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## **THE OLD MATHEMATICIAN.**

**A SKETCH FROM THE LIFE.**

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I AM about to write of a great man — no ideal, but one who most truly lived, laboured, suffered, died, and “left no sign.” You will not find his name in the rolls of the Royal Society; and yet he was a wiser philosopher than nine tenths of that learned body. You will never be asked to subscribe to a testimonial immortalizing his benevolence; and yet he was a philanthropist as sincere — perhaps as great — as Clarkson. You will read no book dilating on his trials; and yet he was a hero — a martyr, too. No painter ever craved permission to transmit his bodily likeness to posterity: the pen shall do it here.

Clement Griffin sprang from that rude mass which is the foundation stone of society, but from whose rough, unformed depths, many a pure marble fragment has been brought to light; and doubtless there might be many more, if some skilful sculptor's hand were found to breathe life and beauty into the shapeless mass. Clement Griffin was one of “the people.” He bore in his person the distinctive marks which most commonly descend from one labouring generation to another — the short ungainly stature, the large rough hand, and the ill-formed mouth, in which no curve of beauty was found. But one peculiarity of his face was too striking to be passed over: he had the eye of intellect, gray, piercing, yet at times inexpressibly soft, deeply set under overhanging brows. These eyebrows were so remarkable that even a stranger would have noticed them — thick, bushy, iron-gray even in youth, and meeting in a line over the nose. Had Clement lived in these phrenological days, a Spurzheim or a Gall would have gloried in the strongly-developed head; but at the close of the eighteenth century people only regarded the internal faculties of a man's cranium, and that little

enough. Otherwise, Griffin would never have been the poor drudge he was, namely, master of writing and arithmetic in a provincial grammar-school.

Yet this man, who day after day went through the dull round of duty, and might be seen trudging to and from the school in his coarse, threadbare garments, his ribbed worsted stockings, and immense clouted shoes; or in the school-room, carelessly treated by the master, and made game of for his odd old-fashioned ways by youths only a few years his juniors — this man was at once a mathematician, a philosopher, a mechanist of the most ingenious kind, an astronomer, acquainted with nearly all the abstract sciences, and had pursued these various acquirements entirely unaided, save by the force of his own powerful mind. Yet with all this learning, in his manners and habits he was as simple as a child. He would come home from his daily duties, eat his bowl of porridge and milk — for both from poverty and choice Clement Griffin was a Pythagorean — and sit down to pore over mathematical and astronomical lore, which he followed as far as the written science of the times permitted. When he could go no farther on the track of others, he calculated and made discoveries for himself.

I know not how far the wisdom of my hero may be impugned, when I confess that he was a cabalist and astrologer. He was no petty charlatan, no prying sceptic; but his strong, earnest, and withal pious mind, penetrated, or sought to penetrate, into those mysteries of science and nature which the ignorant have ridiculed and the cunning made a tool of, but which many wise — ay, and religious men, too — have in all ages believed. This is not the place to enter into an argument; but while setting forth as a broad principle that no man should scoff at or condemn anything which he has not fathomed to the bottom, let us not think the worse of Clement Griffin because he was an astrologer. He pursued this favourite study, not for gain, but as a lover of science; thus carrying out the astronomical and mathematical principles which are the root of the occult art.

It is not surprising that these pursuits made Clement, even at the early age of thirty, a solitary and prematurely old man. Indeed, no one in the neighbourhood ever remembered his being young. Everybody knew him, thought him an oddity, perhaps slightly mad; but his peculiarities were quite

harmless, and no one ever had an ill word to say of "Old Griffin," or "Old Griff," as he had always been called, even when the parish register might have proved him just five-and-twenty. He had none of those home-ties which make the poetry of life — no mother or sister; and as for the young damsels of B—, they would as soon have thought of wedding the grim knight's statue that frowned at the church door, as of laying siege to the heart of Clement Griffin. Moreover, he had risen in mind at least above his own class — that of working artificers — and with the higher ranks he never thought to mingle; so that in every way Clement was essentially a solitary man.

He had no poetry in his composition — probably never read two rhyming lines in his life — had almost a terror of the visible poetry of the world — woman. A fair face alarmed him; the sound of a merry, girlish tongue made him run away. This was not contempt or misogyny, but merely because he understood and felt with the race of womankind even less than he did with his brother men. And he had little sympathy with the latter. There was only one feminine face that Clement ever looked at, and that was the face of a little school-girl, who, day after day, traversed the same road as he did. At first, Griffin thought this very disagreeable, as the chief reason of his choosing that road had been because it was so lonely, and no passers-by ever interrupted his thoughts. But by degrees he grew accustomed to the light step that overtook his, and the passing look of a pair of brown eyes, as fearless and yet shy as those of a young deer.

After a while, instead of hastening off before the little school-girl had passed his door, lest he might meet her, Clement began to go out at the precise hour she came, that he might be close behind her the whole way. He rarely let her see him, but walked on the other side of the road, where the overhanging hedge almost entirely concealed him. There was in the fresh innocence and glad-heartedness of the child, as she went along, dangling her school-basket, sometimes conning her lesson aloud, sometimes singing merrily — something new, and rather pleasant than otherwise, which touched even the philosopher. He often stopped in the middle of some algebraic problem which he was working in his head as he sauntered along, to listen to the little girl's unconscious

singing, and wonder whether a baby-sister, the only one he had ever had, whose small grave he passed by every Sunday, had been like her.

This one gentle and humanising feeling was like a golden thread running through the dry and musty web of the mathematician's life; the only spark of involuntary poetry which had ever lighted up the dark caverns of his powerful but rugged mind. The child's daily presence became almost necessary to him; and he was less glad than usual when the holidays came, since she no longer passed his door. But his engrossing pursuits soon diverted Clement's attention; and, released for a time from the torment of instructing noisy, stupid, and headstrong boys in the mysteries of arithmetic, he devoted, as usual, his days to science and his nights to astronomy. When the holidays ended, Clement received a summons to attend a young ladies' school, where the former instructor in writing and arithmetic had absolutely eloped with the eldest pupil! There was no fear of Clement Griffin committing such an enormity, so he was chosen in the room of the transgressor. Woefully repugnant to all Clement's tastes was this situation; but he was so poor — poor even with his simple habits; and there was an astronomical instrument he longed to purchase, and could not, — so he consented to attend Miss Simmons's class.

When Griffin entered on his duties, the first face raised to look inquiringly at the new master was that of the little school-girl. It was smiling and pleasant, almost as if she recognised him, and Clement became less shy and uncomfortable under its influence. From that time the mathematician grew less painfully reserved — less shut up in himself. He had some human thing in which to take an interest; and his heart opened to all the world in proportion as it did to little Agnes Martindale. There was something in common between the philosopher and the child. She was, like himself, essentially solitary; one of among many brothers and sisters: she had no particular qualities to attract notice — little beauty, except those large, soft, brown eyes, and not one showy talent. It was only Clement Griffin's instruction which developed the natural bent of her mind, wherein her whole powers lay — and curious to relate, this strongly resembled his own. The master continually turned from his dull and inattentive boy pupils to this girl, who, by a faculty



in general foreign to woman's mind, quickly apprehended as fast as he could teach; so that Clement partly with a vague curiosity to see how far female capacity would go, and partly because these lessons were inexplicably pleasant to him, gradually led her on, far beyond the usual limit of feminine acquirements. When Agnes Martindale had finished her education and left school, Clement still gave her instruction; he could not bear to break the charmed tie.

Oh, how mad — how blind was this man! whose mind had strength to grapple with the deepest mysteries of science and nature, and yet was unlearned as a child in reading the human heart — most of all, his own. He never dreamed for a moment that the secret influence which made life pleasant to him, and lent a new charm even to his dearest pursuits, was the universal spirit which pervades all things; bowing alike the strongest and the weakest; the wise man and the — fool we were about to write — but no! the meanest mind becomes great when it is able to harbour Love.

Clement came in and out as he chose, at Agnes's home. When the mathematical lessons were over, the younger children played with "Aggy's old master," for something in Griffin's nature made him assimilate more with children than with men, perhaps because there was in his own simple character a curious mingling of the child and the sage, without any admixture of the man of the world. Then, by degrees, he got into the habit of establishing himself in one corner, and receiving his bowl of tea from Agnes's hands. No one ever seemed to think it necessary to talk to him or notice him any more than if he were some piece of household furniture, and so he would sit contentedly, hour after hour, in silence, until bed-time came. Then he would quietly shake hands with one or two of the circle with whom he was most at ease, and steal out, unobserved, to his own home. Often when he reached it, he thought how its gloom and darkness contrasted painfully with the cheerful lights and sounds of Farmer Martindale's cosy parlour; and when he looked up at the stars, in whose influence he so firmly believed, he pondered more over the future than he was wont.

It chanced that for some weeks a long and severe illness kept Agnes from his sight, and then Clement Griffin felt and seemed like one from whom the light of day has suddenly been removed. Every morning he crept up to the farm to ask

of children or servants the latest tidings, and none were surprised at his anxious face; it was "only Aggy's old master, who made such a pet of her still." When the invalid came down stairs, the first greeting that met her was his. Agnes was almost startled when she gave him her hand, to feel a hot tear drop upon it.

"You have been very kind in asking after me, Mr. Griffin. I assure you I am really better," said the unconscious girl. "I shall soon be able to go on with the lesson. Pray, be content about me."

He did not answer, but went quietly to his own corner. This illness of hers had made him restless. No longer satisfied with the present, he began to think of chances that might put an end to his happiness. Following, too, the natural inclination of his character, he one day asked Agnes to tell him the day and hour of her birth, that he might cast her horoscope, and know her future fate.

Agnes looked at him eagerly, for he had half made her a convert to his own belief. Then a sudden thought appeared to strike her. She blushed deeply, and answered in a hurried tone — "No; I had rather not know more — more than I do already — it might make me unhappy, and I am now so —"

The door opened quickly, and the girl's blush deepened to the brightest crimson, as it admitted one who had of late been as frequent a visitor as Clement himself. Griffin was never quite pleased at this, for Rupert Nicol's entrance always put a stop to the mathematical studies, and, moreover, having been one of the refractory boys at the grammar-school, the young man had hardly learned to treat his former teacher with consideration. Many a whisper and look from Agnes was necessary to quell his propensity for quizzing "old Griff," even now.

Clement went home early that night, wondering why Agnes had blushed at the thought of her future fate; feeling vexed at Nicol's sudden entrance, and oppressed by a vague sense of restless disquietude, which made him seize the next half-holiday to walk to the farm. When he came there, the family were all out in the hay-harvest, the maid said, all but Miss Agnes. Clement was rather glad of this. They would have the lesson in peace and quietness. He went to the little parlour, and looked through the half-open door.

The room was very still; so still that it might have had no

occupants; but there were two — Agnes, and Rupert Nicol. They sat together; her right hand lay on his shoulder, and above it rested her sweet, young face, not lifted up, but drooping and blushing with deep happiness. Her left hand was held in both of his; he was trying on the third finger a gold circlet — the wedding-ring.

That terrible moment discovered to Clement Griffin his love and its doom. The quiet, cold, dreaming philosopher found out that he was a man, with all the long-slumbering passions and emotions of man roused up within him. He knew likewise that they were all in vain; for a love more baseless, mad, and utterly hopeless, never tortured human breast than now racked that of Clement Griffin.

The young betrothed, as she sat in her quiet chamber, preparing for her bridal, or laid her head on her pillow, but to be haunted by dreams of her beloved, his last tender words, his dearest of all dear smiles, knew not that there was another who paced night after night beneath her window, in agony so deep, so wild, that had the girl seen it, her emotions would have been less of pity than of terror — who spent whole hours in lying on the stone steps of the threshold, which her light happy footfall had just crossed. Clement was no sighing dreamer, indulging in delicious sorrow and sentimental woe; he was not young, and the one great feeling of love had never been frittered away into smaller fancies; it was no boyish ideal, but a terrible reality. He was not a poet to make an idol of the past; the future suddenly and for ever became a blank; and Love itself was changed into Despair.

Agnes married Rupert, and went with him to the far-off home which he had made for her. After she was gone, a few of the neighbours observed that the “Old Mathematician” — they had cause to call him old now, for his hair was quite grey — that Clement Griffin seemed lost without his pupil; that he shut himself up much at home, and was more eccentric than ever when abroad. No tongue whispered, no heart guessed, the real truth. When, a short time afterwards, Clement threw up his situation, with the excuse that he was going elsewhere to bring out a new invention of his own, the only observation made was that “mad folk always get madder the older they grow.” In another year, when Agnes came home on a visit, and inquired after her old teacher, the people at B— seemed almost to have forgotten his name.

Twenty years from the last epoch in my story, a lady in widow's weeds, accompanied by two children, entered the shop of a working mathematician, in one of the large provincial towns. She wanted to have a little casket repaired; it was made of ebony, and the lock, of very curious workmanship, had been broken. The spruce shopman, whose profusely-scented hair and aquiline nose, under which grew a delicate moustache, bespoke him that most disagreeable of modern anomalies, an Adonised Jew, examined it with a puzzled air.

"I never saw anything like this before, madam. We have nothing of the sort in our shop," he said.

"Very likely not; I did not buy it; it was made for me many years ago. I believe the lock is quite original of its kind. Do you think it possible to repair it?"

The shopman shook his head. "I don't know, ma'am; there is something very odd about it: but we have a clever workman here. I will send for him, if you will wait a moment."

The lady sat down: her two boys amused themselves with peering at the curiosities of the shop, but the mother drew down her veil, and seemed rather thinking of the past than alive to the present. The shopman still pored over the casket with much curiosity.

"It must have been a skilful workman who made this, madam. Ebony will turn the edge of our hardest tools."

The lady did not reply to his evident curiosity, except by a bend of the head; and in a few minutes the person who had been sent for came. He was a little old man, nearly bald, with gray bushy eyebrows, and wonderfully keen eyes; as these fell upon the casket, he started and trembled visibly.

"Do you think you can mend this, old fellow?" said the young Jew, carelessly.

The person addressed took the casket in his hand, and walked to the light. He never looked at the customer; he saw nothing but the casket; and did not notice how the lady had risen, and was watching him in extreme surprise.

"I know this well. I can easily mend it. Where did you get it, Mr. Salomans?" anxiously inquired he.

"It is mine," answered a sweet voice under the widow's veil, and a hand was stretched out to the old man. "Do

you not know me, Mr. Griffin? I remembered you at once."

The casket fell from his hand.

"Miss Agnes, is it you, Miss Agnes!" He glanced at her dress. "I beg pardon, Mrs. —. I am old, and cannot remember your name now."

"Never mind, call me anything you like; I am so glad to have found you out at last. Many a time, Rupert and I — ah! poor Rupert," — the widow's voice faltered, and her tears fell fast. A strange dimness had gathered over the eyes of Clement Griffin too. It was well that the young Jew was busy with some new customer at the other end of the shop.

"And are these children yours, Miss Agnes?" said the Old Mathematician, trying with instinctive delicacy to divert her from her grief, though his whole frame trembled with agitation, and his voice was almost inaudible.

"Yes: Robert and Charles, go and shake hands with Mr. Griffin; you have often heard about him. They know you quite well, indeed, dear old friend. Robert has learned all the definitions you wrote out for me, long, long ago."

"And did you keep those definitions, Miss Agnes? How good of you!" said Clement, taking her hand with a sudden impulse, and then dropping it again in alarm, as he saw the eyes of his superior bent on him with astonishment. "We cannot talk here: may I come and see you?"

Mrs. Nicol told him where she lived, shook his hand again warmly, and departed.

"So you can mend this, Griffin, I suppose," said Salomans, with a sneer.

"Mend what?" Clement repeated, dreamily.

"The casket, you old idiot."

"Yes, I ought; for I made it myself."

"And that lady, pray do you know her?"

"A friend, an old friend — yes, I think I may say that," muttered the old man.

"Umph! I did not know you had a friend in the world. Come, off with you! nobody wants an old goose like you in the shop."

Patiently, without answering a word, the poor old man stole back to his workshop. Strange, that with his commanding intellect, he should have been the slave and butt of a petty fop like this! But, throughout his life, Clement Griffin, in all

worldly things, was as ignorant as a child. Agnes Nicol felt this, with a compassion almost amounting to pain, when he told her, as they sat in her little parlour, the outward story of his life since they had last met. She discovered how more than one curious mechanical invention of his, now making a noise in the world, had brought wealth to others, while the deceived inventor toiled on for very bread by the labour of his hands; how his talents and skill had been traded upon — and were so even now — while he himself was treated as a poor drudge. Not that he told all this, for he hardly perceived it himself; but Agnes found it out from his simple and undisguised tale.

It was to them both a strange return of old times. When the children were gone to bed, Griffin sat in the fire-side corner. Agnes had made ready for him the supper he always liked — bread-and-milk: when he took the basin from her hand, the old man put it down on the chair beside him, and burst into tears.

“You are very good to me, Miss Agnes, very! I beg your pardon; I am but a foolish old man, and you make me think of past times.”

Agnes herself was much moved; the more so since she had her own story to relate — not a happy one. The girlish dream had hardly been fulfilled. Alas! when is it? But the widow's sorrow sufficiently testified to the wife's abiding love. A mother's cares were added too, for her boys were growing up; and Mrs. Nicol was poor, very poor. Clement had as yet seen nothing but herself; now he glanced at the meanly furnished room, and though he understood little of such things, he felt that it was hardly meet for an inhabitant like Agnes. How he longed for every coin which he had cast away, or been robbed of, that he might pour all at her feet, and then go and work for his own daily bread all his life long!

If ever an earnest, noble, disinterested love abided in human heart, it was in that of Clement Griffin. Strangely distorted though his nature was — a compound of strength and weakness — of wisdom and madness — of unworldliness that amounted to ignorance — warped through circumstances, and yet intrinsically noble — most surely there was in it one spot, an altar, that might have been a resting-place for angels' feet. Time had quenched the burning fire which once consumed



him, and he could now look on Agnes' still fair face, and feel no pain. He felt thankful that she had never known his madness, or she would have despised him. It *was* madness; but Agnes was too much of a woman to have despised any true and earnest love, however presumptuous and hopeless it might have been. It was over — the wildest imagination could not rekindle its ashes now.

It was a pleasure to Agnes in her widowed and poverty-haunted solitude to have the occasional presence of the kind old man, whom in her childhood and youth she had sincerely regarded. He taught the boys, too, all that lay in his power; and it revived his old enthusiasm to take young Robert on his knee, and instruct him in pursuits to which the boy had already an ardent inclination.

"He will make a great man — a first-rate mathematician," Clement would say, while his eyes brightened, and he looked from his young scholar to the mother who had once been his pupil too, while Agnes would smile, half pensively, and only hope that her boy's life might not resemble that of the hapless enthusiast before her. Sometimes she tried to reason with him; but the old man was quite contented with his present home.

"Salomans gives me food and clothes, almost as much as I want," he argued. "What more can I desire? He only requires me to work in the day, and then I have the night for study. I am really quite content. Besides, he took me in when I had not a penny, and saved me from going to the parish perhaps," said the old man smiling sadly. "I ought to stay with him out of gratitude; and every now and then he gives me some money too: so that in time I shall have bought back all the books I lost."

Poor simple philosopher! — simple, yet wise; for all the sages in Christendom could not have boasted that truest, purest wisdom, which is before all things in the sight of the All-wise.

Agnes Nicol had to struggle hard to bring up her boys as she desired. As Robert's talents developed themselves, she longed to give him every advantage; but it was a hard thing even to provide him with books. Clement Griffin found out this, and soon the needful volumes were brought by him. He said they were his own — a loving and generous fiction. The old man, conquering his natural shyness, had sought for stray

pieces of work from the other opticians of the town, and devoted his nights to their completion, to gain the payment which his skill readily commanded. Thus it was that his pupil's little library grew. Clement Griffin, in his simplicity, could imagine no other need but that of books, or else his whole nights would have been spent in thus working to supply comforts to Agnes Nicol and her children.

At last Robert had a chance of obtaining advancement in the branch of science to which his taste inclined. A distant cousin of his father's, who was a mathematical-instrument maker in London, offered to take the boy for a small premium. But all the mother's contrivances could not procure the sum. Clement Griffin's sorrow was equal to hers, for he loved Robert, and was proud of his talents. Night after night, as he traced his way homeward, the old man pondered over every possible expedient to get over this difficulty, and find the necessary money. Sometimes in his simplicity he thought of walking to London — only a hundred miles — and offering to work six months in old Nicol's shop, if he would but remit the premium for Robert. But then iron fetters could not be stronger than those self-forged chains which bound Clement, as he thought out of gratitude, to Salomans. Likewise, with instinctive delicacy, he felt that Mrs. Nicol must not be acquainted with any sacrifice for her sake, or her refusal would at once make it vain. The old man was floating in a sea of doubt and perplexity. To him, coining twenty gold guineas would have seemed far less difficult than earning them in the ordinary old-world fashion like any other man.

At last, as the Old Mathematician sat one night among his books, a bright idea flashed across him. Those beloved volumes suddenly assumed a value, not like that he had so long set upon them, but a marketable value. They might be sold! Had he himself been starving, the thought would never have entered Clement's mind; but for Robert — for *her* child — yes! he would sell them! The dusty old tomes seemed transformed into bright shining coins already, all whispering in his ear, "Do it, Clement; what good are we to an old fellow like you? Use us to make a great man of this boy, who will grow up to be famous, when you are no more." Clement turned over their leaves that he might come to some conclusion as to the definite value of these his treasures. It seemed almost like a man anatomising the bodies of his own children;

so dear, so sacred were they to the old philosopher. But stronger feelings than even these were at work within. The man's noble heart triumphed over his devotion to knowledge. He sold the books.

Then, even when the struggle was over, the twenty gold coins sat like a weight of lead upon Clement's heart. Day after day he carried them with him to Mrs. Nicol's, and yet he could not tell how to give them so as to prevent her knowing through whom the gift came, and the sacrifice by which it had been purchased. At length chance opened a way. Agnes, in despair at her boy's melancholy, proposed writing to a rich relative, and entreating, not as a gift but as a loan, that he would provide the means for Robert's outset in life.

"Strangers are sometimes kinder than friends," the mother tried to moralize; "and he is almost a stranger, though connected by blood, for I never saw his face or had a letter from him in my life. Yet people say he is a good man. I will try him."

It chanced that Clement Griffin, in the course of his chequered life, had known this man; and known, too, that the outward character he bore was false. But he did not undeceive the sanguine mother; for, with a quickness and loving stratagem, most unwonted to him, he conceived a plan of doing what the rich man would never have done. He assented eagerly, almost tremblingly, to Agnes's proposition.

"I knew him once. I will take the letter myself," cried Clement.

He took it, and returned next day with a kind message and twenty pounds, "as a gift," he said, though the eccentric but generous donor refused any acknowledgment, either personal or written. Agnes, almost wild in her joy, did not notice the quivering lips, the tremulous voice of her old friend, nor the hasty confusion with which he retreated home. He had suffered far more from the contrivance of this *ruse* than even from the noble self-denial which had prompted it. His truthful conscience reproached him even for the generous lie, and it was long before he could meet the eye of Agnes Nicol.

As Clement grew older, he plunged the deeper into his dreamy pursuits. While Mrs. Nicol and her children lived in his neighbourhood, there was still one tie that connected him with the outer world. But ere long, a small accession of

fortune came to the long-enduring widow, and she went to establish herself near her prosperous boy Robert. Before she left, she entreated her old master to come and settle in London, where Robert would be able to requite the care which had mainly contributed to his success. But the old man only shook his head, with the smile of quiet melancholy that had become habitual to him.

"No, no, Miss Agnes. What should such as I do in London? People would only laugh at my odd ways — perhaps you yourself might be ashamed of me."

"Never — dear, good friend," cried Agnes. She felt it at the time; but afterwards she thought the gray ribbed stockings and clumsy shoes would look rather strange in the pretty drawing-room of which Robert wrote. "And is there nothing I can do to show how much I value you?" she asked.

Clement's eyes looked dim, and the muscles about his mouth twitched convulsively. "You are very kind, Miss Agnes; — then, will you think of me now and then, and perhaps write to me? Direct to the post-office, because I rather imagine Salomans reads all my letters when any come for me."

"And yet you stay with him?"

"Oh, yes. It does me no harm. I have no secrets. God bless you, Miss Agnes — and good-bye!"

"But Robert, who owes you so much: can he do nothing?"

"Why, yes," said the old man, hesitating; "I have heard of a new achromatic object-glass for a telescope. I should like to see it, because I thought of inventing one myself. Perhaps Robert would send me down one, if not too much trouble. And tell him I am very glad he is growing a rich man — only he must keep to mathematics — a head-full of geometry is worth a house-full of gold. Good-bye, and God bless you once more. Miss Agnes — you have been very kind to me, you and your boys. Good-bye."

Agnes watched him down the street. A quaint figure he looked, in the long gray coat and broad-brimmed hat. She noticed how slow and trembling was his gait, and how he stooped more than ever over his thick stick, which had of late become indispensable to him. A few tears rose to her eyes, but they were more to the remembrance of past days than to him.

"Poor old Griffin — he is a good soul, though he is so odd. I wish Robert could have done something for him; but then

he seems quite content, and has so few wants. Well, well, I suppose he is quite happy in his own way." And she turned away to think of the cheerful home which Robert had prepared for her.

Mrs. Nicol was a good woman, — thoughtful, kind, — ay, grateful. For a long season, the strange, long, rambling letters of Clement Griffin were regularly answered; and many times a gift of the kind most likely to please him — a new scientific book of curious invention — found its way to the garret at Salomans'. At last Clement wrote that perhaps Robert had better not send again, for Mr. Salomans generally took them in his own care, and he himself had little use of them.

"How tiresome that he will stay with those wretches," said Robert Nicol; "there is no doing anything for him while he is at Salomans'."

Mrs. Nicol wrote to the same effect — begging him to come at once and make his home with them. But there was no reply for many weeks. Then Agnes received one letter, which follows here, in all its quaint mournfulness: —

"MRS. AGNES NICOL.

"DEAR FRIEND. — Not having received any answer to my last three letters, I am afraid you have forgotten me. It is not surprising; for I believe London is a strange place. I write these few lines to say farewell, as I may never be able to write to you, or see you again on earth. I have been very ill. Indeed, I think, from the appearance of the stars, and Saturn being in opposition to my *Hyleg* — that I shall not get better. Mr. Salomans says I am a great expense to him, and I believe I must be, as I can work little now. So he has told me to leave him next week. I hope he will give me a little money: but I am afraid he will not; and then I shall have to go to my parish, if I can walk there. So, dear Miss Agnes, if you should not hear any more of me, this comes to bid you farewell, and may God bless you and yours, and may He take my soul to Himself when the time comes! I wish you had let me cast your nativity, as my horoscope has come so true — of which I am rather glad. I hope you are well in health — should have liked to have heard from you once again, but suppose you had other and better things to think about. My hand shakes, but I hope you will make out this. I pray God

to bless you all your life, as He has me, in spite of all my troubles. And so no more until we meet with Him. From your sincere friend,

“CLEMENT GRIFFIN.”

Agnes was painfully startled, and almost conscience-stricken by this letter. She was in weak health, or she would have gone immediately to the succour of her old master. “However, Robert shall go down to-morrow, and bring him safe back,” was her first thought.

But Robert was just then very busy, constructing a curious machine for a scientific nobleman, and could not be spared. “Next week will do, mother; you know it is not the first time those wretches have threatened to turn him away — it may be only his fancies. He must be quite an old man now, and perhaps his mind wanders. The letter bears no date, you see, and is written very unconnectedly.”

Mrs. Nicol agreed that it was, and perhaps matters were not so bad as old Mr. Griffin thought. She was over-persuaded by her son to wait a day or two; and it was no use writing. She put the letter — a soiled, crumpled, rough sheet of paper it was — in her gay work-box, thought of it many a time that day, until her many household interests slowly blotted it out. The thing was not unnatural or unkind.

On the morrow, Mrs. Nicol received another letter — a formal missive from a parish doctor. It stated “how an old man, found dying in the road, had been brought into the workhouse at H—. There he had died, and been buried at the parish expense. The only thing that was found upon the deceased — a book, on whose cover was written the name and address of Mrs. Nicol — the workhouse-master begged to enclose.”

It was a Bible, inscribed in a cramped, childish hand, to “Clement Griffin, from his pupil, Agnes Martindale, 2nd May, 17—.”

When she saw it, Mrs. Nicol bowed her head upon its torn, worm-eaten cover, and wept bitter tears of remembrance, not unmingled with self-reproach. They were the only ones which ever fell to the memory of Clement Griffin. Had that gentle, humble spirit beheld them, he would have thought them more than his due.



No admiring disciple has ever raised a stone above this unknown philosopher. He foretold, half a century ago, that men would journey by steam; now, the lightning-like railway passes within sight of his grave. He spent years in perfecting a mechanical invention: its wheels now whirl and roar in a manufactory not two hundred yards from the green pillow where the brain which first conceived their uses is peacefully mingling with the dust. He first declared that the human mind and character were faithfully portrayed in the human head as in a map: not long since, in the little town where his wanderings ended for ever, a phrenologist — a learned man too — lectured to crowded audiences on the new science. The sage — the philosopher — the devoted follower of science — has passed away and left no memory — no, not even a poor name written on a churchyard stone. Yet what matters it? The great men of earth are those who have done most good to that world which may never know or utter their names. But —

“The seeds of truth they sow are sacred seeds,  
And bear their righteous fruits for general weal  
When sleeps the husbandman.”

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