

**BODY AND SOUL:
IN TWO VOLUMES,
VOL. II**

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Body and Soul: In Two Volumes, Vol. II by George Wilkins

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GEORGE WILKINS

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GEO. C. SHATTUCK.

BODY AND SOUL.

IN

TWO VOLUMES.

Ut in vitâ, sic in studiis, pulcherrimum et humanissimum existimo, severitatem comitatemque miscere, ne illa in tristitiam, hæc in petulantiam procedat.—*PAUL. Epist.*

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1824.

THE FATALIST.

CAPTAIN FORTISCUE had seen many a naval engagement, and had fought upon every occasion with such undaunted heroism, as left his judgment infinitely more questionable than his courage. He was not only addicted to an excess of patriotic impetuosity, but sought out the road to danger, with the same zeal that others commonly used to avoid it. The same enthusiasm characterised him in every thing. Still he possessed talent which a proper cultivation might have made brilliant,—a genius prompt to invent, and enterprise to encounter; but, like the vessel in which he rode upon the ocean, he stood in frequent need of a rudder to direct his devious course. He had performed such prodigies of valour, and manifested such self-devotion to his profession, that, had he possessed greater stability of discretion, he would have claimed distinction in the service. His spirits were always variable; now buoyed up by sanguine expectation, now dejected by disappointment: like the element on which he lived, he was at one time calm and motionless, at another violent and raging. After having served upon almost every station, and fought with almost every nation of the globe, he had retired upon half-pay, with the addition of a pension, the compensation for the loss of an arm carried away in the last action in which he was engaged. With such a mind, and such feelings, it was impossible for him to remain inactive; but at length wearied with forming projects

which terminated in abortion, and tired of the sameness of life, he looked out for one who might comfort and solace him in his retirement, and relieve the tedium of life by the endearments of conjugal happiness. As he was a man whose mind was prone to despondency when activity of life ceased, he had, from the time of his removal from service, occasionally fallen into great mental gloominess, which had been increased rather than subdued by false sentiments of religion: it was his wish, therefore, to make choice of a wife whose views in these respects might, in some degree, assimilate to his own. As he was thrown but little into the society of those of his own profession, he could not execute the design he once formed, of uniting himself to the daughter of a brother-officer, who might understand, and feel interested in the relation of those oft-repeated anecdotes of the good and great things of his earlier life, which formed the not unfrequent subject of his conversation. Indeed, removed to a distance from all circumstances and persons connected with the service, his mind turned to the contemplation of other subjects, and chiefly to religion. So much had his attention been engrossed by sacred and nautical reflections, that he had drawn up a treatise on the naval tactics of the Old and New Testament, in which he had descanted at large upon the structure and capacity of Noah's ark, and compared it with the vessels built by Deucalion and the Argonauts; he had hazarded an opinion of the probable burden of the Ninevite ship, from which, in order to lighten its freight, Jonah had been hurled into the profundity of the deep; and then he had run into a digression of some length, to prove that whales have never been found in the latitudes in which the prophet was sailing: then taking a

comprehensive view of the improvement of the science in subsequent ages, he established beyond all controversy, the tonnage of the craft which sailed to and fro over the lake of Gennesareth, and concluded by appending a pointed stricture upon the misconception of Raphael; who, in one of his cartoons representing the miraculous draught of fishes, had placed several figures of the holy personages in a boat, so small, that any one by his own weight, alone, must have upset it. In this way his mind had been occupied, when it was suddenly turned from the course of these lucubrations, by falling into the company of a daughter of an eminent tradesman of the town; a lady who had once possessed some indisputable pretensions to beauty, the loss of which was now counterbalanced by what might be considered the prospect of a pretty fortune, an education rather beyond her station in life, and the inheritance of the severest principles of religion. The season of love is the season of poetical inspiration; and many were the attempts which the Captain made to assail the strong-holds of the lady's heart, by exalting her opinion of his talents, and inflaming her with the ardour of his affection. His mode of disclosing the labouring passion of his breast was not so singular as it was affecting; it was expressed in the following rhapsody, which was delivered at the close of an evening visit, with the vice-like grasp of a hard hand, and the upward cast of an enamoured, but a blood-shot eye:

Oh Cupid, God of wild desires!
Venus, Mistress of the Loves!
Oh quench, oh quench these inward fires,
Hither drive your purple doves.

Waft yourselves upon the ocean
Of the blue and cloudless sky,

For, alas ! you have no notion
How very near I am to die.

To die—in one ecstatic burst
Of a non-descriptive joy ;
I burn, I burn, oh slake my thirst !—
Raging Loves my senses cloy.

Tho' in battle I've been wounded,
And by waves have oft been tost,
Until now I ne'er was grounded,
Ne'er till now have I been lost—

Lost—in fiercest adoration
Of her many various charms,
Ye Gods ! accept of my prostration,
Give, oh give her to my arms !

The conclusion of these lines was truly poetical, because it was the height of fiction in the author to represent himself as possessing two arms, when he evidently had but one. This mistake did not, however, escape his observation, and if he could have altered the sentiment without altering the rhymes, he would have done so ; but it was revolting from his mind to represent himself as a dismembered lover ; besides, as he had once possessed the full complement of limbs, he suffered the stanza to remain. But the result of all this was not what he had anticipated ; for though the lines breathed an unequivocal avowal of his love, yet the lady's sensibility was altogether shocked at the profanation of invoking heathen deities, which, she said, were only other names for demons ; and the offer of prostration to them amounted, in her opinion, to sheer idolatry. Her displeasure, therefore, was wofully excited by this unhappy effusion, and would probably have proved, for some length of time, fatal to his suit, had he not soon afterwards offered a more congenial, serious, and approved effort of his Muse.

Here, a vile but contrite sinner
 Seeks a Saint endow'd with grace,
 Fain and fairly would he win her
 In the semblance of thy face.

Holy maiden ! know ! love thee ;
 Religion's voice in thee ! hear ;
 From thy presence do not drive me ;
 Methinks I feel an holy fear,

Storms and tempests I've not heeded,
 They were all the sports of Fate ;
 Other lessons I have needed
 To remind me of my state.

With vice in every shape infected,
 From thy sight I ought to flee ;
 But I feel myself elected
 To partake of bliss with thee.

Canst thou wish to stop the torrent,
 Or the trade-wind in its course ?
 Canst thou meet the storm abhorrent,
 Or unshrinking stem its force ?

Then, seek not, Lady, to reject me
 Nor my fondness to reprove ;
 To thy sweet embrace elect me,
 Let me revel in thy love !

No sooner had she gained upon the affections of the Captain, and procured the key which unlocked the arcana of his heart, than she exerted her power to eradicate those notions which she deemed false, and to strengthen those she judged right and holy. His treatise upon sacred nautical tactics she constrained him now, as the condition of her acceptance of him, to burn to ashes, as a profanation which no other sacrifice nor altar could remove ; and here, little " Dan Cupid," was exemplified thy power ! That which had cost him so much intense contemplation, exhibiting in one view all his knowledge and learning, which he had cherished as the progeny of his

brain, the child of his fancy, the offspring of his inventive genius and erudite imagination, was, in one moment of time, all obliterated, pulverised, and destroyed, to purchase — what? the heart and hand of a maiden of forty, who, in all the paleness and pride of an austere religionist, promised the partner of her couch the participation of her own gloominess, to mix with that compound which made up the gravity and gaiety of his own unsettled disposition. The thing was however, after much compunction and some little hesitation, performed; after which, and some other preliminaries which were said to be calculated to ensure spiritual rather than earthly comfort, the lady, with downcast look and blushing modesty, suffered herself to be conducted to the altar.

This was almost the last act of worship which the Captain performed in the Church; for from this day Mrs. Fortiscue had passed an *unanimous* resolution, that they should attend the service of a Chapel, of which her uncle was the minister, and in which the doctrines of Calvin were preached to their full extent. To this her spouse made no objection, inclined as he was by habit and inclination to give way to a perfect belief in Predestination, and absolute Necessity; a belief which had actuated him on so many occasions to meet danger and to brave death in every form. For many years were these notions strengthened by the perpetual sanction of his wife's authority; and when, after a little time she presented him with a son, her power was complete. It is easy, therefore, to conceive how poignant must have been his sorrow, when all joy was suspended by the announcement of the death of her who had given birth to his child. He bore the calamity with no religion, with no