

**THE PASSIONATE
PILGRIM, OR, EROS
AND ANTEROS**

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The Passionate Pilgrim, or, Eros and Anteros by Henry J. Thurstan

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HENRY J. THURSTAN

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OR

EROS AND ANTEROS

BY

HENRY J. THURSTAN.

L. S. G. 1858

Tu lasciarai ogni cosa diletta
Pih ornamento—

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1858.

250. f. 330.

φίλων φιλοτάτη
ἀειμνημοσύνης ἀλάστορός τε
ἀνάδημα



THE PASSIONATE PILGRIM

OR

EROS AND ANTEROS.

BOOK I.

I My heart was hot within me: the fire kindled: and at the last I spake with my tongue;—How have I sinned, that I should thus be punished? Ignorant of the secrets of this world's governante, dimly knowing myself, confessing error, yet anxious to find the truth,—I cannot, however, in the appeal to remembrance; in the heat of fancy, before the dispassionate assizes of reason, see cause for the infliction of pain so severe that remorse surely has no sharper stings, nor shame more enduringly distressful. He who has smitten knows the cause, and I dare not ask Him the duration. But by the many years' experience I shall here recount, I am assured this regret will not leave me for life: by remembrance of its human origin I cannot wish it effaced hereafter, except on one condition, unrecorded in any vision even of the heaven above the heavens.

Why again should I write of these things, trivial in the world's ear, terrible in my own recollection? To set forth, and, were it possible, eternalize in true words a tale like mine, is an impulse so strong, it has affected so many through all ages, that one may justly esteem it based deep in our human nature—an ultimate fact: *the fire burns*; there is no other answer. Natural too is what such confession often receives, a verdict of vanity or weakness from the strong and the successful; for wealth cannot understand poverty. Whilst he thinks it harsh and partial, the writer of course anticipates this judgment. Those who from better fortunes, or feelings less sensitive, cannot know the strange relief lying in the imagined sympathy of unknown fellow-creatures, as they read, if they read, will smile or moralize—preach patience or forgetfulness—try tears by the test of utility—turn from the hateful spectacle of pain, and close disgust with derision. Put away the book: 'I have nothing recondite to tell, nothing worth looking for; nothing either unheard of by you, or new in truth to any human creature'. But all men are not thus happiness-hardened, or will esteem a sincere *Liber Amoris* weak or vain—a mere display of folly or of egotism.

Ove sia chi per prova intenda amore,
Spero trovar pietà, non ch'è perdono.

Those, again, not inexperienced themselves in evil will recognize that in this mysterious dispensation of life, suffering seemingly unmerited in degree and endless in severity most defies explanation, and most provokes the search of any courageous and inquiring spirit; that here, on a scale of infinite minuteness, the central perplexity of the world's riddle is involved. Far from the writer is it to say—'Je ne suis fait comme aucun de ceux que j'ai vus': even for alleviation's sake, he would not care to write, were

this theme of agonies and exultations merely personal. But the thoughtful will know that man—the microcosm—repeats each in his individual sphere, one image of the fate of humanity; that a true picture of the world within by implication comprehends the world without us; that the experience of each is the lesson of all. They too, lastly, will feel the sad solace that lies in utterance; why the fire burns, and I must speak; why this confession tells strangers what has been reserved from friends.

II All suffering, it has been repeated often, destroys or is destroyed. But the latter alternative, in the sense generally meant, appears to me a partial statement. It is a phrase chosen for the purpose of well-intended consolation, and based on the secret faith that Time, who brings so much, never fails also to bring forgetfulness. 'You are sad now', it seems to say; 'but wait. After a while you also will be as you were—you will have re-entered 'on natural happiness.' And if the speaker be of a religious tone, he checks his smile to add—'You will forget. But you will find reason for thankfulness, not in the relief granted alone, but in the very remembrance, it may be, of 'your sorrow'.

If this were indeed all, we might adopt at once Voltaire's too famous apologue into the cycle of Christian morality, and follow philosopher and princess in that devotional offering—'Ils firent ériger une belle statue au Temps, avec cette inscription :

A CELUI QUI CONSOLE.

It is indeed so in romances; not in life. Sorrow, with joy (for this characterizes every passion), if not fatal, is not destroyed,—it is simply incorporated. 'Love is love for evermore'. As science tells us that Omnipotence

alone can annihilate the most trivial of atoms (if in ultimate truth Omnipotence itself be not here limited), so no man can really put by the past, or separate self from self. That the *vis viva* of identity varies much in degree, I do not deny; yet the most broken and planless of lives has its own unity. It is the *same* things which are perpetually changing: annihilation is impossible in the spiritual world, as in the material; we are at once, not merely what we are, but what we were, and what we shall be.

I cannot write with art, but only to lighten this pain; to say once more how much I have prized her: although it be indeed too late for mercy, to cry to God once more with Augustine, 'Da quod amo; amo enim; et hoc tu dedisti'. Most who have described the course of love are more careful to narrate the circumstances and crises of passion, than attempt a picture of the words, thoughts, or inner sensations of the passion itself. But if he had the faculty, the narrator would want the wish to compose a romance; to corrupt reality by ornamental fiction or 'moral purpose'; he can write only 'the things which he has seen, and the things which are'. Words indeed have their limits; like colours, they are foiled at each extremity, by the sunlight and by the gloom of nature. Yet although without expressions into which I can transfuse the elixir of their sweetness or the wormwood of their despair, I desire, so far as it may be possible, to render in language the feelings that can come but once in life, but which will throughout colour, and may survive it: to paint them with the fewest and plainest words I can; in the most English English. I do not even wish to draw the fleeting cloud, only to fix the hues that paled it with death, or crimsoned it into glory.

A thousand trivialities of common life not altogether omissible—not altogether, as I hope, unpardonable in narration, formed part of these spiritual experiences: and by the subtle intercurrents of being, passed into the mind, or whatever it may be, which is the silent and sequestered centre of our individuality. A thousand perplexed thoughts on human life, thoughts not novel, but the oldest of the old, and so gifted with perpetual youth, grew with advancing years, menaced often life itself with overshadowing terror, and found in passion a contrasting peace, or a consolatory resolution. Some account, therefore, of mental progress, the steps of study and the teachings of man and nature, is a necessary portion of an undertaking, which will interest none but those—and better for mankind were they the majority—from whom nothing human is alien.

III There is a time in the life of all men so forgotten, that we can hardly call it part of life. 'It is dead', Augustine has observed, 'and we are alive'. We accept our own infancy on the faith of others. It never came within the range of recollection. It lay beyond the sphere of personal identity. The mind of Plato himself or Shakspeare was then, so far as we can imagine, only a thing future and possible. It was a land of darkness where we were, and knew it not, and were unconscious that ourselves had any real existence; till some accident, the society of other children, or childish prayer, or death in the house, lifted the veil, and our position in this strange earth became partially cognizable. It is often the same with the earlier days of what is to be the friendship, the passion, the real life of life. We were with angels, and we knew it not: the 'Presence which is not to be put by' was over us, but our eyes were sealed. Thus