

break old habits. I love my glass; I love Addison. Each will partake in killing me. Why can not I see him again in the arm-chair, his right hand upon his heart under the fawn-coloured waistcoat, his brow erect and clear as his conscience; his wig even and composed as his

temper, with measurely curls and antithetical top-knots, like his style; the calmest poet, the most quiet patriot; dear Addison! drunk, deliberate, moral, sentimental, foaming over with truth and virtue, with tenderness and friendship, and only the worse in one ruffle for the wine.

## DANTE AND BEATRICE.

*Dante.* When you saw me profoundly pierced with love, and reddening and trembling, did it become you, did it become you, you whom I have always called *the most gentle Bice*, to join in the heartless laughter of those girls around you? Answer me. Reply unhesitatingly. Requires it so long a space for dissimulation and duplicity? Pardon! pardon! pardon! My senses have left me: my heart being gone, they follow.

*Beatrice.* Childish man! pursuing the impossible.

*Dante.* And was it this you laughed at? We can not touch the hem of God's garment; yet we fall at his feet and weep.

*Beatrice.* But weep not, gentle Dante! fall not before the weakest of his creatures, willing to comfort, unable to relieve you. Consider a little. Is laughter at all times the signal or the precursor of derision? I smiled, let me avow it, from the pride I felt in your preference of me; and if I laughed, it was to conceal my sentiments. Did you never cover sweet fruit with worthless leaves? Come, do not drop again so soon so faint a smile. I will not have you grave, nor very serious. I pity you; I must not love you: if I might, I would.

*Dante.* Yet how much love is due to me, O Bice, who have loved you, as you well remember, even from your tenth year. But it is reported, and your words confirm it, that you are going to be married.

*Beatrice.* If so, and if I could have laughed at that, and if my laughter could have estranged you from me, would you blame me?

*Dante.* Tell me the truth.

*Beatrice.* The report is general.

*Dante.* The truth! the truth! Tell me, Bice.

*Beatrice.* Marriages, it is said, are made in heaven.

*Dante.* Is heaven then under the paternal roof?

*Beatrice.* It has been to me hitherto.

*Dante.* And now you seek it elsewhere.

*Beatrice.* I seek it not. The wiser choose for the weaker. Nay, do not sigh so. What would you have, my grave pensive Dante? What can I do?

*Dante.* Love me.

*Beatrice.* I always did.

*Dante.* Love me? O bliss of heaven!

*Beatrice.* No, no, no! Forbear! Men's kisses are always mischievous and hurtful; everybody says it. If you truly loved me, you would never think of doing so.

*Dante.* Nor even this!

*Beatrice.* You forget that you are no longer a boy; and that it is not thought proper at your time of life to continue the arm at all about the waist. Beside, I think you would better not put your head against my bosom; it beats too much to be pleasant to you. Why do you wish it? why fancy it can do you any good? It grows no cooler: it seems to grow even hotter. O! how it burns! Go, go; it hurts me too: it struggles, it aches, it sobs. Thank you, my gentle friend, for removing your brow away; your hair is very thick and long; and it began to heat me more than you can imagine. While it was there, I could not see your face so well, nor talk with you so quietly.

*Dante.* O! when shall we talk quietly in future?

*Beatrice.* When I am married. I shall often come to visit my father. He has always been solitary since my mother's death, which happened in my infancy, long before you knew me.

*Dante.* How can he endure the solitude of his house when you have left it?

*Beatrice.* The very question I asked him.

*Dante.* You did not then wish to . . . go away?

*Beatrice.* Ah no! It is sad to be an outcast at fifteen.

*Dante.* An outcast?

*Beatrice.* Forced to leave a home.

*Dante.* For another?

*Beatrice.* Childhood can never have a second.

*Dante.* But childhood is now over.

*Beatrice.* I wonder who was so malicious as to tell my father that? He wanted me to be married a whole year ago.

*Dante.* And, Bice, you hesitated?

*Beatrice.* No; I only wept. He is a dear good father. I never disobeyed him but in those wicked tears; and they ran the faster the more he reprehended them.

*Dante.* Say, who is the happy youth?

*Beatrice.* I know not who ought to be happy if you are not.

*Dante.* I!

*Beatrice.* Surely you deserve all happiness.

*Dante.* Happiness! any happiness is denied me. Ah, hours of childhood! bright hours! what fragrant blossoms ye unfold! what bitter fruits to ripen!

*Beatrice.* Now can not you continue to sit under that old fig-tree at the corner of the garden? It is always delightful to me to think of it.

*Dante.* Again you smile: I wish I could smile too.

*Beatrice.* You were usually more grave than I, although very often, two years ago, you told me I was the graver. Perhaps I *was* then indeed; and perhaps I ought to be now: but really I must smile at the recollection, and make you smile with me.

*Dante.* Recollection of what in particular?

*Beatrice.* Of your ignorance that a fig-tree is the brittlest of trees, especially when it is in leaf; and moreover of your tumble, when your head was just above the wall, and your hand (with the verses in it) on the very coping-stone. Nobody suspected that I went every day to the bottom of our garden, to hear you repeat your poetry on the other side; nobody but yourself: you soon found me out. But on that occasion I thought you might have been hurt; and I clambered up our high peach-tree in the grass-plot nearest the place; and thence I saw Messer Dante, with his white sleeve reddened by the fig-juice, and the seeds sticking to it pertinaciously, and Messer blushing, and trying to conceal his calamity, and still holding the verses. They were all about me.

*Dante.* Never shall any verse of mine be uttered from my lips, or from the lips of others, without the memorial of Bice.

*Beatrice.* Sweet Dante! in the purity of your soul shall Bice live; as (we are told by the goat-herds and foresters) poor creatures have been found preserved in the serene and lofty regions of the Alps, many years after the breath of life had left them. Already you rival Guido Cavalcante and Cino da Pistoja: you must attempt, nor perhaps shall it be vainly, to surpass them in celebrity.

*Dante.* If ever I am above them . . . and I must be . . . I know already what angel's hand will have helped me up the ladder. Beatrice, I vow to heaven, shall stand higher than Selvaggia, high and glorious and immortal as that name will be. You have given me joy and sorrow; for the worst of these (I will not say the least) I will confer on you all the generations of our Italy, all the ages of our world. But first (alas, from me you must not have it!) may happiness, long happiness, attend you!

*Beatrice.* Ah! those words rend your bosom! why should they?

*Dante.* I could go away contented, or almost contented, were I sure of it. Hope is nearly as strong as despair, and greatly more pertinacious and enduring. You have made me see clearly that you never can be mine in this world: but at the same time, O Beatrice, you have made me see quite as clearly that you may and must be mine in another. I am older than you: precedence is given to age, and not to worthiness, in our way to heaven. I will watch over you; I will pray for you when I am nearer to God, and purified from the stains of earth and mortality. He will permit me to behold you, lovely as when I left you. Angels in vain should call me onward.

*Beatrice.* Hush, sweetest Dante! hush!

*Dante.* It is there, where I shall have caught,

the first glimpse of you again, that I wish all my portion of Paradise to be assigned me; and there, if far below you, yet within the sight of you, to establish my perdurable abode.

*Beatrice.* Is this piety? Is this wisdom? O Dante! And may not I be called away first?

*Dante.* Alas! alas! how many small feet have swept off the early dew of life, leaving the path black behind them! But to think that you should go before me! It almost sends me forward on my way, to receive and welcome you. If indeed, O Beatrice, such should be God's immutable will, sometimes look down on me when the song to Him is suspended. Oh! look often on me with prayer and pity; for there all prayers are accepted, and all pity is devoid of pain. Why are you silent?

*Beatrice.* It is very sinful not to love all creatures in the world. But is it true, O Dante! that we always love those the most who make us the most unhappy?

*Dante.* The remark, I fear, is just.

*Beatrice.* Then, unless the Virgin be pleased to change my inclinations, I shall begin at last to love my betrothed; for already the very idea of him renders me sad, wearisome, and comfortless. Yesterday he sent me a bunch of violets. When I took them up, delighted as I felt at that sweetest of odours, which you and I once inhaled together . . .

*Dante.* And only once.

*Beatrice.* You know why. Be quiet now, and hear me. I dropped the posy; for around it, hidden by various kinds of foliage, was twined the bridal necklace of pearls. O Dante! how worthless are the finest of them (and there are many fine ones) in comparison with those little pebbles, some of which (for perhaps I may not have gathered up all) may be still lying under the peach-tree, and some (do I blush to say it!) under the fig. Tell me not who threw these, nor for what. But you know you were always thoughtful, and sometimes reading, sometimes writing, and sometimes forgetting me, while I waited to see the crimson cap, and the two bay-leaves I fastened in it, rise above the garden-wall. How silently you are listening, if you do listen!

*Dante.* Oh! could my thoughts incessantly and eternally dwell among these recollections, undisturbed by any other voice . . . undistracted by any other presence! Soon must they abide with me alone, and be repeated by none but me . . . repeated in the accents of anguish and despair! Why could you not have held in the sad home of your heart that necklace and those violets?

*Beatrice.* My Dante! we must all obey . . . I my father, you your God. He will never abandon you.

*Dante.* I have ever sung, and will for ever sing, the most glorious of His works: and yet, O Bice! He abandons me, He casts me off; and He uses your hand for this infliction.

*Beatrice.* Men travel far and wide, and see many on whom to fix or transfer their affections; but

we maidens have neither the power nor the will. Casting our eyes on the ground, we walk along the straight and narrow road prescribed for us; and, doing thus, we avoid in great measure the thorns and entanglements of life. We know we are performing our duty; and the fruit of this knowledge is contentment. Season after season, day after day, you have made me serious, pensive, meditative, and almost wise. Being so little a girl, I was proud that you, so much taller, should lean on my shoulder to overlook my work. And greatly more proud was I when in time you taught me several Latin words, and then whole sentences, both in prose and verse, pasting a strip of paper over, or obscuring with impenetrable ink, those passages in the poets which were beyond my comprehension, and might perplex me. But proudest of all was I when you began to reason with me. What will now be my pride if you are convinced by the first arguments I ever have opposed to you; or if you only take them up and try if they are applicable. Certainly do I know (indeed, indeed I do) that even the patience to consider them will make you happier. Will it not then make me so? I entertain no other wish. Is not this true love?

*Dante.* Ah yes! the truest, the purest, the least perishable, but not the sweetest. Here are the rue and hyssop; but where the rose!

*Beatrice.* Wicked must be whatever torments you: and will you let love do it? Love is the gentlest and kindest breath of God. Are you willing that the Tempter should intercept it, and respire it polluted into your ear? Do not make me hesitate to pray to the Virgin for you, nor tremble lest she look down on you with a reproachful pity. To her alone, O Dante! dare I confide all my thoughts. Lessen not my confidence in my only refuge.

*Dante.* God annihilate a power so criminal! O, could my love flow into your breast with hers! It should flow with equal purity.

*Beatrice.* You have stored my little mind with many thoughts; dear because they are yours, and because they are virtuous. May I not, O my Dante! bring some of them back again to your bosom; as the *Contadina* lets down the string from the cottage-beam in winter, and culls a few bunches of the soundest for the master of the vineyard? You have not given me glory that the world should shudder at its eclipse. To prove that I am worthy of the smallest part of it, I must obey God; and, under God, my father. Surely

the voice of Heaven comes to us audibly from a parent's lips. You will be great, and, what is above all greatness, good.

*Dante.* Rightly and wisely, my sweet Beatrice, have you spoken in this estimate. Greatness is to goodness what gravel is to porphyry: the one is a moveable accumulation, swept along the surface of the earth; the other stands fixt and solid and alone, above the violence of war and of the tempest; above all that is residuous of a wasted world. Little men build up great ones; but the snow colossus soon melts: the good stand under the eye of God; and therefore stand.

*Beatrice.* Now you are calm and reasonable, listen to Bice. You must marry.

*Dante.* Marry?

*Beatrice.* Unless you do, how can we meet again unreservedly? Worse, worse than ever! I can not bear to see those large heavy tears following one another, heavy and slow as nuns at the funeral of a sister. Come, I will kiss off one, if you will promise me faithfully to shed no more. Be tranquil, be tranquil; only hear reason. There are many who know you; and all who know you must love you. Don't you hear me? Why turn aside? and why go farther off? I will have that hand. It twists about as if it hated its confinement. Perverse and peevish creature! you have no more reason to be sorry than I have; and you have many to the contrary which I have not. Being a man, you are at liberty to admire a variety, and to make a choice. Is that no comfort to you?

*Dante.*

Bid this bosom cease to grieve?  
 Bid these eyes fresh objects see?  
 Where's the comfort to believe  
 None might once have rival'd me?  
 What! my freedom to receive?  
 Broken hearts, are they the free?  
 For another can I live  
 When I may not live for thee?

*Beatrice.* I will never be fond of you again if you are so violent. We have been together too long, and we may be noticed.

*Dante.* Is this our last meeting? If it is . . . and that it is, my heart has told me . . . you will not, surely you will not refuse . . .

*Beatrice.* Dante! Dante! they make the heart sad after: do not wish it. But prayers . . . O, how much better are they! how much quieter and lighter they render it! They carry it up to heaven with them; and those we love are left behind no longer.

## SOUTHEY AND LANDOR.

### SECOND CONVERSATION.

*Southey.* As we are walking on, and before we open our Milton again, we may digress a little in the direction of those poets who have risen up from under him, and of several who seem to have never had him in sight.

*Landor.* We will, if you please: and I hope you may not find me impatient to attain the object of our walk. However, let me confess to you, at starting, that I disapprove of models, even of the most excellent. Faults may be avoided,