

and we now find ourselves, writer and readers, like the materials of which we have been speaking, brought back, after all these various processes, to the refinery from which we set out.

PARADISE LOST.

My knapsack was on my shoulder—

—So said Armand, a young artist, when a little company of us were sitting together the other evening.

—My knapsack was on my shoulder, my ash-stick in hand; three leagues of dusty road had whitened me like a miller. Whence I came, whither I was going—what matters it? I was not twenty years of age. My starting-point, therefore, was home; my goal was Paradise—any earthly Paradise I could find. The country was not particularly picturesque; and the weather was very hot. Great undulations of harvest-laden fields rolled irregularly on all sides. Here was a hamlet; there a solitary farm-house; yonder a wood; on each eminence a windmill. Some peasants that were in the fields, sang; and the birds chirped at them as if in mockery. One or two waggons, dragged by oxen and horses, slowly moved along the tree-bordered road. I sat down on a heap of stones. A waggoner gruffly asked me if I was tired, and offered me “a lift.” I accepted; and soon I was stretched, where dung had been; jolted into an uneasy, half-slumber, not without its charm, with the bells of the lazy team softly jingling in my ears, until I thought fifty silver voices were calling me away to a home that must be bright, and a land that must be beautiful.

I awoke in a mood sufficiently benign to receive an apology. The man had forgotten me when he turned off the high road, and had taken me half a league into the country. Where was the harm, honest waggoner? I am not going anywhere; “I am only going to Paradise.” There was no village of that name in the neighbourhood, he said; but he had no doubt I would be pleased to see the grounds of the chateau. Of course, I had come on purpose for that. I handed him his *pour-boire*. “Drink my health, good man, and injure your own. Let us see these grounds.” The man showed me through a meadow near the farm (to which he belonged) and left me, tossing the silver piece I had given him in his hard hand. I soon observed that the place was worth seeing.

A hasty glance showed it to be a fragment of wild nature, occupied in its original state, and barricaded against civilisation. There were woods, and solitary trees, and lakes, and streams of sufficient dimensions for grandeur; and, when once the wall disappeared amidst the heavy foliage, I could at first discern no traces whatever of the presence of man. However, on closer examination, I discovered that nature had been improved upon; that all objects which might ungraciously intercept the view, or deform a

landscape, had been removed. There were no sham ruins nor artificial cascades; but the stranger's steps were led, by some ingenious process of plantation, insensibly to the best points of view. I felt, and was thankful, for the presence of the art which so industriously endeavoured to conceal itself; but being, at that time, as most young men are, inclined to compare great things with small—thinking to be epigrammatic and knowing—I exclaimed aloud: “The toilette of this park has been admirably performed.”

“A vulgar idea, vulgarly expressed,” said a clear firm voice above me. I looked up, thinking that somebody was hidden in a tree; and, to my surprise, saw a young woman upon a fine large horse, holding a riding-whip playfully over my head. She had approached across the turf unheard; and had heard my exclamation, which, I assure you, was meant for no ears but my own.

“Madam,” replied I, when I had recovered from my confusion, “I think you misunderstand me. There is no vulgarity in comparing a prospect, in which every superfluity is thus tastefully pruned away, to a woman; who, instead of loading herself with ornaments, uses the arts of the toilette to display all her beauties to the best advantage.”

“The explanation will not do,” she replied. “It wants frankness. Your phrase simply meant that you were ashamed of the admiration this view had at first excited; and that you thought it necessary to exert the manly privilege of contempt. If I had not seen you yonder using your sketch-book, I should take you for a travelling hair-dresser.”

The tone and manner of my new acquaintance puzzled me exceedingly; and I was at first rather irritated by the hostile attitude she assumed on such slight grounds. It was evident she wished to provoke an intellectual contest; for, at the moment, I did not understand that her real desire was to suppress the formalities of an introduction. I returned to the charge; she replied. A broadside of repartee was fired off on either side; but insensibly we met upon common ground; affectation was discarded; and, as we streamed irregularly along the swardy avenues, we stopped at the entrance of a long vista—she gently walking her docile genet; I, with my hand upon its mane,—we made more advances towards familiarity and friendship in an hour than would have been possible, under any other circumstances, in a season.

Let me describe my impressions as I received them. Otherwise, how will the narrative illustrate the theory? I am endeavouring to show, by example, what an immense structure of happiness may be built upon a very flimsy ground; that the material sequence of this life's events need have no correspondence with the sequence of our sentiments; that—But I must not anticipate.

The lady, dressed in a green riding-habit,

