

Edward Bolten, wrote two centuries ago?" and taking from his book-shelf a rusty volume, he reads —

As withereth the primrose by the river,  
 As fadeth summer's sun from gliding fountains,  
 As vanisheth the light-blown bubble ever,  
 As melteth snow upon the mossy mountains,  
 So melts, so vanisheth, so fades, so withers,  
 The rose, the shine, the bubble and the snow  
 Of praise, pomp, glory, joy, which short life gathers.  
 Fair praise, vain pomp, sweet glory, little joy.  
 The withered primrose by the mourning river,  
 The faded summer sun from weeping fountains,  
 The light-blown bubble vanished forever,  
 The melten snow upon the naked mountains  
 Are emblems—that the treasures we uplay,  
 Soon wither, vanish, fade and melt away.

## STRAY CHAPTERS.

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"I heard, as all have heard, life's various story,  
 And in no careless heart transcribed the tale:  
 \* \* \* \* \* So—did I gather food  
 To feed my many thoughts—a tameless multitude."

SHELLEY

## I.

"The days of our youth are the days of our glory."

"Years steal  
Fire from the mind as vigor from the limb,  
And life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim."

Thus wrote Byron! he who had quaffed life's cup even to its dregs, and taken his fill of every pleasure which could sweeten or embitter his existence. How comprehensive are those stanzas of the poet—what a depth of thoughtful meaning lies hid beneath their tuneful sadness.

In the sensitive and morbid spirit, they would stifle every dawning of ambition and cloud every hope, or cause him who is bearing the "heat and burden of the day," yearn with heartfelt longings to live over his long-past spring-time.

I remember well the first time those thoughts of the poet woke dreary feelings in my own earnest spirit. I was a youth then; schoolboy days and sports were over, but the present was bright as sunset clouds with anticipations of college-life—the romance of prospective travel, and the thousand airy schemes which haunt the fancy of youth.

It was a hazy, dreamy day in early autumn; the sun still shone warmly on the hill-sides and in grassy dells, as if loth to leave the wealth of fields and orchards which had flourished and ripened under its summer sway.

The corn-fields were growing "yellow unto the harvest," and here and there among the woods flashed the brilliant foliage of some tender vine which untimely frost had touched. The bustle of men and the hum of the work-day world were afar; no sound broke the Sabbath stillness save the whispering of the breeze amidst the high tree-tops, the tapping of the wood-pecker upon some hollow trunk, or the lowing of cattle on the distant meadows. It was to no new haunt my steps were tending; near by rose the ruined walls and mossy wheel of the old mill, which, long disused and deserted, had been my favorite resort. Near by, flowed the bright Neshaminy, winding like a silver thread amidst the woods and meadows towards the distant Delaware; above and around me were the dim-lit woods, into whose depths of shade the sun seldom shone.

It was a spot I loved with youth's excess,  
Not for itself, but for its loneliness.

Fired and warm, I sat down to rest upon the twisted root of an old sycamore, which threw its white arms

far across the stream; my dog lay at my feet, warm and panting too, from his fruitless chase after a grey squirrel, which, nestled safely in the crotch of a high oak, looked down upon his baffled pursuer in quiet security.

Taking from my pocket the well worn book whose pages had whiled away many an else idle hour, I opened it at random, and these lines first met my eye

"Oh, talk not to me of a name great in story;  
The days of our youth are the days of our glory;  
And the myrtle and ivy of sweet two and twenty,  
Are worth all your laurels, though ever so plenty."

The stanza was deeply scored too, with an heavy ink mark; it must have been by the hand of him who was the chosen friend of schoolboy days.

The book had been his parting gift, but his grasp, once so warm and true, is powerless now!

Ah, Herman! thought I, who shall atone for thy wild errors! Well I know "*carpe diem*" was your motto, but did you sieze the day for any good purpose? Yet the grave covers every error; peace be with thee; but thy legacy may teach thy friend what it never taught thee!

As I read again and again the half sad, half joyous lines of the poet, I pondered; then closing the book, leaned over the clear waters that were flowing gently

by me, unrippled by a breeze, and in my reverie, me thought I was gazing into the magic crystal of the Eastern Fakir, wherein I might read my fate. I saw myself a child again, sporting along the streamlet's bank, or amidst bright gardens, plucking gay flowers—now swinging on the willow's pendant boughs—now sleeping on a mossy bank, dreaming sweet dreams. Insensibly I glided into early youth; familiar forms were round me, glad faces met mine. I knew no care or sorrow! the present was all light and joy—the future, bright with hope; but one little cloud swept over my unstained mirror. Amidst its shadowy folds there gleamed for an instant a pale and agonizing brow, and methought a wailing voice cried, “carpe diem—carpe diem.”

My reverie was ended; the spell was broken; yet a “still small voice” seemed whispering in my ear, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.” And my heart replied, yes! “Live while we may,” is the creed of the pleasure-seeker, the proverb of the boy; yet it is the language of the worker and philanthropist too, but abused and perverted by the one, valued and improved by the other.

So musing again, yet with a lightened heart and clearer understanding, I rose from my shady seat and retraced my way homeward.

No longer, thought I, shall the morbid sentiment of

the sated sensualist cast a gloom over *my* untried future. Let those who will, seek pleasure, and when sated with its nectar draught, sigh that the “days of their glory are over,” as for myself, I will strive for a nobler destiny, and time shall solve whether the teachings of my spirit have been right or wrong.

The sun was setting behind curtains of crimson and gold, and lighting up my quiet study-chamber with hues bright as the new-born hopes which filled my spirit.

Taking from my book-shelf an unpretending volume, I read by the roseate light these thoughtful lines from the “Psalm of Life.”

“Not enjoyment and not sorrow  
Is our destined end or way:  
But to act, that each to-morrow  
Finds us farther than to-day.

“Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime  
And departing, leave behind us  
Foot-prints on the sands of time.

“Let us then, be up and doing  
With a heart for any fate;  
Still achieving, still pursuing,  
Learn to labor and to wait.”

## II.

THE wild and silvery Beaverkill winds its way through a wilderness as yet untrdden save by the Indian and the hunter. In its clear depths the wily trout finds a seldom-disturbed retreat, and to its grassy brink the timid deer and his tired hunter come, to slake their thirst with its pure and unsullied waters. There are haunts of rare loveliness by its wooded banks which it would be hard to match the world over, tempting the "world's tired denizen" almost to be an anchorite, and forsaking the beaten thoroughfares of life, say with the poet :

"To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell,  
To slowly trace the forests' shady scene,  
Where things that own not man's dominion, dwell  
And mortal foot hath ne'er, or rarely been ;  
To climb the trackless mountains all unseen,  
With the wild flock that never needs a fold :  
Alone o'er steeps and foaming falls to lean :  
This is not solitude—'tis but to hold  
Converse with Nature's charms, and view her stores  
unrolled."

It was early in the autumn of a year long past,

when, with a cherished friend at my side, I sat upon the brink of a wooded cliff which overhung the flashing waters of the Beaverkill.

We had been hunting from early dawn, and as the shadows lengthened on the hillsides, and the gloom deepened in the valleys, had slowly loitered on our way to the logger's cabin, which had been our home for days. The sun was near the horizon as we reached the lofty ledge that formed the precipitous side of a wide ravine, through whose shady depths the stream was murmuring.

The beauty of the view won our tired feet, so, seating ourselves upon a mossy rock, we gave up the hour to memories of the past and plans for the future ; such a communion as only well-tried friends can know. We were young in years, but world-wise withal. We had roamed the old world together and seen every phase of life, from the rude *châlet* of the Alpine herdsman by the glacier's side, to the gilded halls of royalty with their proud attributes and gay surroundings.

Alike in disposition and congenial in tastes, we had made mankind our study—lookers-on rather than comminglers in the turmoil and bustle, the strife and competition, amidst which so many find their highest joy. The leaves of our journals on which we had faithfully inscribed the chequered experiences of our many sojournings, seemed often-times like the pro

phetic tablets of the soothsayer, by whose silent teachings we might follow or avoid the paths which had led others either to their making or undoing.

As we sat upon the cliff, the warm glow of the autumnal sunset, which is nowhere else so beautiful, lighted up the forest that surrounded us, and shining through the frost-dyed verdure of the tenderer trees, clothed every object with its roseate hue. We thought of many an old cathedral chapel, with its stained windows, and the "dim religious light" streaming through them upon the altars and paintings and worshippers.

As we still sat and musingly talked, the twilight came, and with it the evening breeze, gently at first, then freshening, and ere long rising almost to a gale. As it soughed and wailed through the dense pine forest which stretched around us, and the twilight began to deepen, we thought of the solemn *Tenebrae* and the wail of the *Miserere* in dim Roman chapels. Who that has once heard that shrill cry of seeming agony, which is almost supernatural in its wild notes of sorrow, has not in after years heard it again and again in fancy! Like the fearful scream which the terror-stricken steed is said to give, it is a sound never to be forgotten.

Night was coming on and leaden-hued clouds were gathering in the west, when we reached our rude place of shelter; but the logger's fireside was as warm as

his heart, and throwing off our hunting gear, we sat down to our hearty supper and talked of our day's success. The goodly array of game which hung from the rafters of the wood-shed, attested that the busy world was still far distant; yet, in a few years, the old forests will be cleared away, and those now quiet solitudes echo with the sounds of every-day life.

And we, too, were never more to tread that ground together. That night was our last in the hunter's cabin, though we promised the old man that we would come again the next season and make a longer stay. Little did we dream that one of us would be where no plans are formed, no hopes blighted; so true is it that we must

"Trust no future, howe'er pleasant."

There are not many who can truly realize or fitly appreciate an all-abiding and enduring friendship, and still fewer are they, who when they gain a friend, may keep that friend for ever.

The ascetic and the misanthrope may scoff at friendship and call it but a name, a fleeting fancy of the hour, but it is not so. There are those whose hearts are bound by ties which even the grave cannot sever—ties which have stood every test of life unchanging and unchanged.

The month in which we had promised to revisit the

hunting ground, again arrived, but my friend could not keep his promise with the old woodsman. The companion of my last hunt, the best friend of my boyhood and youth was beneath the sod. Loving him with almost a woman's love, it was hard to give him up to the grasp of the spoiler, adding another to those

"Who, like to autumn leaves by tempests whirled,  
Are swept forever from this busy world."

With another companion I have revisited the scenes above described, and we have sat upon that same pine ridge and listened to the same sighing wind, fancying that a familiar voice came to our ears upon its "wings," reminding us of bygone days.

## III.

BENEATH a rough and unseemly exterior, how much that is intrinsically valuable or lovely may be hidden! The fire of the diamond is clouded by baser soil, till revealed by the hand and skill of the polisher; the water that is purest and coolest, wells from the roughest and hardest rock.

As in nature, so, oftentimes in life. There is many a roughly-clad pilgrim, journeying earth's pathways with us, who beneath his tattered garb, wears a brave and noble heart.

He is an unstudied masquer, yet the world, which with cursory glance,

"Weighs all things in custom's falsest scale,"

will, too often, denounce him as an outcast, or despise as a misanthrope. He may, and he may not be, deserving of that merciless ban. "A word fitly spoken," a little heartfelt sympathy invested in his behalf, may reveal that though.

"The tree hath lost its blossoms, and the rind  
Chapped by the axe looks rough and little worth,  
The *sap* still lasts."