

Professional sketches. No. IV. Mr. Brodie.

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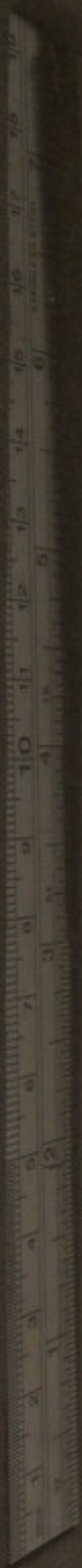
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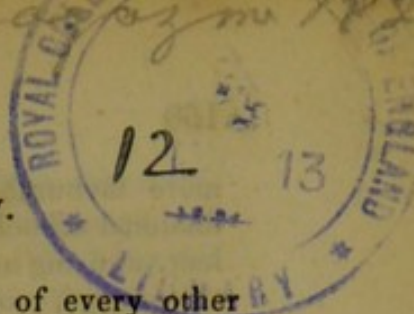
PROFESSIONAL

Two medical students of London are composed of two classes and those who do not. The first is the number, but its paucity of members, the vigour, and the entire indifference to their studies. Indifferent persons and the parts with which they are necessarily engaged and fill their minds, — all the discrepancies and they after day — often night — "subject," and straggling their attention to render them conspicuous. The other is composed of beautiful construction of man's mind in the same way, and with blind horse performs his diurnal course subject in view, and that is, purpose it is requisite that they have knowledge as will enable them to know thus superficially and thus it is, that one-sevenths of the examination, know as much of as they did three years before.

"pass" it — and obtain their diploma.

But the true, enthusiastic in different motives. Never wear machinery of the human frame new and beautiful contrivance, application of the facts which best becomes a philosopher in liberal and enlarged views. He gains the inspiring draughts, knowledge? Has he any other and strength of knowledge in labour even in the most intricate of time. "Knowledge is power and it is the hope of possessing — but excites us to strenuous with difficulties, which is no something supremely interesting of science — in observing the illimitable, extensive, comprehensive and man look back with interest when he was toiling on, straggled by the smiles of Fortune in success." This, however, is a conspicuous member of Benjamin Collins Frodo, the s have anchored their bark in the

P. C. 8



PROFESSIONAL SKETCHES, NO. IV.

Mr. Brodie.

THE medical students of London, and I presume of every other place, are composed of two classes ; those who study medicine *con amore*, and those who do not. The first class consists of, by far, the lesser number, but its paucity of members is amply redeemed by the eagerness, the vigour, and the enthusiasm with which these members pursue their studies. Indifferent persons can form no conception of the ardour and the *gusto* with which they follow those preliminary pursuits which are necessarily disgusting and filthy. All the abominations of the charnel-house,—all the disagreeables of dissection become positively pleasant, and day after day—often night after night, are they poring over the “subject,” and storing their minds with that knowledge, which is in after-life to render them conspicuous in their profession. This is one class. The other is composed of those pupils, who, unmoved by the beautiful construction of man’s mechanism, go through their studies much in the same way, and with much the same degree of relish, as a blind horse performs his diurnal revolutions in a mill. They have but one object in view, and that is, to “pass the College;” and for this purpose it is requisite that they should cram their brains with as much knowledge as will enable them to go through that terrible ordeal. Knowledge thus superficially and easily acquired, is as easily lost ; and thus it is, that nine-tenths of the students at the end of a year after their examination, know as much of the principles of medicine and surgery as they did three years before. They “grind” for their examination—“pass” it—and obtain their diploma.

But the true, enthusiastic lover of the science is actuated by very different motives. Never weary of tracing the exquisite and minute machinery of the human frame—delighted with the unfolding of each new and beautiful contrivance, and interested beyond measure in the application of the facts which are displayed before him, the real student becomes a philosopher instead of a mechanic—a man of broad, liberal, and enlarged views. Has he other incentives to exertion besides the invigorating draughts, which gush from the fountains of pure knowledge? Has he any other stimulus besides that which the power and strength of knowledge impart? Doubtless he has. Few of us labour even in the most intoxicating departments of science, unmindful of fame. “Knowledge is power,” said the founder of English science ; and it is the hope of possessing this power that endues us with energy—that excites us to surmount innumerable obstacles, and to grapple with difficulties, which to many may appear insuperable. There is something supremely interesting in watching the progress of the child of science—in observing the gradual unfolding of the mind—the illimitable, excursive, comprehensive mind ; and the philosopher himself must look back with intense interest on his own advancing career, when he was toiling on, struggling with the iron-hand of poverty, uncheered by the smiles of Fortune, but still proceeding “conquering and to conquer.” This, however, is somewhat too digressive.

As a conspicuous member of the first class of students we may rank Benjamin Collins Brodie, the subject of the present article. Few men have launched their bark in the tempestuous ocean of busy life under

more favourable auspices than he. Educated in an excellent professional school, that of the illustrious Hunters—gifted with quick talent, untiring industry, and a mind comprehensive and well-prepared—the *protégé*, moreover, of a man, who, whatever may be his foibles now, stood once at the very pinnacle of his profession, Mr. Brodie entered upon the duties of his vocation with an ardour and a devotion seldom surpassed. From the very instant that he became the pupil, or rather the assistant of Sir Everard Home, every moment of his existence was devoted to the profession. He was either lecturing or demonstrating,* or “dressing” at the Hospital, or visiting patients from morning to night, and sometimes, from night to morning, for it is the duty of the assistant to sit up all night with such patients as have undergone some serious, or, in the language of the schools, some *great* operation, until all danger is over. No one but a man of strong nerve, great activity, and most enthusiastic attachment to his profession, could have undergone the toil and fatigue dependent upon the bustle and worry of the practice in which Mr. Brodie was now involved; but his whole heart was in it, and he not only endured it uncomplainingly, but he enjoyed it as a source of healthful, mental excitement; in short, he loved it.

All this time the young physiologist was diving deeply into the mysteries of science; and, like the bee, abstracting sweets from the flowers which were scattered in his path. Nothing escaped the penetrating acumen of his mind; objects which to others were trivial, obscure, dull, were to him sources of bright intelligence and wisdom. That quick, searching, sudden, and singular talent, which even now distinguishes him from his brethren, was in constant activity, seizing upon facts—sifting the wheat from the chaff, the ore from the dross, and astonishing even his elders by the mode with which it instructed its fortunate possessor. Was there a new question started in the schools—a new opinion broached, or a new theory introduced? Mr. Brodie did not rest—no, not even amidst all his numerous toilsome avocations—until he had carefully and minutely *dissected* it, and discovered its truth or its fallacy. To the decisions of his elders he always listened with deference and humility; but his was not a mind to receive as gospel a fact which was only sanctioned by the dogmatism of custom, or the formal, fusty, fallacious authority of long-rooted prejudice. Truth is to be discovered, not by an implicit obedience to pre-existing dogmata, but by a diligent, untiring, and careful use of reason and observation; and it is the active and proper application of these qualities, which so particularly characterise the present school of medicine in all its branches, as contrasted with the empirical, patchwork system of our predecessors. We will adduce one instance, on a subject intimately connected with Mr. Brodie, to show the broad difference between “those that *were*” and those that *are*. What did his predecessors—*our* predecessors, know about suspended animation? Did they understand its *rationale*—its philosophy—its essence? Not they! “Time was, that when the brains were out the man would die!” *This* they did know; but they knew no more. They knew full well that if a man was shot through the heart or the head, or any vital organ, that life would cease:

* The office of Demonstrator consists in demonstrating and explaining to the students the subjects on which the Professor lectures.

but did they know how a man died from suffocation—from the inspiration of mephitic vapour—from the swallowing of certain poisons, and from hanging?—or did they know how he died at all? No, they did not. They said, as the lungs cease to act and the heart to beat, the patient must needs “go hence, and be no more seen:” but people have been recovered after the lungs have ceased to act; and this opened the eyes of the wise men; and so the Royal Humane Society was founded by a man who deserves much gratitude, not only at the hands of his profession, but of the whole world—the late Dr. Lettsom. This is an inquiring, learned, knowledge-seeking, and knowledge-finding age—and we will explain what we mean by the *rationale* of suspended animation: if we should seem somewhat learned on the subject, our readers must pardon us, especially as we engage to render our dissertation so comprehensible that “those who run may read.”

We have already intimated that our predecessors knew little about the *modus operandi* of death. Bichât, in his admirable work on the Phenomena of Life, was the first to place the inquiry upon a scientific basis. Before this, we saw men die from disease, from poison, and from accidents of various kinds; but how life was destroyed, we knew not,—that is, we knew not in all cases, whether it was injury of the brain, or heart, or lungs, which first contributed to the extinction of the vital spark. Men died—and that was enough. But Bichât taught us to reason on the subject, and to found all our reasonings on the mutual relation and connexion of the three great organs of the body—the heart, the lungs, and the brain; and on the consequent division of the phenomena of the living system into organic and animal life.

Organic life is the simplest mode of existence, and is dependent upon the proper functions of the heart and arteries; while animal life is supported by the functions of the brain and nerves, in conjunction with respiration, which, in fact, connects the two states with each other.

Death must, therefore, begin either at the lungs, or the brain, or the heart; the two first states being the most common. In many kinds of death, more especially in that which occurs from a suspension of the action of the lungs, there are two distinct stages. In the first, sensation, thought, and voluntary motion are destroyed; in the second, the circulation of the blood, and the organic functions, dependent thereupon, cease. In common parlance, we designate life as the presence of mental phenomena; and death, their absence: in a strictly physical sense, however, life may be existent, so long as actions are going on in the body, differing from any which can be explained upon chemical or mechanical principles. In considering, therefore, the order in which the phenomena of death occur, we do not merely depend upon the cessation of all indications of mind; but we pursue the changes, so long as any movement takes place in the body, inexplicable by the laws to which we have alluded. In short, there must be a complete extinction of animal as well as of organic life.

Death, instantaneously as it frequently takes place, is a process comprising many curious and elaborate changes. Bichât and Brodie have ascertained that in *asphyxia*, or suffocation, which is the most sudden and simple mode of dissolution, the changes are more complicated than even these physiologists at first imagined. They distinctly discovered that the heart partially continues its action after respiration has ceased.

By considering here what is the principal purpose of respiration, namely, the oxydisation of the blood,—we shall find that the lungs having ceased to play, while the heart continues partially to beat, the blood which is now circulated cannot be oxydised; and it is this circulation of unoxydised or venous blood which completely destroys life. As soon as a few waves of this black or venous blood pass through the brain, insensibility takes place, and animal life ceases; and, lastly, organic life still remaining, and the heart still propelling this (now) poisonous fluid through the other parts of the body, the action of the heart itself is at length destroyed by it, as well as the vitality of every other part through which it flows. Thus death by suffocation is caused by venous blood acting as a poison—first upon the nervous system, and then upon the other different parts of the body—animal life becoming extinguished first, and then organic.

Now, this proves how persons who have been half-drowned, or half-hanged, have been recovered. If organic life still exists, although the functions of animal life may have been perfectly suspended, and if the lungs can be excited sufficiently to oxydise the blood, life is restored. From this we see the necessity of perseverance, even after all apparent symptoms of returning life have ceased; and, discarding all the barbarous empiricism, which formerly characterized this branch of practice, we have but one sensible object in view, which is to excite the lungs to action.

To a mind like Mr. Brodie's, we can easily imagine the interest which this very important subject imparted, as well as the eagerness with which he pursued it. In this, as in every thing which engages his attention, he has succeeded to an extent almost beyond reasonable expectation. He has proved that in small animals, artificial respiration will support the circulation of the blood for many hours after the heart has wholly ceased to beat, and even after the heads of the animals have been actually cut off. This knowledge was not obtained, however, without much and repeated labour. It was not one or two flimsy experiments that satisfied him with the important result. Again and again were they repeated, until the fact was established beyond dispute or the possibility of doubt. It may appear strange, perhaps, that a surgeon like Mr. Brodie, who is engaged in actual practice from an early hour in the morning till midnight, should find any time for pursuits not immediately connected with the current practice of the day. But little do they know of the human mind, or its powers, who think thus. We know for a fact, that, notwithstanding all the physical labour to which Mr. Brodie is daily exposed, he finds a lack of excitement for his very active mind. There is little interest to him in the ordinary cases which come before him; and a recourse to some *abstruse* pursuit in physiology is absolutely necessary to preserve his mind in activity. There is one very conspicuous quality in Mr. Brodie, which is, a rapidity of perception, that enables him to seize, as it were, intuitively, upon the leading facts of the most intricate case. This, to a person who did not know his habits, would appear as the mere effect of a sudden and momentary impulse; but, in fact, it is the result of much deep, steadfast, and solitary study. We have seen him pause for a moment, after having heard the detail of an intricate case, and then give his opinion plainly and decidedly. There is no subterfuge—no

beating about the bush—no loop-hole left to creep out at—but all is plain, straightforward, decisive; and a man must assuredly have great confidence in himself to enable him to act in this manner.

A more estimable, and perhaps a more useful characteristic in Brodie's character, is his gentlemanly conduct to all persons, and his true, unvarying, unostentatious benevolence. We could tell many a tale illustrative of this; but to penetrate the *sanctum* of private life is no part of our purpose. His conduct at the hospital, both to his pupils and to the poor patients, is beyond all praise. He does not rest satisfied with merely going round from bed to bed, as the custom is, without communicating any thing to his pupils, or expressing any interest in the welfare of the sufferer;—no, Mr. Brodie does *not* do this. He informs his pupils, not only what plan he means to adopt, but why it is adopted, and what are the expected results. If there be any intricate or unusual case, he explains candidly what are his opinions—his reasons for them—the why and the wherefore, without any humbug, and so forth: and all this with so much kindness, suavity, and attention, that no one can doubt the sincerity of his interest for his pupils' welfare. This kindness is extended, also, to the patients; and we are very sure that much of the pain and terror of disease has been often alleviated by conduct such as this. As a lecturer Mr. Brodie is excellent; although there is a constraint in his manner, which sounds at first rather awkwardly—but this soon wears off, and is at length entirely lost in the mass of instructive facts, which he pours forth before his auditors. His style is particularly simple and unaffected, his lecture being literally a "plain unvarnished tale," full, however, of excellent instruction, and useful, impressive information; and his must be a dull capacity indeed, who does not carry away something profitable from every lecture which he hears.

In conclusion we must observe, that Mr. Brodie is surgeon to St. George's Hospital—an institution which has been honoured by the services and adorned by the talents of those luminaries of surgical and medical science, the two Hunters, and Sir Everard Home. Their successor has trodden well and diligently in their footsteps; and it must be a source of proud satisfaction to him to reflect, that when all distinctions are levelled in the dust, his name may be joined to their's as a benefactor to mankind—and as a large and valuable contributor to that science, of which he is now so distinguished an ornament.

EXPECTATION.

(SCHILLER.)

WAS it the latch that was stirr'd?
Or the wicket that open swung?—
No, 'twas but the breeze I heard,
That sighs yon poplar trees among.

Thou green and leafy bower, be new array'd,
To-day the loveliest Fair shall bless thy sight,
Ye branches, twine and form a cooling shade,
And cast o'er all the scene a gentle night,
And ye too, Zephyrs, sport around the Maid,
And fan her cheek with fluttering pinions light,
When her fair form is borne along the grove,
With footstep light, to seek the bower of love.

Expectation.

Hark! through the thicket is heard
 A sound rustling loudly and near!
 No, 'tis but the startled bird
 Fluttering in the brake, I hear.

Oh! quench thy torch, bright Day, and thou arise
 In gentle silence, calm, mysterious Night,
 And spread thy purple mantle o'er the skies,
 With friendly branches shade us from the sight.
 Far from the listener's ear Love timid flies,
 And hates the gaudy day's rude, glaring light;
 Let none but Hesperus with twinkling eye
 In silence gaze, from out the darkening sky.

Are there not soft voices near,
 That whispering the silence break?
 No, 'tis but the swan I hear,
 That ruffling cleaves the silver lake.

My ear drinks in a harmony divine,
 The fountain falls with sweetly rushing sound,
 The flowers to Zephyr's kiss their heads incline,
 While every creature seems rejoicing round;
 And where the peach lies hid in leaves, the vine
 Embracing hangs, with purple clusters crown'd;
 While round my burning cheek the breezes play,
 And breathing perfume, steal the glow away.

Hear I not steps bounding free,
 That rustle the leaves as they tread?
 No, 'tis from the neighbouring tree
 The ripe and golden fruit is shed.

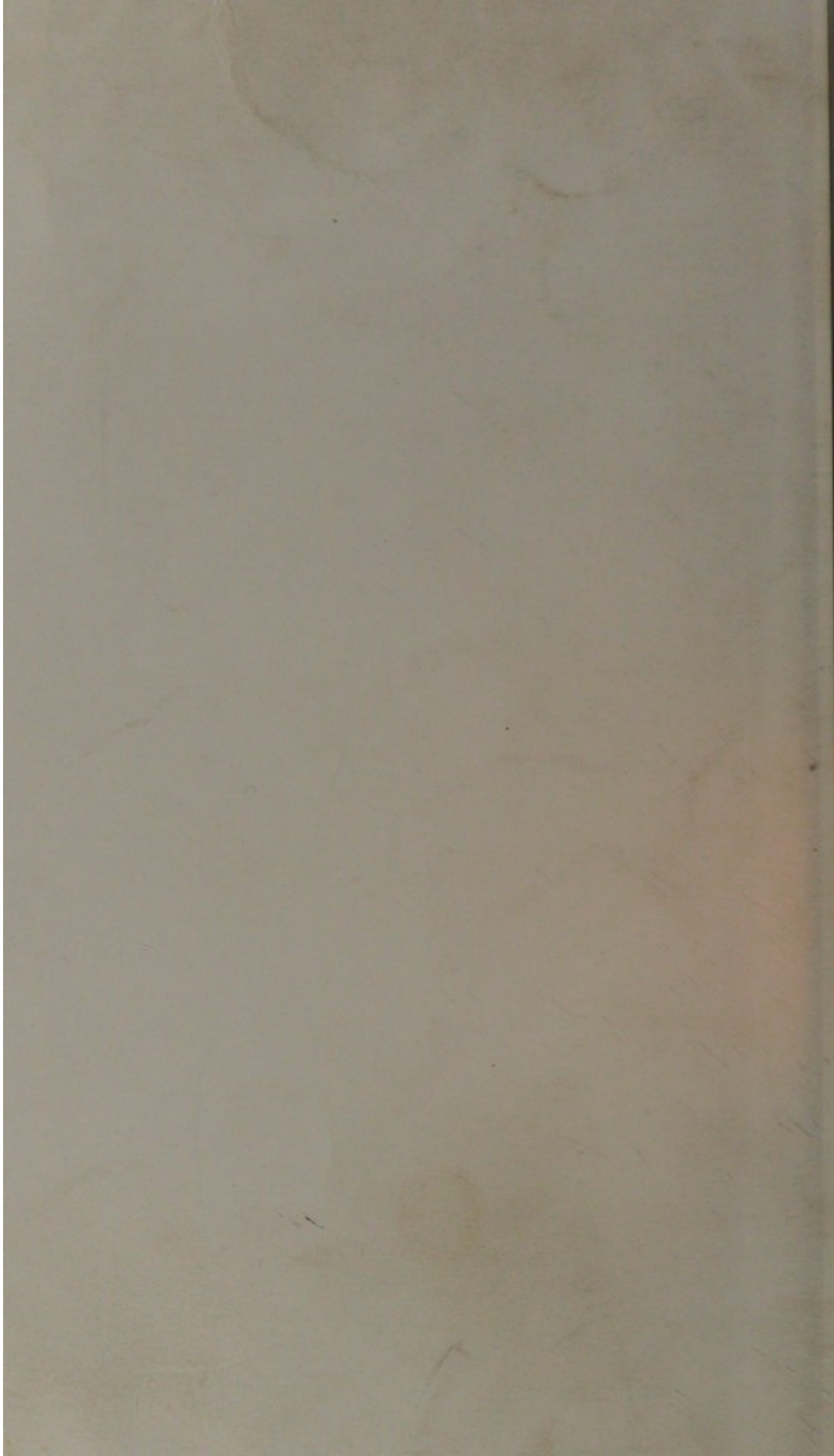
At length is closed the flaming eye of Day
 For sweet repose, and pale are all his rays,
 Now boldly open in the twilight grey
 Those chalice'd flowers that hate his gaudy blaze,
 And while the beaming Moon glides on her way
 The earth seems half dissolving in her gaze,
 While lovely Nature stretch'd before me lies,
 And every beauty meets my wondering eyes.

Is it a form I see move
 In silken robes glistening and bright?
 No, 'tis in yon cypress grove
 A marble column gleaming white.

Thou longing heart, be calm, thy transports spare,
 'Tis but of fancied bliss thou art possess'd;
 The arms that should enfold her, clasp the air,
 No dream of joy can cool my burning breast.
 Oh! let her stand one moment living there,
 And let me feel in mine her soft hand press'd,
 Or from her mantle catch a passing gleam—
 Then o'er his senses stole th' illusive dream.

But as sudden descends from above
 When unhop'd for, the moment of bliss,
 So lightly she treads through the grove,
 And awakes her beloved with a kiss.







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