

LITERATURE.

[From the Court Journal.]

I'M NOT A HANDSOME MAN.

When I have pondered, now and then,
The miseries that arise
From those thrice favoured mortals, 'Men
With lovely hair and eyes;
The girls that daily lose their wits,
From looks where lightnings flash;
The tears, and sighs, and fainting fits,
Produced by a moustache;
The battles, murders, wounds, and scars,
Since first the world began—
I very often thank my stars
I'm not a handsome man.

Though I am tender to them all,
For me they never fret;
I never caused a tear to fall
From any female, yet!
We part—for twenty years or two,
No 'strong convulsions' tell;—
We meet—I falter 'how d'ye do?'
They laugh a gay 'quite well.'
I never hear 'You've grown so thin,
From Fanny or from Anne;
I can't perceive they care a pin;—
I'm not a handsome man.

My boots from Hoby, you can see,
My coat is cut by Stultz—
And yet they don't consider me
Like other male adults:
My figure they can scarce abuse,
And each proportion suits,
I'm five feet ten in dancing shoes,
And six feet one, in boots;
Yet at a ball no girl ere had
My name upon her fan.
For waltz, quadrille, or gallopade—
I'm not a handsome man.

The 'soft regrets'—the 'agony,'
The 'soothings' that repay
A broken heart, or head—on me
Are never thrown away;
They see me take, without remorse,
No sustenance for a week—
Or mount the most neck-breaking horse,
Without a single shriek;
No, 'Don't, for mercy's sake, be rash,
No tender 'How you can,'
Unheeded, all my bones may crash—
I'm not a handsome man.

All my perfections have an 'er,'
My virtues all a 'FUL,'
'His gait is graceful, but, too stiff,'
'His mouth well shaped, or shut:'
'He writes the most delicious rhymes,
But has not one blue vein;'—
'Like Byron, raves of foreign climes,
But, heavens! he is so plain:'
Even my modesty some defect
Supplies for them to scan,
'His songs are really too correct'—
I'm not a handsome man.

And yet I bear with all their pets,
As well as all their airs,
Their monkeys, squirrels, paroquets,
Tame goldfinches, and hares:
I visit Laura, and I bring
Her swan, a 'comfiture';
I call on Fanny, and I fling
Her monkey—a 'douceur';
Yet this, for all I have withstood,
The only praise they can—
'If he's not a beautiful he's good'—
I'm not a handsome man!

THE FALL OF HERCULANEUM.

A TALE OF THE GREAT ERUPTION.

PART I.—THE TRIBUNAL.

Twilight was stealing over the earth. The sun had gone down to his accustomed rest behind the distant mountains, whose summits yet retained a tinge of that reddish golden hue which is always in Italy the precursor of its setting. Mist-clouds arose, like shadowy forms of spirits, from out the depths of the calm ocean, and a filmy vapor was just discernible above the highest cone of the burning mountain, which was visible from all parts of Herculaneum, and from many other towns and villages adjacent.

Yet notwithstanding the close approach of night, (for the Herculaneans were in favor of early hours) the streets of the gay city—second in gaiety only to its more haughty neighbor, Pompeii—were filled with a crowd of variously attired personages, all wending their way toward that portion of the town where was situated the Hall of Justice, or place where were tried all such cases of injustice or wrong as might require redress or public hearing.

In those days, and especially in Herculaneum, justice was by no means the 'shadow of a name,' which modern practitioners, for their own selfish ends, have rendered it, and not even the wealthiest individual living within its jurisdiction was screened from the exercise of magisterial authority in cases of a nature requiring the law's interference.

On the present occasion the throng consisted of all sexes and ages—thus proclaiming that the event which had called them forth was far from being an ordinary one. Sweeping stately along the evenly paved avenue, the proud noble brushed with his perfumed robes the coarser garments of the peasant and the laborer.—Priests with their meekly folded hands submissively reposing on their breasts, and eyes seeking the ground, as though from the fear of contamination, walked side by side, with ladies of rank and station, and these in their turn were followed close by the bearded and steel-armed soldier, the gravely clad and gravely spoken civilian, the humble artisan, and the ragged beggar.

In the centre of the concourse, which, in the midst of talking and laughter, swept onward toward the Justice-seat of Herculaneum like a triumphal procession, retracing from the scene of some great victory, a group, consisting of three young men, attired in the rich cloths of Syria—a circumstance which bespoke them nobly born—came impetuously along, with sounds of merriment and idle jests ill suited to the gravity of the hour. One, however, there was who, though by no means of sedate disposition, partook but lightly of his comrade's unseemly mirth, and many an eye was bent upon the handsome features and lofty brow of the youth, as he passed along, and many a musical voice from the lips of beauty murmured the praises of Lucius Cominius—son to the first dignitary and wealthiest nobleman of the city.

'What, my Cominius—sulking, when all else are merry,' laughingly exclaimed one of his companions, who had noticed the partial abstraction of their more youthful companion, not without wonder—for he was usually as gay and light-hearted among his friends as he was brave and fearless in war.

'Nay, I do not sulk, kind Marcus,' the young man replied, 'I am but wearied. We Herculaneans, thou knowest, are ill accustomed to late hours, as are you of Pompeii.'

'This is a poor excuse,' said Marcus—a dissipated Pompeian, with whom Cominius had spent the day in a manner which lent some coloring to his apology; for he was unused to reveling, and his brain ached with the day's unwonted excitement, 'I'll wager, now, the cause of thy melancholy lies deeper than the skin, gentle Cominius. What thinks our Claudius here?'

'A bright eye is sometimes a fiercer weapon than the sword, and a more deadly enemy to man's peace than the wine-cup,' retorted the latter, laconically.

It is probable Cominius might have replied to this rallying speech, had not the attention of the group been then directed to the figure of an old, palsy-stricken man, who, led by the hand by a lovely girl whose features were evidently those of another clime, had cast himself directly in their way.

'How now, greybeard!' exclaimed Marcus, in angry tone, 'wouldst stop our way?'

'Know'st thou we are men of rank and influence, fool?' hiccoughed the friend of Marcus—too deep in his potations to distinguish whether it was a post or human being that he addressed. 'Out of our way, knave, or our swords'—

'Hold! Marcus,' interposed Cominius, thrusting himself between his companions and the old man—for he saw that they were about putting their threat into execution.

'Hold, I entreat! See ye not the old man is blind?' 'So much the greater his folly,' rejoined Marcus.

'What business have blind men abroad in the dark?' 'Aye, what business?' echoed his friend Claudius.

Cominius did not pause to argue with his companions, for he saw that they were already suffering under the influence of their deep and frequent potations. So, drawing the old man aside, he kindly inquired his wishes.

'Alas!' he replied, 'I fear I have given offence, young gentleman, though the gods will bear me witness I meant it not.'

'Thou hast not offended,' said Cominius. 'Thanks,' rejoined the other. 'The question I have to ask is a simple one. Know'st thou the cause of all this gathering?'

'Assuredly. I deemed it known to all in Herculaneum.'

'I am not of Herculaneum, nor of this country,' answered the old man. 'Something, I own, I have heard, but nought distinct. Thou may'st judge I have an interest in the question—since I and my sweet child here have this day journeyed many a weary mile to get an answer.'

Cominius gazed upon the old man while he spoke, and a sentiment of deep compassion, mingled with curiosity, arose in his breast.—He looked also upon the daughter, and a momentary thrill passed over him as he thought of her beauty, and her faithful devotion to her aged father.

'The occasion is an uncommon one,' said Cominius, when the old man had finished.—'A youth made captive in a recent siege is tried to-day, and if sufficient cause be found, (as, alas! I fear there will) he will be condemned to the lion.'

'To the lion! oh! no, not to the lion!' almost screamed the young girl, starting forward, with a look expressive of the deepest terror, while her father remained, deprived of speech by these fearful words, standing where she had left him.

'He is of kin to thee, then?' said Cominius, interrogatively.

'It matters not,' put in the old man. 'I pray thee, good youth, his name?'

'He is called Ctesiphon, the Greek,' was the reply.

'His parentage I know not.'

'Tis he, 'tis he—my poor boy!' groaned the old man, despondingly.

'Come, father, come,' suddenly exclaimed the girl, resuming his hand. 'Our doubts are dispelled, now: 'tis he—see, the crowd is thinning—in a few moments we shall be too late, and all will be lost.'

'I fear you will need some influence,' said Cominius, staying them. 'Thou seest some of the crowd are already returning. With the exception of the reserved seats, the Judgment Hall is full.'

'Alas! what is our course, then?'

'I see but one way,' said Cominius. 'The son of the chief dignitary has the bestowal of the remaining places.'

'But how to see him?'

'I will bring you to him if you wish.'

'And if he should refuse?'

'I will guarantee that he shall not, and I am one, perhaps, not devoid of influence with him,' rejoined Cominius. 'Perhaps, even I can interest him in your cases; perhaps—'

'Oh! Heaven! thou dost not say—'

'Perhaps, I say, the captive may be freed—but this I promise not.'

'Blessings on thee, stranger, for these words of hope! An old man's blessing may be nought on earth, but may avail hereafter.'

'Come, we waste time,' interrupted Cominius. 'Let us haste—a few more minutes of delay might prove fatal.' Saying which, he grasped the old man by the robe, and hurried him along, as fast as the latter's blindness and the darkness of the night would admit. A few moments brought them before the portals of the edifice wherein the trial was to be held. But the young girl started back—affrighted at the crowd which filled the square.

'It is impossible for us to enter here,' she said.

'Not so, fair one,' answered their conductor; and raising his voice, he exclaimed—'Ho, there! room for the Prætor's son! room for Lucius Cominius and his friends.' The effect was magical. The densely packed crowd gave way at once, and through the lane thus formed, Cominius advanced towards the entrance with his proteges. The lictors immediately lowered their spears, and made him grave obeisance as he passed. Without pausing to notice these demonstrations of the popular favor, the youth pushed onward, still retaining the old man's robe, until they found themselves seated within the space appropriated to the friends of the magistrates, which was placed immediately to the left of the tribune—now occupied by the officers of the law. During their passage Cominius had borrowed of a citizen his cloak, and thus disguised he took his seat by the side of the fair damsel who accompanied him, and gazed with an interest second only to that evinced by his strange acquaintances, upon the painful scene. But in the stern gaze of his father he saw no hope for the captive, and he almost feared to encounter the look of the young Greek at his side, lest the agony betrayed therein should unman him.

They were just in time. The young man arraigned before them had offended against the peace, it would seem, by grievously injuring the Chief whose prisoner he was, and for this desperate offence—originating in the justifiable desire to effect his own escape, he was to be excluded from the general exchange, and his finely moulded limbs condemned to glut the pleasures of the Amphitheatre.

Such was the sentence!

During its deliverance the old man hung his head in abject despair, while his daughter with bated breath, and hands clasped firmly on her heart, as though to curb its vehement throbbings, leaned forward from her seat, and watched alternately the countenances of the judges and the face of the captive, until it seemed as if her eyes must inevitably burst their sockets. But when the remorseless sentence was fairly concluded, she gave one heart-breaking scream, and fell back senseless.

'Ho! lictors—silence yon rude wench—let her be removed!' exclaimed the Prætor.

Two lictors stepped forward to obey the order, but she clung to them with clasped hands, and would not stir.

'Nay, remove me not, I will be silent—I will not again offend. Indeed I will not,' she cried, imploringly.

Her entreaties had no effect, however, and the lictors were about fulfilling their orders, when Lucius Cominius—casting aside the disguise he had assumed—rose and sternly waved them off.

'They are my friends,' he exclaimed, 'and must not be removed.'

Then, stepping into the open space, a portion of which was occupied by the captive and the soldiers who guarded him, he confronted the Prætor.

'My son!' burst from the lips of the elder Cominius.

'What brings thee here at such a time?'

'I come for justice, father,' was the reply.

'Justice? how! why!'