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OF

GEORGE ELIOT.

BOSTON:
ROBERTS BROTHERS.
1874.

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SCENES FROM CLERICAL LIFE

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AMOS BARTON.

IN every parting there is an image of death.

O the anguish of that thought that we can never atone to our dead for the stinted affection we gave them, for the light answers we returned to their plaints or their pleadings, for the little reverence we showed to that sacred human soul that lived so close to us, and was the divinest thing God had given us to know!

Love is frightened at the intervals of insensibility and callousness that encroach by little and little on the dominion of grief, and it makes efforts to recall the keenness of the first anguish.

What is opportunity to the man who can't use it? An unfecundated egg, which the waves of time wash away into nonentity.

A tallow dip, of the long-eight description, is an excellent thing in the kitchen candlestick, and Betty's nose and eye are not sensitive to the difference between it and the finest wax; it is only when you stick it in the silver candlestick, and introduce it into the

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drawing-room, that it seems plebeian, dim, and ineffectual. Alas for the worthy man who, like that candle, gets himself into the wrong place! It is only the very largest souls who will be able to appreciate and pity him — who will discern and love sincerity of purpose amid all the bungling feebleness of achievement.

Nice distinctions are troublesome. It is so much easier to say that a thing is black, than to discriminate the particular shade of brown, blue, or green, to which it really belongs. It is so much easier to make up your mind that your neighbor is good for nothing, than to enter into all the circumstances that would oblige you to modify that opinion.

At least eighty out of a hundred of your adult male fellow-Britons returned in the last census are neither extraordinarily silly, nor extraordinarily wicked, nor extraordinarily wise; their eyes are neither deep and liquid with sentiment, nor sparkling with suppressed witticisms; they have probably had no hairbreadth escapes or thrilling adventures; their brains are certainly not pregnant with genius, and their passions have not manifested themselves at all after the fashion of a volcano. They are simply men of complexions more or less muddy, whose conversation is more or less bald and disjointed. Yet these commonplace people — many of them — bear a conscience, and have felt the sublime prompting to do the painful right; they have their unspoken sorrows, and their sacred joys;

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their hearts have perhaps gone out towards their first-born, and they have mourned over the irreclaimable dead. Nay, is there not a pathos in their very insignificance — in our comparison of their dim and narrow existence with the glorious possibilities of that human nature which they share?

Depend upon it, you would gain unspeakably if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and the pathos, the tragedy and the comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out through dull gray eyes, and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones.

I have all my life had a sympathy for mongrel ungainly dogs, who are nobody's pets; and I would rather surprise one of them by a pat and a pleasant morsel, than meet the condescending advances of the loveliest Skye-terrier who has his cushion by my lady's chair. That, to be sure, is not the way of the world: if it happens to see a fellow of fine proportions and aristocratic mien, who makes no *faux pas*, and wins golden opinions from all sorts of men, it straightway picks out for him the loveliest of unmarried women, and says, *There* would be a proper match! Not at all, say I: let that successful, well-shapen, discreet and able gentleman put up with something less than the best in the matrimonial department; and let the sweet woman go to make sunshine and a soft pillow for the poor devil whose legs are not models, whose efforts are often blunders, and who in general gets more kicks than half-pence.

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What mortal is there of us, who would find his satisfaction enhanced by an opportunity of comparing the picture he presents to himself of his own doings, with the picture they make on the mental retina of his neighbors? We are poor plants buoyed up by the air-vessels of our own conceit: alas for us, if we get a few pinches that empty us of that windy self-subsistence! The very capacity for good would go out of us. For, tell the most impassioned orator, suddenly, that his wig is awry, or his shirt-lap hanging out, and that he is tickling people by the oddity of his person, instead of thrilling them by the energy of his periods, and you would infallibly dry up the spring of his eloquence. That is a deep and wide saying, that no miracle can be wrought without faith — without the worker's faith in himself, as well as the recipient's faith in him. And the greater part of the worker's faith in himself is made up of the faith that others believe in him.

Let me be persuaded that my neighbor Jenkins considers me a blockhead, and I shall never shine in conversation with him any more. Let me discover that the lovely Phœbe thinks my squint intolerable, and I shall never be able to fix her blandly with my disengaged eye again.

Thank heaven, then, that a little illusion is left to us, to enable us to be useful and agreeable — that we don't know exactly what our friends think of us — that the world is not made of looking-glass, to show us ju the figure we are making, and just what is going on ochind our backs! By the help of dear friendly illu-

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sion, we are able to dream that we are charming — and our faces wear a becoming air of self-possession; we are able to dream that other men admire our talents — and our benignity is undisturbed; we are able to dream that we are doing much good — and we do a little.

END OF "AMOS BARTON."

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MR. GILFIL'S LOVE-STORY.

IT is with men as with trees: if you lop off their finest branches, into which they were pouring their young life-juice, the wounds will be healed over with some rough boss, some odd excrescence; and what might have been a grand tree expanding into liberal shade, is but a whimsical misshapen trunk. Many an irritating fault, many an unlovely oddity, has come of a hard sorrow, which has crushed and maimed the nature just when it was expanding into plenteous beauty; and the trivial erring life which we visit with our harsh blame, may be but as the unsteady motion of a man whose best limb is withered.

Alas, alas! we poor mortals are often little better than wood-ashes — there is small sign of the sap, and the leafy freshness, and the bursting buds that were once there; but wherever we see wood-ashes, we know that all that early fulness of life must have been. I, at least, hardly ever look at a bent old man, or a wizened old woman, but I see also, with my mind's eye, that Past of which they are the shrunken remnant, and the unfinished romance of rosy cheeks and bright eyes seems sometimes of feeble interest and

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significance, compared with that drama of hope and love which has long ago reached its catastrophe, and left the poor soul, like a dim and dusty stage, with all its sweet garden-scenes and fair perspectives overturned and thrust out of sight.

Rich brown locks, passionate love, and deep early sorrow, strangely different as they seem from the scanty white hairs, the apathetic content, and the unexpectant quiescence of old age, are but part of the same life's journey; as the bright Italian plains, with the sweet *Addio* of their beckoning maidens, are part of the same day's travel that brings us to the other side of the mountain, between the sombre rocky walls and among the guttural voices of the Valais.

The inexorable ticking of the clock is like the throb of pain to sensations made keen by a sickening fear. And so it is with the great clockwork of nature. Daisies and buttercups give way to the brown waving grasses, tinged with the warm red sorrel; the waving grasses are swept away, and the meadows lie like emeralds set in the bushy hedgerows; the tawny-tipped corn begins to bow with the weight of the full ear; the reapers are bending amongst it, and it soon stands in sheaves; then, presently the patches of yellow stubble lie side by side with streaks of dark-red earth, which the plough is turning up in preparation for the new-thrashed seed. And this passage from beauty to beauty, which to the happy is like the flow of a melody, measures for many a human heart

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the approach of foreseen anguish — seems hurrying on the moment when the shadow of dread will be followed up by the reality of despair.

All earthly things have their lull: even on nights when the most unappeasable wind is raging, there will be a moment of stillness before it crashes among the boughs again, and storms against the windows, and howls like a thousand lost demons through the key-holes.

A mother dreads no memories — those shadows have all melted away in the dawn of Baby's smile.

Among all the many kinds of first love, that which begins in childish companionship is the strongest and most enduring: when passion comes to unite its force to long affection, love is at its spring-tide.

In the love of a brave and faithful man there is always a strain of maternal tenderness; he gives out again those beams of protecting fondness which were shed on him as he lay on his mother's knee.

The delicate-tendrilled plant must have something to cling to.

Human longings are perversely obstinate; and to the man whose mouth is watering for a peach, it is of no use to offer the largest vegetable marrow.

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To minds on the Shepperton level it is repetition, not novelty, that produces the strongest effect; and phrases, like tunes, are a long time making themselves at home in the brain.

"Ignorance," says Ajax, "is a painless evil"; so, I should think, is dirt, considering the merry faces that go along with it.

Animals are such agreeable friends—they ask no questions, they pass no criticisms.

There are few of us that are not rather ashamed of our sins and follies as we look out on the blessed morning sunlight, which comes to us like a bright-winged angel beckoning us to quit the old path of vanity that stretches its dreary length behind us.

It is a wonderful moment, the first time we stand by one who has fainted, and witness the fresh birth of consciousness spreading itself over the blank features, like the rising sunlight on the alpine summits that lay ghastly and dead under the leaden twilight. A slight shudder, and the frost-bound eyes recover their liquid light; for an instant they show the inward semi-consciousness of an infant's; then, with a little start, they open wider and begin to *look*; the present is visible, but only as a strange writing, and the interpreter Memory is not yet there.

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We have all our secret sins; and if we knew ourselves, we should not judge each other harshly.[1]

Our thoughts are often worse than we are, just as they are often better than we are. And God sees us as we are altogether, not in separate feelings or actions, as our fellow-men see us. We are always doing each other injustice, and thinking better or worse of each other than we deserve, because we only hear and see separate words and actions. We don't see each other's whole nature.[1]

We can hardly learn humillty and tenderness enough except by suffering.[1]

Th' yoong men noo-a-deys, the're poor squashy things — the' looke well auoof, but the' woon't wear, the' woon't wear.[1]

END OF "MR. GILFIL'S LOVE-STORY."

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THE golden moments in the stream of life rush past us, and we see nothing but sand; the angels come to visit us, and we only know them when they are gone.

Always there is seed being sown silently and unseen, and everywhere there come sweet flowers without our foresight or labor. We reap what we sow, but Nature has love over and above that justice, and gives us shadow and blossom and fruit that spring from no planting of ours.

In the man whose childood has known caresses there is always a fibre of memory that can be touched to gentle issues.

There is a power in the direct glance of a sincere and loving human soul, which will do more to dissipate prejudice and kindle charity than the most elaborate arguments.

The tale of the Divine Pity was never yet believed from lips that were not felt to be moved by human pity.

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There is an unspeakable blending of sadness and sweetness in the smile of a face sharpened and paled by slow consumption.

Worldly faces never look so worldly as at a funeral. They have the same effect of grating incongruity as the sound of a coarse voice breaking the solemn silence of night.

There are moments when by some strange impulse we contradict our past selves — fatal moments, when a fit of passion, like a lava stream, lays low the work of half our lives.

Our habitual life is like a wall hung with pictures, which has been shone on by the suns of many years; take one of the pictures away, and it leaves a definite blank space, to which our eyes can never turn without a sensation of discomfort. Nay, the involuntary loss of any familiar object almost always brings a chill as from an evil omen; it seems to be the first finger-shadow of advancing death.

In those distant days, as in all other times and places where the mental atmosphere is changing, and men are inhaling the stimulus of new ideas, folly often mistook itself for wisdom, ignorance gave itself airs of knowledge, and selfishness, turning its eyes upward, called itself religion.

Religious ideas have the fate of melodies, which,

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once set afloat in the world, are taken up by all sorts of instruments, some of them wofully coarse, feeble, or out of tune, until people are in danger of crying out that the melody itself is detestable.

Opposition may become sweet to a man when he has christened it persecution: a self-obtrusive, over-hasty reformer complacently disclaiming all merit, while his friends call him a martyr, has not in reality a career the most arduous to the fleshly mind.

The strong emotions from which the life of a human being receives a new bias, win their victory as the sea wins his: though their advance may be sure, they will often, after a mightier wave than usual, seem to roll back so far as to lose all the ground they had made.

Nemesis is lame, but she is of colossal stature, like the gods; and sometimes, while her sword is not yet unsheathed, she stretches out her huge left arm and grasps her victim. The mighty hand is invisible, but the victim totters under the dire clutch.

What scene was ever commonplace in the descending sunlight, when color has awakened from its noonday sleep, and the long shadows awe us like a disclosed presence? Above all, what scene is commonplace to the eye that is filled with serene gladness, and brightens all things with its own joy?

When we are suddenly released from an acute ab-

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