my weary heart so sick,
 O'er-burdened with the grating jar of life,—
 This youth,—how sleeps the lake, how blue it gleams.

(Chester again enters.)

CHES. Ah! Mary alone,—indeed, has Henry Gray
 Shot like a rocket in the rayful air?
 A brilliant youth, at least his eyes are bright.

SCENE III.

CHESTER AND MARY.—(Outskirts of Town.)

MARY. He is a student at the college.

CHES. Mark you, he is a student, and knows the trick.

He has a brother too, Vincent, a gay

Free, dashing animal, or so I hear,

But I hate characters at second-hand.

You know they are towns-people; 't is an old,

And comfortable family, I hear

Pest on't, my brains won't hold much matter now,

I am too old for gossip.

MARY. Has he a sister?

CHES. Who wants that good device? it is a part

Of every comfortable family.

MARY. My father's mansion, will you enter?

CHES. No, Mary, not to-night. (Mary goes in.)

(Chester alone.) What comes of this,

When two youths come together, but woman

Rarely loves,—a play upon the word, So, So!

As I grow old, I lose all reasoning.

I hunt most nimble shadows, and have grown

A perfect knave for picking out old seams.

(Enter William Gray.)

GRAY. Good evening Mr. Chester. I call it evening,

For I see you walk, and they say here your gait

Is nightly.

CHES. I have seen Henry now, and Mary came,

He had not known her,—strange!

GRAY. Mary, the banker's daughter; a girl of promise.

CHES. They are old friends of mine, banker and all.

I've held him on my arm, and made him quake

At jingling coppers. He's richer now-a-days.

GRAY. 'T would please me to make more of them.

CHES. I will contrive it. There are times in life,

When one must hold the cherry to his lips,

Who faints to pluck a fair maid by the ear.

ACT II. — SCENE I.

ADELINE AND VINCENT. — (*Mr. Gray's House.*)

VIN. She is a lovely girl.

ADE. And rich as lovely.

VIN. I wish I knew her better.

ADE. One day is not enough, friend Vin., to know
The mind of woman ; many days must go,
And many thoughts.

VIN. You will assist me, Adeline.

ADE. So far as in me lies, — I know not Mary.

VIN. But the sex is in your favor.

ADE. I know not that.

(Enter Henry.)

VIN. You made a good report on botany.

HEN. I'm glad you think so. 'T is a fair study,
To spy into the pretty hearts of flowers,
To read their delicacies, so near to.
But Vincent, science at the best
Demands but little justice at my hands,
It has its masters, has its oracles,
I am content to gather by the wall,
Some little flowers that sport a casual life,
To hover on the wing ; who comes ? — 'T is Chester.*(Exit Chester.)*CHES. Three friends in charming concert act their part.
But Henry, I have news for you.

SCENE II.

CHESTER AND HENRY. — (*Seated in Chester's House.*)

HEN. What is the news, I pray ?

CHES. Last night, as I went walking in the wood,
I practise often in these woodland walks,
And on some nights I almost pluck the stars
Like crystal plums from off the tops of trees,—
But, as I said, I walked far down the wood,
In that rheumatic kind of greasy gait
I have accumulated, and I went

Dreaming and dreaming on, almost asleep,
If not quite half awake, until I reached
The lake's dim corner, where one ragged tree
Let in a gush of fuming light. The moon
Now being high, and at its full, I saw
Upon that little point of land a shape,
A fair round shape, like early womanhood
Kneeling upon the ground wept by the dews ;
And then I heard such dreadful roar of sobs,
Such pouring fountains of imagined tears
I saw, following those piteous prayers,
All under the great placid eye of night.
'T was for an old man's eye, for a young heart
Had spun it into sighs, and answered back.
And now the figure came and passed by me,
I had withdrawn among the ghostly shrubs,
'T was Mary, — poor Mary ! I have seen her smile
So many years, and heard her merry lips
Say so much malice, that I am amazed
She should kneel weeping by the silent lake,
After old midnight night-caps all but me.
But you are young, what can you make of it ?

HEN. What can one make of figures ? I can see

The fair girl weeping by the moonlit lake.

CHES. Canst thou not see the woman's agony,
Canst thou not feel the thick sobs in thy throat,
That swell and gasp, till out your eyes roll tears
In miserable circles down your cheeks ?HEN. I see a woman weeping by the lake ;
I see the fair round moon look gently down,
And in the shady woods friend Chester's form,
Leaning upon his old, bent maple stick.CHES. What jest ye ? Dare you, Henry Gray, to mock
A woman's anguish, and her scalding tears,
Does Henry Gray say this to his friend Chester,
Dares he speak thus, and think that Chester's scorn
Will not scoff out such paltry mockeries ?HEN. Why how you rage ; why Chester, what a flame
A few calm words have lighted in thy breast.
I mock thee not, I mock no woman's tears,
Within my breast there is no mockery.CHES. True, true, it is an old man's whim, a note
Of music played upon a broken harp.
I fancied you could read this woman's tears,
Pest on't, I am insane ; I will go lock me up.*[Exit Chester.]*HEN. (*alone.*) Ye fates, that do possess this upper sphere,

Where Henry's life hangs balanced in its might,
 Breathe gently o'er this old, fond, dotting man,
 Who seems to cherish me among his thoughts,
 As if I was the son of his old age,
 The son of that fine thought so prodigal.
 O God, put in his heart his thought, and make
 Him heir to that repose thou metest me.
 Ye sovereign powers that do control the world,
 And inner life of man's most intricate heart,
 Be with the noble Chester; may his age
 Yield brighter blossoms than his early years,
 For he was torn by passion, was so worn,
 So wearied in the strife of fickle hearts,
 He shed his precious pearls before the swine.
 And, God of love, to me render thyself,
 So that I may more fairly, fully give,
 To all who move within this ring of sky,
 Whatever life I draw from thy great power.
 Still let me see among the woods and streams,
 The gentle measures of unfaltering trust,
 And through the autumn rains, the peeping eyes
 Of the spring's loveliest flowers, and may no guile
 Embosom one faint thought in its cold arms.
 So would I live, so die, content in all.

 SCENE III.

Mary's Room. Midnight.

MARY, (*alone.*) I cannot sleep, my brain is all on fire,
 I cannot weep, my tears have formed in ice,
 They lie within these hollow orbs congealed,
 And flame and ice are quiet, side by side.

[*Goes to the window.*]

Yes! there the stars stand gently shining down,
 The trees wave softly in the midnight air;
 How still it is, how sweetly smells the air.
 O stars, would I could blot you out, and fix
 Where ye are fixed, my aching eyes;
 Ye burn for ever, and are calm as night.
 I would I were a tree, a stone, a worm;
 I would I were some thing that might be crushed;
 A pebble by the sea under the waves,
 A mote of dust within the streaming sun,

Or that some dull remorse would fasten firm
 Within this rim of bone, this mind's warder.
 Come, come to me ye hags of secret woe,
 That hide in the hearts of the adulterous false,
 Has hell not one pang left for me to feel?
 I rave; 'tis useless, 'tis pretended rage;
 I am as calm as this vast hollow sphere,
 In which I sit, as in a woman's form.
 I am no woman, they are merry things,
 That smile, and laugh, and dream away despair.
 What am I? 'Tis a month, a month has gone,
 Since I stood by the lake with Henry Gray,
 A month! a little month, thrice ten short days,
 And I have lived and looked. Who goes? 'tis Chester,
 I must, — he shall come in.

[*She speaks from the window. Chester enters.*]

CHES. You keep late hours, my gentle Mary.

MARY. Do not speak so. There is no Mary here.

Hush! (*Holds up her finger.*) I cannot bear your voice;
 'tis agony

To me to hear a voice, my own is dumb.

Say, — thou art an old man, thou hast lived long,

I mark it in the tottering gait, thy hair,

Thy red, bleared eyes, thy miserable form,

Say, in thy youthful days, — thou art a man,

I know it, but still men are God's creatures, —

Say, tell me, old man Chester, did thine eyes

Ever forget to weep, all closed and dry?

Say, quick, here, here, where the heart beats, didst feel

A weight, as if thy cords of life would snap,

As if the volume of the blood had met,

As if all life in fell conspiracy

Had met to press thy fainting spirit out? —

Say, say, speak quickly; hush! hush! no, not yet,

Thou canst not, thou art Chester's ghost, he's dead,

I saw him, 't was a month ago, in his grave,

Farewell, sweet ghost, farewell, let's bid adieu.

[*Chester goes out, weeping.*]

'T is well I am visited by spirits.

If 't were not so, I should believe me mad,

But all the mad are poor deluded things,

While I am sound in mind. 'T is one o'clock,

I must undress, for I keep early hours.

SCENE IV.

The Wood.—HENRY AND MURRAY.

- HEN. I cannot think you mean it; 'tis some dream
Of your excited fancy. You are easily
Excited. You saw a nodding aspen,
For what should Mary's figure here?
- MUR. It was her figure, I am persuaded.
They tell strange tales, they say she has gone mad,
That something's crazed her brain.
- HEN. Is that the story? I have been mad myself.
Sometimes I feel that madness were a good,
To be elated in a wondrous trance,
And pass existence in a buoyant dream;
It were a serious learning. I do see
The figure that you speak of, 'tis Mary.
- MUR. I'll leave you then together. (*Enter Mary.*)
- HEN. (*To Mary.*) You have the way alone; I was your guide
Some weeks ago, to the blue, glimmering lake.
I trust these scenes greet happily your eyes.
- MARY. They are most sweet to me; let us go back
And trace that path again. I think 't was here
We turned, where this green sylvan church
Of pine hems in a meadow and some hills.
- HEN. Among these pines they find the crow's rough nest,
A lofty cradle for the dusky brood.
- MARY. This is the point I think we stood upon.
I would I knew what mountains rise beyond,
Hast ever gone there?
- HEN. Ah! ye still, pointing spires of native rock,
That, in the amphitheatre of God,
Most proudly mark your duty to the sky,
Lift, as of old, ye did my heart above.
Excuse me, maiden, for my hurried thought.
'Tis an old learning of the hills; the bell!
Ah! might the porter sometimes sleep the hour.

*[Exit Henry.]**The Sun is Setting.*

- MARY. 'T is all revealed, I am no more deceived,
That voice, that form, the memory of that scene!
I love thee, love thee, Henry; I am mad,
My brain is all on fire, my heart a flame,
You mountains rest upon my weary mind;
The lake lies beating in my broken heart.

That bell that summoned him to the dark cell,
Where now in innocence he tells his beads,
Shall summon me beyond this weary world.
I long to be released; I will not stay,
There is no hope, no vow, no prayer, no God,
All, all have fled me, for I love, love one,
Who cannot love me, and my heart has broke.
Ye mountains, where my Henry breathed at peace,
Thou lake, on whose calm depths he calmly looked,
And setting sun, and winds, and skies, and woods,
Protect my weary body from the tomb;
As I have lived to look on you with him,
O let my thoughts still haunt you as of old,
Nor let me taste of heaven, while on the earth,
My Henry's form holds its accustomed place.

[Stabs herself.]

INTERIOR OR HIDDEN LIFE.*

PROFESSOR UPHAM, who for about seventeen years has sedulously occupied the chair of moral philosophy at Bowdoin College, in this volume, presents an additional proof of the spontaneous love which entitles him to that office, as well as of his sincere regard for the well being of all mankind. The basis of his work is the position that the human soul, every human being, may be holy. Strange proof of occasional default that men should ever think otherwise!

As might naturally be expected, however, from the author's occupation, his work manifests more precision in style, than most productions on similar subjects in former

* Principles of the Interior or Hidden Life, designed particularly for the consideration of those who are seeking assurance of faith and perfect love. By THOMAS C. UPHAM; Boston: D. S. King; 1843. 12mo. pp. 464.