THE YOUTH OF THE POET AND THE PAINTER.

(Continued from p. 58 of last number.)

LETTER V.

FANNY ASHFORD TO EDWARD ASHFORD.

My Dear Brother,

No letter from you yet, although you have now been a fortnight at Lovedale. This is too cruel. So far as I am concerned, I am willing to have you in the country, and away from College; but for mother’s sake you should write her a full account of yourself. She grieves and laments over your abrupt departure, as if you were ruined for life; and seems to think you can never retrieve your lost standing in your class. You know she had set her heart on your success; and this frightful dissolution of your collegiate bands has created a perfect dismay in her tender heart. If you will only write her a full account of it, how it all took place, she will, I doubt not, become perfectly satisfied, and you will regain your place in her affection.

Who do you think has visited us, to our evident consternation as I fear, but the illustrious head of Triflicut College, the majestic President Littlego. Of all pompous persons he is the chief; and the extreme self-sufficiency of the man put me out of patience with him in five minutes. He held a conversation with mother about you, which I will report for your benefit as nearly as I can.

"Madam," said the President, "I hope your health is good. We have had very hot weather this season; and the boys returned to their tasks without much spirit. Have you received any intelligence from your son Edward since he saw fit to leave his duties?"

"We heard from him," she replied, "through his friend, Mr. Hope."

"I hope he did not remark in that letter," said the majestic Littlego, "that any too difficult tasks had been imposed upon him by the several departments in college. We treat all the boys alike; the utmost republicanism prevails in our system; and it is impossible that Ashford should have been overloaded with requirements. I am surprised he should have left us, and I am authorized to say by the board of control, that even now, if he chooses to return immediately, he will be permitted to again unite himself with his class. This privilege has been conceded to him for your sake Madam, no less than his own. I shall feel it my duty to correspond with Ashford on this subject;" and bowing very gravely, this majestic gentleman stalked slowly out of the parlor.

Poor mother was nearly frighted to death by this visit of the dignitary, and I fear it will hold as long in her memory as the visit of "my gracious Prince" to Mrs. Bellenden in the novel. Since you left, we have had a little party as usual; but as mother mourns over your absence so severely; and she, you know, is the life of all parties. Your friend Hope came, out of whom I can make nothing, except as being your friend, seemed in capital spirits, and whenever he talked with mother about you, smiled with more than his usual brilliancy. Pray write us at once. Your affectionate

FANNY.

LETTER VI.

EDWARD ASHFORD TO JAMES HOPE.

FANNY.

Lovedale.

I am yet on the river, and love to float on the sparkling waters; but I feel sad and cold this sunny day. It is too solitary, I believe, yet much better than the dull noise of the city, and the stupid form at college. Nature can never be enough, yet how much better than the society of most men. I run away to the forest as if I was pursued by a demon, to avoid the fellowship of these kind-hearted people, yet know not why. I suppose we were not born in the same planet, and different colored blood runs in our veins. What a mistake that we are all brothers in this world, and how rarely we find a true brother’s or even a cousin’s friendly eye fixed on us.
To-day has been pure golden sunshine since morning; and how the day-god played with the trunks of the trees, as if the forest were one great harp. In the morning, as I sat among golden-rods, under the shade of a pine, where on every side these sunny flowers grew, it seemed as if the sunlight had become so thickly knotted and intertwined with the roots and stems of the plants and grasses, that it could not escape, but must remain and shine forever; yet the pine-tree's shadow, at sunset and before, fell long across the place, and the gay light had fled, like the few bright days of life, which fly so rapidly. The old tells us we are young, and can know nothing of life; to me, it seems I have lived centuries, out of which I can reckon on my fingers the days of pleasure, when my heart beat high. I fancy, there is a race of men born to know only the loss of life by its joys,—to live by single days, and to pass the most part of their time in the shadowy vistas, where there is neither darkness nor light, but perpetual mist. I am one of these; and though I love nature, the river, the forest, the clouds, she is only a phantom, like myself, and passes slowly, an unexplained mystery, like my own consciousness, which shows through a want of perfect knowledge. I seem myself, only as what I do not know, and others, as some reflection of this ignorance, an iceberg among other icebergs, slowly drifting from the frozen pole of birth to the frozen pole of death, through a sunny sea. I feel, that within lies a heap of perpetual snow, encircled by a fair ring of grass and flowers, over which the sun plays, yet this central cold never melts to nourish their roots, but shines mild and graceful, though never warm. Can I ever become warm in this snowy peak? I should be, for there alone does it seem that the air of my life is clear. I should be resigned to this penance, would society leave me to myself; but, in addition to this pressure of inward ice, I am doomed to perpetual conflict with those around; and I have not only my individual part to play, but to act in domestic tragedies beside.

At the earnest request of a mother, who, if too tender-hearted, has a real love for me, though of my character she understands so little, I went to the college, in hope to burrow concealed behind stupid folios while in the house, and leave them to stand and smile ring defiance i
order, silence, and gentle repose. I saw the pale scholar, gliding like a shade through the aisles of a solitary chapel, or studiously bent upon his mighty volume in a recess of the vaulted library. I should be one of these scholars, have my gown and spiritual republic with the rest, and take my place in mysterious debates on subjects too lofty for the vulgar eye to profane, and feel fear as I wandered in the retired court-yards, that I should never rise to the lofty place of the true scholar. I had wove some such webs, which, it is true, hung on my mother’s request, before I went to Triflescut.

I found here no scholars whatever. Some young men, deficient in grace, were wearing out the elbows of their coats, in getting by heart some set lessons of some little text-books, and striving, which should commit them the most perfectly to memory. This perfection lay in the point of a tutor’s pencil, and was at last decided on by the votes of a band of professors, who loved wine and puddings better than literature or art, and whose chief merit lay in keeping their feet dry.

The collegians seemed lost in the microscopic side of learning; and I felt I could see no poetry there, nor get any marks, and might either wait to be formally turned out by the vote of the professors, headed by the President, or fly myself. I chose the latter.

I have had a little formal letter from the President, informing me, that I may come back, if I will be a good boy, or stay away, if I will be a bad one; I shall not reply, for I have nothing to say. It was childish to go to College, and yet more childish to stay more than one day, when I was there.

As I sat on my sand-bank to-day, looking at a finely-shaped arrow-head I had found, I could not but recall the forms of those uncivilized men who once pitched their wigwams under the groves on its border. I saw them circling me, in their maze dance, like a company of demons come from the depths of nature, to torment me in my poor condition; they shook their long, straight hair, in raven clouds above their flat foreheads, while some maidens, who sat in a group apart, smiled on me, with those moon-like watery smiles, which make me at once frantic and powerless. Apart from the maidens, and the dancing group, to the trunk of a tree bare for the purpose, was bound by tight-drawn sinews a youth, whose curling hair, and pale cheeks showed he had been stolen from some other clime. Those fearful bands pressed close into his tender flesh, and it seemed the blood would gush from them every instant; yet the expression of his countenance was calm and resigned, as if the patience of years lay within his unaltering eyes; as the Indian girls smiled, I saw a fainter smile yet, of the same cast, flow over his thin cheek, and a tall, muscular chief from the dancing group raised his heavy spear and balanced it, in his upraised arm, as if he would throw it.

There was a most glorious sunset this evening, and I stood on the high bank of the river to watch it. The long line of dancing light was traced from my feet across the river, till it sunk at the foot of some black hills. The sky above was flecked with spots of fused gold, with a lake of the richest blue, surrounded by yellow banks, and crimson mountains, rolling and towering into a host of laughing rosy clouds. This is the setting of the life in the clouds, while our sunlight here falls into the arms of the black hills. Still, our little boats dance down the golden tide, play with the shining foam, and leave behind a long row of pretty bubbles, which expand and fade in an instant. I shall love better to play among the purple mountains, and the silver trees. I am haunted to-day by some figures from the sky, though O! how seldom they come.
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opinion; I would calmly ask her to wait for a season, and not precipitate her judgment, and dwell upon the exquisite delicacy of her son's character, which I do not believe either she or her daughter appreciate.

You inquire, "Do you think Ashford a poet, or simply a lover of verse, who writes by force of imitation?"

What the world generally calls a poet, I believe he will never be, that is, to carefully prepare a good many dull verses, print them on the whitest paper, with notes of introduction, and engage a favorable critic to make them a pretty review. Whether he publishes anything, I consider doubtful; but from the poem you showed me, I judge the production of verse is natural to him, and that by abundant encouragement from his friends, he may be led to write with more attention to critical rules, though for some years he will pay the least possible respect to measure and formal art.

He will have a favorable beginning for a poet, and his verse become the product of necessity and nature.

I am glad he inclines to so much privacy, for this portfolio literature has long had a charm for me, which I cannot value too greatly.

I would do my best to inspire him with a believin his powers, though I should make a very gradual approach to any formal criticism of what he may send.

Above all, I would leave his life to himself.

How many years I required to untie the dexterous noose, which the stern education of my youth knotted about my faculties, and in fact, what day passes in which I do not wage violent war with the legends of boyhood.

How much more difficult for such a person as Edward, who has scarce-ly any control over himself, to become free, should he once fall into the snare of custom.

I hope he will remain at Lovedale, as it pleases him, for I long to hear some brought up poetically in nature.

Soon enough, time will hammer his chains of practice, if they are not forging already.

M. G.

LETTER VIII.

Richard Ashford to Edward Ashford.

My dear Ned,

Thou art no more to be come at than the south shore, under a north-easter, and I have abandoned all hope of

Doughnut.
seeing your face again. I have been besought by your acquaintances, both male and female, excepting your friend Hope, to communicate with you at Lovedale in person, and so" heard the lion in his den." To say nothing of the rheumatism, of which I have had several horrible twinges lately, I hold any intrusion into your solitude a paltry business; I am willing to let you alone, and would not write you a letter for a dukedom, was I not the only medium of communication between the main land and your island.

You have played us a snug trick, and graduated at a college of your own founding. I heard a piece of your letter to Hope, which forced the water out of my eyes, as if they had been sponges.

Your magnificent explosion of the College, as if it was a fuze, and very wet at that, exceeds in comic these old plays, I am reading; and if I was not a tolerable hand at laughing these many years, I had become one at reading that.

The President took an oath on the four evangelists, that you were mad as a March hare; the Board of Control washed their hands of you at once, and you are now no more a member of Triflecut, than of Bedlam.

Being free of College, consider within yourself what line of business you mean to pursue, and send us word. Your sister the other day, said, "A man can not go back to College." You cannot go back, for they are your mortal enemies there, except Hope, and he is a quidnunc.

'I am authorized, by your mother, as your oldest male relative, to inform you, that you can, if you choose, return to Doughnest, and enter the office of Lawyer Snealmin, to study law. Snealmin I advised with yesterday. He is a dry, spare, plugged-looking creature, with more laws in his head than straws in a wheat-stack. He sits at an angle of forty-five degrees, and lives on apples and sour milk. In his office you will be expected to hold a law book between your face and the fire in winter, and in the summer try to keep your temperature low, by drinking iced water, and playing the flute. In his premises are two other young gentlemen sucking law, who look plump, and appear very cheerful. I cannot form an opinion as to your fitness for the law, as a profession, but will inform you, what is expected of a lawyer, and then you will be able to judge for yourself. I was once engaged in a protracted law-suit, which lasted three years, and then died of consumption, its lungs (the lawyers) having absorbed the whole substance. If you are a lawyer, you must be able to eat two dinners every day, one with your client, and the other with the bar; to purchase a dozen volumes, bound in law-calf, and full of law-veal, or, as it is sometimes called, mutton-head. In the morning, you enter your office at half-past eight, read the paper till nine, and then, if you feel able, walk as far as the Court-house. There you are provided with a seat by the Sheriff, and cold water by the deputy Sheriff. You next stare at the Court, consisting of one or more judges, twelve jurymen, a criminal or civil case, four baize tables, and a lot of attorneys. You next begin to make motions, which consists of getting a case put off, or put on, as you happen to feel, and run your eye over the docket, which is kept at the clerk's table, in a ledger, for the accommodation of the county, and the clerk's family. If it is your case which comes on, you open your eyes wide, talk a great deal about nothing, and dine with the bar. Occasionally you will feel sleepy after dinner, but awake yourself by smoking a cigar, or driving into the country. This, my dear Ned, is the general life of lawyers, so far as I have been able to learn, into which you can be initiated, if you will only say so.

Your mother is equally willing you should study medicine with Doctor Phosphorus, whom I have also consulted. Of the two, I should prefer to become a doctor. In this case, you enter the medical College, and attend three courses of lectures, and pass one examination. Medicine seems to be a delicious occupation. You have great privileges at the dissecting-room, where you will find a greasy demonstrator in a red jacket, cutting up the carcass of a refugee Frenchman, who died at the poor-house of starvation, and as nobody would bury him, took shelter here, in the pleasant society of the students. You will be in ad-
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Oct.

[Letter to James Rope]

Edward Ashford

YOUR mother is willing to set off what property belongs to you, and let you have the whole control, now and forever, if you choose; but I advise you to leave it where it is, for it will burn, like as not, in your pockets.

I have seen more of your friend, Hope, and I maintain what I said, the fellow is a quiz, whether he knows it or not. A good boy, though, and I am glad he takes so much interest in you. The rarest thing in this life is a true friend. Interest ties us mostly together, and our chains are made of bank-bills. The golden bracelets of love unite very few.

Your Uncle,

Dick.

LETTER IX.

EDWARD ASHFORD TO JAMES HOPE.

How much more we see of nature in some moods, than in others. It seems, I could be for an instant content in the sunny beauty of the calm, autumn day. I cannot blame my constitution, that varies its sympathy so often, but I mourn I am cold and indifferent to the common customs and occupations of men.

Ifeachman has been entrusted with the gift of doing some one thing better than another, how happens it, I discover no pursuit which seems my rightful destiny?

At times, I think I must be a poet; and am armed with a strong resolve to compose some verses, which shall utter the music of my thoughts. The rhymes come, the essence is wanting, and what I meant for song, has only its form. I am desirous to be as humble as a child.

If I am granted any success, how proud I shall feel; I never ask for a greater blessing.

I have this ardent desire after verse, if I begin to write, I can think of nothing else, either when walking, or in the house. Some spirit inhabits the else empty chambers of my mind, and leads me after this mirage, over the bare fields of existence, and entreats me to quench its thirst at the sweet spring of poetry.

When I write, and see what poor success I meet,
I feel more dispirited than before. Was it once thus with the masters of song? I should be glad, had they left the record of their experience in their mighty vocation, for I might then be better prepared to fail. There remains only their beautiful success, and it is impossible to believe they faded beneath these harrowing disappointments, under which I lie cold and sorrowful. I read the sublime strains dejected by my feeble trial to follow their daring footsteps, and have concluded many times, that I cannot be a poet. Again the desire comes, again I long to sing, and add a new thorn to my pillow in my failure. You cannot think how singular it is, you should say I was born a poet. Your keen eyes, that usually search every secret, have been blinded by love. You do not see, with the impartiality of a stranger, of what in another, you call trifling with the muse, you think, because I send it, poetry. I lately wrote some verse which I send you, as I do not feel like writing more to-day.

**AUTUMN.**

A varied wreath the autumn weaves Of cold gray days, and sunny weather, And strews gay flowers and withered leaves Along my lonely path together.

I see the golden-rod shine bright, As sun-showers at the birth of day, A golden plume of yellow light, That robs the Day-god’s splendid ray.

The aster’s violet rays divide The bank with many stars for me, And yarrow in blanch tints is dyed, As moonlight floats across the sea.

I see the emerald woods prepare To shed their vestiture once more, And distant elm-trees spot the air With yellow pictures softly o’er.

E. A.