

metal. Georgiana assented—but, on looking at the result, was afflicted to find the features of the portrait blurred and indelible; while the minute figure of a hand appeared where the cheek should have been. Aylmer snatched the metallic plate, and threw it into a jar of corrosive acid.

Soon, however, he forgot these mortifying failures. In the intervals of study and chemical experiment, he came to her, flushed and exhausted, but seemed invigorated by her presence, and spoke in glowing language of the resources of his art. He gave a history of the long-dynasty of the Alchemists, who spent so many ages in quest of the universal solvent, by which the Golden Principle might be elicited from all things vile and base. Aylmer appeared to believe, that, by the plainest scientific logic, it was altogether within the limits of possibility to discover this long-sought medium; but, he added, a philosopher who should go deep enough to acquire the power, would attain too lofty a wisdom to stoop to the exercise of it. Not less singular were his opinions in regard to the Elixir Vitæ. He more than intimated that it was at his option to concoct a liquid that would prolong life for years—perhaps indefinitely—but that it would produce discord in nature, which all the world, and chiefly the quaffer of the immortal nectar, would find cause to curse.

"Aylmer, are you in earnest?" asked Georgiana, looking at him with amazement and fear; "it is terrible to possess such power, or even to dream of possessing it?"

"Oh, do not tremble, my love!" said her husband, "I would not wrong either you or myself, by working such inharmonious effects upon our lives. But I would have you consider how trifling, in comparison, is the skill requisite to remove this little Hand."

At the mention of the birth mark, Georgiana, as usual, shrank, as if a red-hot iron had touched her cheek.

Again Aylmer applied himself to his labors. She could hear his voice in the distant furnace room giving directions to Aminadab, whose harsh, uncouth, misshapen tones were audible in response, more like the grunt or growl of a brute than human speech. After hours of absence, Aylmer re-appeared, and proposed that she should now examine his cabinet of chemical products, and natural treasures of the earth. Among the former he showed her a small vial, in which, he remarked, was contained a gentle yet most powerful fragrance, capable of impregnating all the breezes that blow across a kingdom. They were of inestimable value, the contents of that little vial; and, as he said so, he threw some of the perfume into the air, and filled the room with piercing and invigorating delight.

"And what is this?" asked Georgiana, pointing to a small crystal globe, containing a gold-colored liquid. "It is so beautiful to the eye, that I could imagine it the Elixir of Life."

"In one sense it is," replied Aylmer, "or rather the Elixir of Immortality. It is the most precious poison that ever was concocted in this world. By its aid, I could apportion the life time of any mortal at whom you might point your finger. The strength of the dose would determine whether he were to linger out years, or drop dead in the midst of a breath. No king, on his guarded throne, could keep his life, if I, in my private station, should deem that the welfare of millions justified me in depriving him of it."

"Why do you keep such a terrific drug?" inquired Georgiana in horror.

"Do not distrust me, dearest!" said her husband, smiling; "its virtuous potency is yet greater than its harmful one. But, see! here is a powerful cosmetic. With a few drops of this, in a vase of water, freckles may be washed out as easily as the hands are cleansed. A stronger infusion would take the blood out of the cheek, and leave the rosiest beauty a pale ghost."

"Is it with this lotion that you intend to bathe my cheek?" asked Georgiana anxiously.

"Oh, no!" hastily replied her husband,—"this is merely superficial. Your case demands a remedy that shall go deeper."

In his interviews with Georgiana, Aylmer, generally made minute inquiries as to her sensations, and whether the confinement of the rooms, and the temperature of the atmosphere, agreed with her. These questions had such a particular drift, that Georgiana began to conjecture that she was already subjected to certain physical influences, either breathed in with the fragrant air, or taken with her food. She fancied, likewise—but it might be altogether fancy—that there was a stirring up of her system; a strange indefinite sensation creeping through her veins, and tingling, half painfully, half pleasurably, at her heart. Still, whenever she dared to look into the mirror, there she beheld herself, pale as a white rose, and with the crimson birth mark stamped upon her cheek. Not even Aylmer now hated it so much as she.

To dispel the tedium of the hours which her husband found it necessary to devote to the processes of combination and analysis, Georgiana turned over the volumes of his scientific library. In many dark old tomes, she met with chapters full of romance and poetry. They were the works of the philosophers of the middle ages, such as Albertus Magnus, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and the famous friar who created the prophetic Brazen Head. All these antique naturalists stood in advance of their centuries, yet were imbued with some of their credulity, and therefore were believed, and perhaps imagined themselves, to have acquired from the investigation of nature a power above nature, and from physics a sway over the spiritual world. Hardly less curious and imaginative were the early volumes of the Transactions of the Royal Society, in which the members, knowing little of the limits of natural possibility, were continually recording wonders, or proposing methods whereby wonders might be wrought.

But, to Georgiana, the most engrossing volume was a large folio from her husband's own hand, in which he had recorded every experiment of his scientific career, with its original aim, the methods adopted for its development, and its final success or failure, with the circumstances to which either event was attributable. The book, in truth, was both the history and emblem of his ardent ambitious, imaginative, yet practical and laborious life. He handled physical details, as if there were nothing beyond them; yet spiritualized them all, and redeemed himself from materialism, by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite. In his grasp the veiled clod of earth assumed a soul. Georgiana, as she read, revered Aylmer, and loved him more profoundly than ever, but with a less entire dependence on his judgment than heretofore. Much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe that his most splendid successes were all most invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed. His brightest diamonds were the merest pebbles, and felt to be so by himself, in comparison with the inestimable gems which lay hidden beyond his reach. The volume, rich with achievements that had won renown for its author, was yet as melancholy a record as ever mortal hand had penned. It was the sad confession, and conditional exemplification, of the short-comings of the composite man—the spirit burdened with clay and working in matter; and of the despair that assails the higher nature, at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part. Perhaps every man of genius, in whatever sphere, might recognize the image of his own experience in Aylmer's journal.

So deeply did these reflections affect Georgiana that she laid her face upon the open volume, and burst into tears. In this situation she was found by her husband.

"It is dangerous to read in a sorcerer's books," said he with a smile, though his countenance was uneasy and displeased. "Georgiana, there are pages in that volume, which I can scarcely glance over and keep my senses. Take heed lest it prove as detrimental to you."

"It has made me worship you more than ever," said she.

"Ah! wait for this one success," rejoined he, "then worship me if you will. I shall deem myself hardly worthy of it. But, come! I have sought you for the luxury of your voice. Sing to me dearest!"

So she poured out the liquid music of her voice to quench the thirst of his spirit. He then took leave with a boyish exuberance of gaiety, assuring her that her seclusion would endure but little longer, and that the result was already certain. Scarcely had he departed, when Georgiana felt irresistibly impelled to follow him. She had forgotten to inform Aylmer of a symptom, which for two or three hours past, had begun to excite her attention. It was a sensation in the fatal birth-mark, not painful, but which induced a restlessness throughout her system. Hastening after her husband, she intruded, for the first time, into his laboratory.

He was pale as death, anxious, and absorbed, and hung over the furnace, as if it depended upon his utmost watchfulness whether the liquid, which it was distilling, should be a draught of immortal happiness or misery. How different from the sanguine and joyous man that he had assumed for Georgiana's encouragement!

"Carefully now, Aminadab! Carefully, thou human machine! Carefully, thou man of clay!" muttered Aylmer, more to himself than his assistant—"Now, if there be a thought too much or too little, it is all over!"

"Hoh! hoh!" mumbled—"look, master, look!"

Aylmer raised his eyes hastily, and at first reddened, then grew paler than ever on beholding Georgiana. He rushed towards her, and seized her arm with a gripe that left the print of his fingers upon it.

"Why do you come hither? Have you no trust in your husband?" cried he, impetuously. "Would you throw the blight of that fatal birth-mark over my labors? It is not well done. Go, prying woman, go!"

"Nay, Aylmer," said Georgiana, with the firmness of which she possessed no stinted endowment, "it is not you that have a right to complain. You mistrust your wife! You have concealed the anxiety with which you watch the development of this experiment. Think not so unworthily of me, my husband! Tell me all the risk we run; and fear not that I shall shrink, for my share in it is far less than your own!"

"No, no, Georgiana!" said Aylmer impatiently, "it must not be."

"I submit," replied she calmly—"And Aylmer, I shall quaff whatever draught you bring me; but it will be on the same principle that would induce me to take a dose of poison, if offered by your hand."

"My noble wife," said Aylmer, deeply moved, "I knew not the height and depth of your nature, until now. Nothing shall be concealed. Know, then, that this crimson Hand, superficial as it seems, has clutched its grasp into your being, with a strength of which I had no conception. I have already administered agents powerful enough to do aught except to change your entire physical system. Only one thing remains to be tried. If that fails, we are ruined!"

"Why did you hesitate to tell me this?" said she.

"Because, Georgiana," said Aylmer, in a low voice, there is danger!"

"Danger? There is but one danger—that this horrible stigma shall be left on my cheek!" cried Georgiana. "Remove it! remove it!—whatever the cost—or we shall both go mad!"

"Heaven knows, your words are too true," said Aylmer, sadly. "And, now, dearest, return to your boudoir. In a little while all will be tested."

He conducted her back, and took leave of her with a solemn tenderness, which spoke far more than his words how much was now at stake. After his departure, Georgiana became wrapt in musings. She considered the character of Aylmer, and did it complete justice than at any previous moment. Her heart exulted, while it trembled at his honorable love, so pure and lofty that it would accept nothing less than perfection, nor miserably make itself contented with the earthlier nature than he had dreamed of. She felt how much more precious was such a sentiment, than that meaner kind which would have borne with the imperfection for her sake, and have been guilty of treason to holy love, by degrading its perfect idea to the level of the actual. And, with her whole spirit, she prayed, that for a single moment, she might satisfy his highest and deepest conception. Longer than one moment, she well knew it, it could not be; for his spirit was ever on the march—ever ascending—and each instant required something that was beyond the scope of the instant before.

The sound of her husband's footsteps aroused her. He bore a crystal goblet, containing a liquor colorless as water, but bright enough to be the draught of immortality. Aylmer was pale; but it seemed rather the consequence of a highly wrought state of mind, and tension of spirit, than of fear or doubt.

"The concoction of the draught has been perfect," said he, in answer to Georgiana's look. "Unless all my science have deceived me, it cannot fail."

"Save on your account, my dearest Aylmer," observed his wife, "I might wish to put off this birthmark of mortality by relinquishing mortality itself in preference to any other mode. Life is but a sad possession to those who have attained precisely the degree of moral advancement at which I stand. Were I weaker or blinder, it might be happiness. Were I stronger, it might be endured hopefully. But being what I find myself, methinks I am of all mortals the most fit to die."

"You are fit for heaven without tasting death!" replied her husband. The draught cannot fail. Behold its effects upon this plant!"

On the window seat there stood a geranium, diseased with yellow blotches, which had overspread all its leaves. Aylmer poured a small quantity of the liquid upon the soil in which it grew. In a little time, when the roots of the plant had taken up the moisture, the unsightly blotches began to be extinguished in a lingering verdure.

"There needed no proof," said Georgiana, quietly. "Give me the goblet, I joyfully stake all upon your word."

"Drink, then, thou lofty creature!" exclaimed Aylmer, with fervid admiration. "There is no taint of imperfection on thy spirit. Thy sensible frame, too, shall soon be all perfect!"

She quaffed the liquid and returned the goblet to his hand.

"It is grateful," said she, with a placid smile. "Methinks it is like water from a heavenly fountain; for it contains I know not what of unobtrusive fragrance and deliciousness. It allays a feverish thirst, that had parched me for many days. Now, dearest, let me sleep. My earthly senses are closing over my spirit, like the leaves around the heart of the rose, at sunset."

While thus employed, he failed not to gaze often at the fatal Hand, and not without a shudder. Yet once by a strange and unaccountable impulse, he pressed it with his lips. His spirit recoiled, however, in the very act, and Georgiana out of the midst of her sleep, moved uneasily and murmured as if in remonstrance. Again, Aylmer resumed his watch. Nor was it without avail. The Crimson Hand, which had been strongly visible upon the marble pale of Georgiana's cheek, now grew more faintly outlined. She remained not less pale than ever; but the birthmark, with every breath that came and went, lost somewhat of its former distinctness. Its presence had been awful; its departure more awful still. Watch the rainbow fading out of the sky; and you will know how that mysterious symbol passed away.

"By Heaven, it is well-nigh gone!" said Aylmer to himself in almost irrepressible ecstasy. "I can scarcely trace it now. Success! Success! And now it is the faintest rose-color. The slightest flush of blood over the cheek would overcome it. But she is so pale!"

He drew aside the window curtain and suffered the natural light of day to fall into the room, and rest upon her cheek. At the same time he heard a gross, hoarse chuckle, which he had long known as his servant Aminadab's expression of delight.

"Ah, clod! Ah earthly mass!" cried Aylmer, laughing a sort of frenzy. "You have served me well! Matter and Spirit—Earth and Heaven—have both done their part in this! Laugh things of the sense! You have earned the right to laugh."

These exclamations broke Georgiana's sleep. She slowly unclosed her eyes and gazed into the mirror, which her husband had arranged for that purpose. A faint smile flitted over her lips when she recognized how barely perceptible was now that Crimson Hand, which had once blazed forth with such disastrous brilliancy as to scare away all their happiness. But then her eyes sought Aylmer's face, with a trouble and anxiety that he could by no means account for.

"My poor Aylmer!"

"Poor? Nay, richest! Happiest!—Most favored!" exclaimed he. "My peerless bride, it is successful! You are perfect!"

"My poor Aylmer!" she repeated with more than human tenderness. "You have aimed loftily—you have done nobly! Do not repent, that, with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best earth could offer. Aylmer—dearest Aylmer, I am dying!"

Alas, it was too true! The fatal Hand had grappled with the mastery of life, and was the bond by which an angelic spirit kept itself in union with a mortal frame. As the crimson tint of the birth-mark—that sole token of human perfection—faded from her cheek, the parting breath of the now perfect woman passed into the atmosphere, and her soul, lingering a moment near her husband, took its heavenly flight. Then

a hoarse chuckling laugh was heard again! Thus ever does the gross Fatality of Earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence, which, in this dim sphere of half-development, demands the completeness of a higher state. Yet, had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness, which would have woven his mortal life of the self-same texture with the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of Time, and living once for all in Eternity, to find the perfect Future in the present.

THE COMMERCIAL.

WILMINGTON, N. C.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1846.

TO OUR PATRONS.

In consequence of our enlargement, we find it out of our power to make up our mails in time for the Northern train on the morning of publication, and as we wish to convey to our patrons abroad the latest statement of our Market, with the arrivals and clearances of our Port, we have thought it to the interest of all parties to issue "The Commercial" in the afternoon, instead of the morning, as heretofore; then we can give the transactions of the Market to noon of the day of publication, with all items of news up to that hour. Our advertising columns we shall keep open until 12 o'clock, M.

That Trade—We would respectfully call the attention of the Commissioners of Navigation to a large vessel which some weeks ago lodged upon the wharf opposite the Wilmington and Raleigh Railroad Company's wharf, and is embedding itself in that shoal, to the great detriment of the navigation of that part of the river. We hope the Board will at once see to its removal.

SAN JUAN DE ULLOA.

There is much diversity of opinion relative to the strength of the Mexican Fortress. A letter from an officer in the Navy, says that it is much overrated, and that the present American naval force on that station is quite sufficient to subdue it. Another officer writes that he had a talk with an English officer who has been through the Fortress. He says the Mexicans have the means of heating 1000 forty-two pound shot, red hot in one hour and fifteen minutes. This officer thought, if he had 1500 British gunners, and command of this Castle, he would defy the whole British navy. So much for the opinions of naval officers. If the first report be true, the conquest will be easy—if half of the latter be fact, it is impossible for us to take it with all the force we can bring against it.

THE PROGRESSIVE DEMOCRACY.

The democratic press are progressing very rapidly on the subject of direct taxation. The last Democratic Review, the National Organ of the "unaffiliated," and more independent than The Union, because it does not rely upon Executive favor for support, plainly proposes the abolition of the Custom House, which will take from the Federal Government the patronage of 11,000 offices. The Editor proposes to apportion a tax of twenty-two millions among the several States, to be collected with the State Taxes, and thus save expense in collecting for the Federal Government. But we do not know what the so-called democratic party will do, without these offices. Take away the "spells," abolish custom-house offices, and you take away the prop, the very pillar which sustains democratic patriotism.

It is thought that the subject of direct taxation will be made an issue in the next campaign. It may do well with Locofocism, which has already gone far as this would go from the ancient republican landmarks. But whatever you do, gentlemen who manage, mislead and humbug the people, don't take away the office—the "love of country" can never stand that never, among those whose "party is their country."

THE SUB-TREASURY.

Large amounts of Treasury Notes are in Deposit at the Banks in New York. It appears that the Banks, when they recently receive the public income, and there is an arrangement among themselves, that the Bank whose week it is to receive the money from the Custom House, shall, during that week, receive all the Treasury Notes that may be collected. Disbursing officers deposit these notes in Bank to their own credit, then draw checks for such sums as they have to pay on account of the government. Thus the sub-treasury law is completely abandoned, in the financial operations of the public agents. We do not think they are to blame; they cannot help it—it is impossible to make such a monstrous humbug operate at all. It answers the purposes of politicians, however, who merely wish to gild the people, and show them, "in all simplicity and candor," as the Standard says, that government paper is really nothing more nor less than specie—which all the faithful are bound to believe, and all the leaders are compelled to assert—under pain of being burnt or hung in effigy, and cut off forever from the Executive loaves and fishes.

FEDERALISM OF THE WHIGS.

A correspondent of the Boston Atlas, tells the following anecdote of Gen. Joseph Chandler, of Augusta, Maine, who presided at a meeting of Independent Democrats in that town a few days ago.

A Locofocist, who had more impudence than brains (a very usual occurrence) asked General Chandler if "he was going over to the Federalists." He said, in reply, "that, in olden times, the test of Democracy was the disposition to encourage home industry, the sparing of home made apparel, the protection of home labor, and those were called Tories who went for procuring articles of clothing and manufactures from British workshops."

This answer indicates what is the federalism of the whigs, about which the democratic press prate so much. This federalism is desirous of producing within our own country all articles requisite to its own maintenance and comfort; all that may be necessary to render her independent of foreign nations, in peace as well as war, whether they are the fruit of agricultural industry or the result of mechanical labor. The whigs, while thus rendering the nation independent, would make our industrious population independent also, by every encouragement consistent with justice and the "compromise" of our Constitution.

We remember when this was considered, very sound democratic republican doctrine—when the adverse party would have raised a shout of indignation, and the cry of "federalism," "bank-bought whigs," and the like. But the present is a wonderful era. We are now to be taught that "democracy" consists in doing long after it has abandoned its nature.

THE BROTHERS OF "THE UNAFFILIATED."

The brethren of "The Unaffiliated" are still giving the public a touch of their quality, in bitter denunciations of each other. The Western democratic papers are unmeasured in their denunciation of Polk, for his veto of the River and Harbor Bill, as are the press of Pennsylvania in condemnation of the war waged against domestic industry by the administration, and its adherents. A paper, called the Alleghen Record discourses in the following style: "The Washington Union styles the veto of the River and Harbor appropriation bill a great measure of internal policy—it should have said internal policy; it would approximate nearer to the true policy of President Polk.—The veto of this great Western measure was a cowardly, base, and impolitic performance, unbecoming the President of a mighty commercial and agricultural nation—worthy only of a sectional despot of the nullification stamp."

The Chicago Democrat, edited by the Hon. John Wentworth, a Democratic member of Congress, is very rebellious on the subject. He says he does not believe the people will be any longer humbugged by the deceptions of the Polk party. The policy is to make the people believe that Polk is in favor of certain sections, but objects to the general features of the Bill.—But the sale of public property, intended for improvements, opens the eyes of the people of Chicago to these "deceptions."

A MISTAKE.

The democratic press are laboring under a very great mistake (no doubt intentional) in attempting to convince the farmers that the advance in bread stuffs since the arrival of the steamer Britain, is the consequence of the passage of the new tariff act. The tariff act passed the House of Representatives early in July. The intelligence reached England on the 20th of the same month, and the first response to it came by the steamer Caladonia, which left Liverpool on the 4th of August. The news was that there was much rejoicing in the Manufacturing districts; but the markets for grain were lower than they had been for twelve months—that is for "free grain." There has since been a rise in the price of bread stuffs in England, owing entirely to unfavorable weather for the incoming harvest in England, and from the important fact, then ascertained, that the potato crop would be almost entirely cut off.

EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIMENT.

An experiment has been successfully tried in Prussia, for the culture of the Irish potato in water. They were planted on the first of September, and thrived more rapidly and strongly than in the Spring season. A writer says: "In spite of the severe winter, I have, on the first of November, covered up potatoes, having a stalk only a foot high, and they have grown admirably and are perfectly formed."

FIFTY-FOUR FORTY.

The position of Mr. Polk, on the Oregon question, is very far from being an enviable one. In obedience to the dictation of the Baltimore Convention, he declared our right to the whole of Oregon to be "clear and unquestionable." He assumed the line of 54 40 in his December message to Congress, and in his message submitting the proposition of Great Britain he said the sentiment in that Message remained unchanged. And yet Mr. McLane declares that he followed the instructions of the Department, in settling the matter on the parallel of 49; and the published documents prove this to be a fact. This conduct of Polk is designated by the gentle name of "inconsistency" by some of the whig presses. This is very well—a soft answer turneth away wrath—but it looks to us as much like an abominable cheat as any thing on record. The truth is, Polk kept up the cry of 54 40 to retain the favor of the war-hawks, while he gave the requisite instructions to Mr. McLane that produced a peaceable settlement of the question. The President ought to know all about the instructions given to his Ministers abroad; to say that he did not know what was written on the occasion, places him in a situation too ridiculous to be sanctioned by any one. If he did know, as he certainly did, he has acted a most hypocritical and undignified part; disgraceful to his character as a man, and dishonorable to his reputation as President. But it is hard to cast off old habits. The low tricks of dirty politicians will follow them into high station. Small men, small actions.—"Great men choose greater sins"—but Polk loves trickery.

"YOUNG HICKORY."

The Union gives its readers to understand that the President considers appropriations made under Gen. Jackson's administration to be unconstitutional; and that "Young Hickory" is far ahead of "Old Hickory" in constitutional acumen and tenderness of conscience. The "progressive democracy" sets up a claim to know much more about organic law, and to feel more keenly the responsibilities of the "inward monitor" than Jackson or any of the Republican Fathers. The "crooked has become straight" in the hands of the present administration, and what was heretofore considered wisdom and patriotism, is now set down as very weak and stupid. The President doubts the constitutionality of making appropriations for the improvement of our Lake Harbors, if we are to credit his organ; and will shortly prove, to a demonstration we dare say, that a Custom House on the Lakes is not bona fide a Custom House, like those on the Atlantic side. The administration may go ahead with this doctrine. There are plenty of the faithful ready to sustain it, and to believe it too—that is, when it is fairly promulgated "by authority."

UNDER HIS OWN HAND.

The President of the United States has sent documents, franked under his own official hand, to the editor of the North Carolina Standard, the matter referred to is duly noted and the thanks of the editor preferred to the Chief Magistrate for his kindness. We believe this is the first instance on record of the meeting and greeting of two dignitaries in this way, and it should be recorded in aid of the fact asserted by the Union, that Polk is a very industrious man, and that no public toil, or private duties, such as attending Church and the like; can prevent him from being courteous to his press.

THE POTATO.

A paragraph is going the rounds of the newspapers, giving what purports to be a new discovery in the manner of raising potatoes. It is no more nor less than their production from the seed contained in the ball or fruit of the potato. We have heard of this method ever since we have heard of the article at all. An old account of this root says: "New ones are readily produced by sowing the seeds, which, with care, will produce tubers the third year and a full crop the fourth."

MAINE.

There were four parties in the field at the recent election there, viz. Whigs, Locofocists, Independent or anti-slavery, and the Whigs sustained themselves gallantly, and the Polk party is broken up.