Review of Henrietta Temple

N. Beverley Tucker
HENRIETTA TEMPLE:


"By the author of Vivian Grey!" How the sight of these words delighted our eyes, and with what eager zest we betook ourselves to the perusal of the work! We were glad to find ourselves once more engaged with a writer in whom we are always sure to find much that is original and nothing commonplace, and whose faults are chiefly such as spring from the exuberance of genius. We have always regretted that we see so little of Mr. Disraeli. We have sometimes wondered at it; but when we have expressed this wonder, we have been told that he is not popular as a novelist in his own country, and that his labors in that line have proved unprofitable. If this be so, we should not wonder if he renounced his pen forever in indignant disgust. To be postponed to Bulwer is bad enough; Bulwer, whose heavy wing (to borrow a thought from Pollock,) comes flapping laboriously as he strives to work his way up into the regions where the mind of Disraeli floats at ease amid the creations of his own genius that people the ethereal expanse! This is bad enough. But to be neglected by the admirers of James and Ritchie! To see "Philip Augustus" and "One in a Thousand" preferred to "Vivian Grey" and "Contrariwise Fleming," is more than any man should be expected to endure.

But "a prophet is not without honor, save in his own country;" and we find pleasure in the belief, that there is no writer of novels now living whose powers are estimated so highly by the best judges among us, as Mr. Disraeli's. The work before us is a striking example of the versatility of his genius. At first, we hardly knew how to believe that it was actually his. The reader can hardly fail to remember the peculiar characteristics of Vivian Grey. The suddenness, the abruptness, the disregard of all connection between antecedents and consequents, leave us at a loss to know whether we have been asleep or awake—whether the vivid images which have flitted so distinctly before us, and which did last and pass away, were the fragments of a broken and disjointed dream, or occasional glimpses of the affairs of men of flesh and blood transacted before us, but so as to let us see but part of what was done, or but a narrative so contrived as to seem to tell us every thing, and still to leave us in perplexed and wondering ignorance.

The story before us is told in a style exactly the reverse of this. The preliminary circumstances are laid before us with the distinctness and precision of a lawyer's brief, so that without being wearied with a long detail, we find ourselves in full possession of all the circumstances of all the parties, and of their mutual relations to each other. They are placed, as on a chessboard, before the game begins. We understand precisely who is who, and what is what, and can, at any moment, without confusion, trace the progress of each piece from his original position, and see the philosophy of all the moves which have conducted him to his present place.

Such is the impression made upon us by the mere manner in which this story is told, and at the same time we are sensible that nothing is lost in the interest of the
piece by this attention to detail. There is, indeed, one
signal exception to the generality of this account, in
which we are left to guess and wonder with as much
perplexity (though certainly with less interest,) as at
any tour de main in Vivian Grey.
We now proceed to give an abstract of our author's
story, to which we propose to add some specimens of
the good and bad of his style.
Sir Ratcliff Army is a decayed baronet, whose
family came in with the conqueror, and flourished un-
der the long line of his descendants, until the spirit of
religious controversy began to mingle itself with politi-
cal strife. It was the fate of this family to cling to the
falling fortunes of the Catholic church, and to incur at-
tainders and forfeitures, by which its wealth and power
were so reduced, that a large landed estate mortgaged
to its full value was all that remained to Sir Ratcliff.
With the estate and the mortgage he inherited the pride
of his family, and this determined him to keep together
his patrimonial acres, paying nearly every shilling of
his rents to keep down the interest of his debts. In
this way he lives in poverty and obscurity in one of
his old dilapidated baronial mansions. His wife,
the daughter of a wealthy nobleman, brings him no
dowry, but she brings what is better—a kind and gene-
rous heart, a cheerful temper, and a disposition to share
his poverty without a murmur. They have an only
son, who, under the tuition of a Catholic priest who has
sought and found a shelter under the roof of his early
friend Sir Ratcliff, grows up an elegant, accomplished,
and well instructed young man.
For this youth a commission in the army is obtained,
and he sails for Malta, where he spends three years or
more. While there, the heir apparent of his grandfa-
ther, Lord Grandison, dies, and the old nobleman is left
to choose whether he will leave the bulk of his estate
to the daughter of a deceased son, or to the only son of
his daughter. He distinctly avows his preference of
the latter, and the young man is taught to regard him-
self as the heir of 15,000/- sterling per annum. This
arrangement is made so notorious, that he finds no dif-
ficulty in obtaining credit to any amount at Malta.
The consequence is, that while he purchases his way to
the rank of captain, he at the same time acquires the
most ruinous habits of self indulgence and extravagance.
An only son, brought up at home, his self love had been
cultivated from his birth to the day that he left his family
and joined his regiment. There, handsome, accomplished,
talented, and rich, he found himself the favorite of his
companions, the pet of the regiment, and the darling of
the ladies. The consequence was, that by the time of
his grandfather's death, Ferdinand Army was, in his
estimation, the most important personage in the world,
and the only one whose comfort or happiness he was at
all interested in, or at all bound to provide for. In
this view of the subject he found himself countenanced
by the unanimous concurrence of all his little world at
Malta. But here he was doomed to the same fate
which many a politician experiences, who, after being
the leader of a dominant party, suddenly finds himself
in a lean minority. Into the leastest of all minorities,
Captain Ferdinand Army was doomed to fall, as soon
as it was known that his grandfather was actually dead,
and had left his whole estate to the daughter of his son.
Unpleasant as this intelligence was, it might have
been more so, had the whole truth reached Malta before
the captain's departure. But he sailed as soon as he
heard of the old lord's death; and it was not until his
arrival in England that he learned the nature of his tes-
tamentary dispositions.
What was to be done? He owed some 15,000/-, and
had nothing to pay withal; but he had a pretty cousin
to whom the estate had been left, and on her he finds
that his handsome person and fine address have made
a favorable impression. For her he cares not a straw :
but what of that? He courts her and is accepted, and
his Maltese creditors hearing a at the same moment that
he is not the heir, but that he is to marry the heiress,
refrain from pressing their demands.
Soon after this snug arrangement has been agreed
upon, he meets with the lady whose name designates the
work, and a mutual turning into love at first sight
in the consequence. Here then is a new toy on which
Mr. Ferdinand Army has set his heart, and he snatches
it at an inestimably as he had snatched at his cousin's
fortune, and with the like success. But unluckily he
cannot have both, and Miss Temple is the daughter of
a gentleman of very moderate fortune. Of course she
is not let into the secret of his prior engagement; so
leaving her in the dark about that, he hies away to see
his cousin, with a full purpose of breaking off from it.
But his heart fails him, and he trifles away the time,
until Miss Temple becomes uneasy at his prospected
absence, and until she hears from the best authority
that he is certainly engaged (as he certainly was) to
his cousin, and that a short day was fixed for their nup-
tials. This intelligence comes in such a shape as to
leave no doubt in the mind of either father or daughter
of its truth; whereupon they give Captain Army the
slip, retire to the Continent, and establish themselves at
Pisa. At length the lover makes his appearance, but
the birds are flown. The consequence is a desperate
illness, in which he is tenderly nursed by his poor mo-
thor and his abused cousin, who is not yet undeceived.
At length he recovers slowly; his tutor explains the
real state of affairs to Miss Grandison, and they agree
that, for the present, the knowledge of the truth shall
go no further. Sir Ratcliff and his wife, therefore, are
still happy in the belief that their son is about to marry
an heiress, whose wealth will restore the splendor of
their house, and his creditors rest in the comfortable as-
surance that, sooner or later, their debts will be paid
with large accumulated interest. Meanwhile, Miss
Temple at Pisa meets with Lord Montfort, who is the
equal of Army in all that he ought to be, and his op-
posite in all that he ought not to be. Of course he falls
in love with the lady, and addresses her. She rejects
him, assuring him of her esteem, but at the same time
showing her hopeless attachment to another man. But
Lord Montfort is quite too philosophical to be put aside
by any such difficulties. He knows that women must
marry, and that if a good woman does not learn to love
her husband, it must be her husband's fault. Of the
moral value of Miss Temple there can be no doubt.
He therefore calmly places the matter on that footing,
and on further consideration he is accepted.
On the return of Miss Temple with her father and
lover to England, they are thrown by successive chances
into the society of the Armys. In the meantime the
secret seizes out that the captain is not to marry Miss
Miss Grandison, Miss Temple also discovers that, instead of marrying her wealthy cousin, he had forsaken Miss Grandison for her. Miss Temple was no lawyer, but the story of the lawyer's bull and the farmer's ox is true of all mankind, and womankind too, and so she forgives him with all her heart.

But the carcasses of Captain Arny are, by no means, so indulgent. The discovery that he is not to marry his wealthy cousin, rouses their resentment as well as their fears, and he is thrown into prison. From this he is relieved by Lord Montfort, at the earnest entreaty of Miss Temple. But his lordship does not stop there. He resigns the lady herself to her first lover, and being deserted, as it seems, to take up with the leavings of the irresistible Captain Arny, he seeks and finds consolation with his rejected cousin Miss Grandison. An unexpected legacy makes Mr. Temple a rich man, and all ends well and prosperously.

For this story, merely as a tale, we have not much to say. If the execution were not at all superior to the material, we should have little praise to bestow, and there would be no need to condemn a work having nothing to redeem it from early oblivion. Indeed, in the management of the story, there is one fault which appears more glaringly than in its scanty abstractions. It is the suddenness of the change of partners. It not only is not explained when and how Miss Temple's hold on Lord Montfort's heart became relaxed, and when he first became sensible of the attractions of Kate Grandison, and she of his, but the possibility of any such change of feeling is almost negatived. On one day we have Lord Montfort the devoted and plighted lover of Miss Temple; on the same day we have Miss Grandison light-hearted, cheerful and free as air; on the same day we have a conversation between her and the young nobleman, which leads the reader to believe that they have no thought of each other, and early the next morning he announces to Arny that they are betrothed to each other, and that Miss Temple is free. It follows that all this unprepared change of position and plan takes place in one evening, and that between persons of the utmost redonde and delicacy. Now, this is intolerable. It is done, indeed, so haphazardly, that the writer seems determined to defy censure. He had tied a knot too hard for him, and in the exercise of his powers, than Fanny Wharton's discovery of Harvey Birch's plot, was General Washington. It will be seen we speak of Cooper's Spy—decidedly his best work, if he had stopped in the middle of the second volume, by giving his court martial sense enough to acquit young Wharton.

"What a mystery is love! All the necessities and habits of man are to him equally indifferent. He does not mingle in their paths of callous bustle, or hold himself responsible to the airy indolence be fore which his gaze fixedly on a single star; and, if that do not shine, he lets go the rudder, and glories when his barque descends into the bottomless gulf."

"What a mystery is love! All the necessities and habits of our life sink before it. Food and sleep, that seem to divide our being, or day and night divide time, lose all their influence over the lover. He is, indeed, a spiritualized being, fit only to live upon ambrosia, and slumber in an imaginary paradise. The changes of the world do not touch him; he is no more affected by them than the clouds and mists of a stormy sky. The schemes and struggles of mankind are, in his thinking, but the anxieties of pigmies, and the fantastical achievements of apes. Nothing can subdue him. He laughs alike at loss of fortune, loss of friends, loss of character. The deeds and thoughts of men are to him equally indifferent. He does not mingle in their paths of callous bustle, or hold himself responsible to the airy indolence before which they have bowed. He is a monarch, who, in the sea of life, keeps his gaze fixedly on a single star; and, if that do not shine, he lets go the rudder, and glories when his barque descends into the bottomless gulf."

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It is the dark conviction that feelings the most ardent may yet each other so dearly grow cold, and that emotions the most constant and confirmed are, nevertheless, liable to change, that taints the feeblest spell of our later passions, though they may spring from a heart that has lost little of its original freshness, and be offered to one infintely more worthy of the devotion than our first ideality. To gaze upon a face, and to believe that for ever we must behold it with the same adoration; that those eyes, in whose light we live, will for ever meet ours with mutual glances of rapture and devotedness; to be conscious that all conversation with others sounds vapid and spiritless, compared with the rapturous expression of our affection; to feel our heart rise at the favored voice; to feel our heart rise at the favored voice; to believe that for ever we must behold a BJmnambulist, with eyes that seem to open to those that watch only have supposed that they were celebrating some anniversary of domestic joy. It seemed rather a birthday feast than the last social meeting of those who had lived together so long, and loved each other so dearly.

But, as the evening drew on, their hearts began to grow heavy, and every one was glad that the early departure of the traveller on the morrow was an excuse for speedily retiring. "We shall all be up to-morrow!" they exclaimed together. "So wishing his last good night. with a charged heart and faltering tongue, Ferdinand Armyn took up his candle and retired to his chamber. He could not refrain from examining an unusual writing when he had entered the room. He held up the light to the old accustomed walls, and threw a parting glance of affection at the curtains. There was the glass vase which his mother had never omitted each day to fill with fresh flowers, and the counterpane that was her own handy work. He kissed it; and, flinging off his clothes, was glad when he was surrounded by darkness of his own making. He felt the pain acutely, but could not speak. At length he sobbed aloud.

"It is too cruel," continued Lady Armyn, kissing with a child. "What have I done to deserve this?" his mother cried. "May our Father that is in heaven bless you, my darling child; may He guard over you; may He preserve you! Very, very much or original; yet in the very last and most beautiful sentence there is a grammatical fault so glaring, as to show that the passage flowed spontaneouls from the pen, and could not even have been read over with a critical eye. "We certainly did not discover it at the first perusal, and we trust there are few readers so cold as to have perceived it. But it is there, and does but enhance the beauty of the passage, by showing that it was perfectly unintended."

The following is in a different style, but shows equal power. We cannot imagine anything more tender and more true to nature in its best aspects. It is the account of the parting of Ferdinand from his parents, when he first leaves them to join his regiment:

It was singular at dinner, in what excellent spirits every body appeared to be. "The dinner, also, generally a very simple repast, was almost as elaborate as the demonstrator of the genus, and, although no one felt inclined to eat, consisted of every dish and delicacy which was supposed to be a favorite with Ferdinand. Sir Basilclif, in general so grave, was to-day quite joyous, and produced a magnet of clatter, which he had himself discovered in the old cellar, and of which even Glassilia, an habitual water-drinker, ventured to partake. As for Lady Armyn, she scarcely ever ceased talking; she found a jest in every sentence, and seemed only uneasy when there was silence. Ferdinand, of course, yielded himself to the apparent spirit of the party; and, had a stranger been present, he could only have supposed that they were celebrating some anniversary of domestic joy. It seemed rather a birthday feast than the last social meeting of those who had lived together so long, and loved each other so dearly.

Ferdinand Armyn, a man in love wanders in the world as spirit of the party; and, had a stranger been present, he could have supposed that they were celebrating some anniversary of domestic joy. It seemed rather a birthday feast than the last social meeting of those who had lived together so long, and loved each other so dearly.

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"You know I have often stayed a month at grandpapa's, and slept in the same six weeks in the same bed. Now, shall I not have my home again?"

"Home again! eight times six weeks—a year, nearly a year! It seems eternity. Winter, and spring, and summer and winter; always—always to pass! I am weary of my existence. He has scarcely torn me out of my sight. Oh! my idol, my beloved, my dearest Ferdinand; I cannot believe that we are to part."

"Shall, dearer mother, think of my father, dearest? think how much his hopes are placed on me; think, dearer mother; how much I have to do, how much depends on me, you know. I must renounce our house;"

"It is very wicked. I am not; I never; I never shall pardon myself for this blunder, dearest; I, for the most part, those who leave at ARMVII will, indeed, be very, very, very, very young, very young, and inexperienced and inexperienced. Do not let them spoil your heart and beautiful nature. Do not let them lead you astray. Remember ARMYII, sweetest dear, ARMYII, and those who love them. Trust me, oh! yes, indeed believe me, darling, you will never find friends in this world like these men of ARMVII."

"I know not, explained Ferdinand, with streaming eyes;"

"I will never witness how deeply I feel that truth, if I forget thee and thee alone, dear friend of my heart, dear friend of my life!"

"My darling, darling Ferdinand," said Lady Armany, in a calm voice. I am, indeed, very sorry that I have come now. It will be a consolation to me in my absence to remember all that you have consoled stainless among my beloved children's lives, good nights. I shall not come down to-morrow, dear. We will write you in the morning."

"I will, if you are the same beloved to your father, so that you are not far away? Ah! there it is, my child. You will be a man when you come back, and be a good vacancy your mother. Bring me, oh! your letters, your letters, your letters."

"Lady Armany."

"I know not."

"Yes, Angus," explained Ferdinand, with streaming eyes;"

"You will witness how deeply I feel that truth, if I forget thee and thee alone, dear friend of my heart, dear friend of my life!"

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"Lady Armany."

"I know not."

"Yes, Angus," explained Ferdinand, with streaming eyes;"
He thus speaks of the Marquess of Montfort:

"This young marquis was an excellent specimen of a class superior in talents, intelligence, and accomplishments, in public spirit, and in private virtues, in any in the world—the English nobility."

Can we wonder after this that Mr. Daniel O'Connell, in the fury of his crusade against the house of peers, has thought proper to denounce Mr. D'Israeli in terms too gross to be admitted to a place on our pages? Can we doubt that among all readers of his school there is no favor for one who speaks thus of the English nobility?

"But what of that? Thus prescribed by their enemies, what is there to prevent that wealthy and intelligent body, and all the readers of their party, from adopting Mr. D'Israeli, transported us at once to the Circean Boudoir and noble, who hires him to bet for them."

Ferdinand Armyn is manifestly a great favorite with our author. Yet is there nothing in his character to recommend him to any well formed mind, but that of a young woman in the impassioned frenzy of first love. It is impossible to detect in him any principle of action but selfishness, and that selfishness unresting. It is impossible to detect in him any principle of action but selfishness, and that selfishness unresting.

"When he had thought of her before, lining perhaps in some foreign solitude, he had never ceased reproaching himself for his conduct, and had accosted himself of deception and cruelty; but the moment of his blush presently, cemented one of the richest beneficiaries in England! (he ground his teeth as he recited these phrases.) and she advanced within a great circle, (his old companion, Lord Moundoff, too; what a strange thing it is!) priding, nailing, and prospering, while he was alone, with a broken heart and worse than despairs for his, and all for her sake, his soul becomes torn; he repulsed her with his inopportune fidelity; he buried her in his bosom—life; he buried her as cold as passionless insensibility; he dilated on her insensibility since they had parted; her altruism, her humanity, her love for her was unforgiving; she had been disposed as his interest; he murmured at the lightness of his temptations; he cursed her caprice; he denounced her infernal treachery; in the distorted phantoms of his agitated imagination, she becomes to him even an object of hatred.

"Take the following conversation:

"'Is she married?' inquired Ferdinand.

"'No,' but she is going to be.'

"'I know it,' said Ferdinand.

"'Glasstonbury stared.

"'You know it? what, to D'Orsny?'

"'Dully, or whatever his name may be; damn him.'

"'Don't blame;' said Glasstonbury.

"'May all the curses—'

"'God forbid,' said Glasstonbury, interrupting him.

"'Unfeeling, piteux, traitorous—'

"'She is an angry girl,' said Glasstonbury, 'a very angry girl. She has filth and sorrow in her eyes.'

"'Painted! nearly in your arms! Oh! tell me all, tell me all,' exclaimed Glasstonbury, starting up in his place with an eager voice and sparkling eyes. 'Does she love me?'

"'I love you,' said Glasstonbury.

"'Farewell!'

"'Oh! how I pity poor innocent heart,' said Glasstonbury.

"'When I look here of all your sufferings—'

"'Do you tell her? What then?'

"'And she herself has barely recovered from a long and terrible illness.'

"'My own Henrietta! Now I tell you happily,' said Glasstonbury. 'I really never knew I could talk so gently.'

"'It is the only happy moment I have known for months,' said Glasstonbury.

"'I was an overhwelming that I lost my presence of mind,' said Glasstonbury. 'I really never knew how to tell you anything. I do not know how I came into your room.'

"'Dear, dear Glasstonbury, I am myself again!'

"'Only think,' said Glasstonbury, 'I never was so unhappy in my life.'

"'I have endured for the last four hours the torture of the imagination, and all the heats of the passion, and that was dying like a dog, in this cursed cottage. O! Glasstonbury, nothing that I have ever endured has been equal to the hell of this day! And now you have come and made me comparatively happy. I shall get up directly.'

"'Glasstonbury looked quite intently; he could not comprehend how this fatal intelligence could have produced effects so favorable to some he had anticipated. However, in answer to Ferdinand's reiterated inquiries, he contrived to give a detailed account of every thing that had occurred, and Ferdinand's running commentary concluded to be one of constant self-congratulations.'

Now this amiable passion is the bright feature in Mr. Ferdinand Armyn's character. Apart from this he is the slave of appetite and vanity—a mere adventurer, a fortune-hunter, and a leguey-hunter, who bities his creditors, and spends the money that does not belong to him in wasteful self-indulgence, unmindful of the necessities of parents, whom their devotion to him has beggared.

But the depravity of Mr. D'Israeli's moral tastes is not exhibited in his manifest liking of this character alone. For this he might find some apology with a class of readers who are not the worst customers of the writers of 'Love Stories.' We have said that he miti­gates the character of his hero from the odiously selfish to the passionately selfish. The best is like that between manslaughter and murder. But manslaughter itself is felony; and it is not probable that felons of any kind, their aided or abetters, should find favor with 'a class superior in talents, intelligence and accomplishments, in public spirit and in private virtues, to any in the world.'

But, as we have said, the evidences of a corrupt mo­ral taste do not stop here. Under the name of Mr. Bond Sharp, our author takes occasion to show us, with manifest tokens of high approbation and perfect sympathy, the character of Girles, only the prize-fighter and black-leg, the keeper of a London Hell, the New-marr­ket Jockey, who trailers with stable boys and race­riders, and sells the benefit of his intrigues to the rich and noble, who hire him to bet for them.

Another character who figures here, and is in high favor with the author, is the witty and agreeable but detestably profligate Count D'Orsay, who is exhibited under the name of the Count de Mirabel. We beg pardon for alluding to anything so indecent as Wilson's revelations of what he was permitted to see in private society; but the introduction of this personage by D'Israeli, transported us at once to the Circean Boudoir of Lady Bellington, where we find both together. If the reader remembers Mr. Willis's account of the au­thor's manners and appearance, he will be at no loss to account for that peculiar dress of puppets which displays itself not in this work alone, but in every character in the exhibition of which he seems to find peculiar pleasure. We think we have shown why Mr. D'Israeli has failed to find that encouragement to which his eminent talents would seem to entitle him, but which he does
not, in fact, deserve. For ourselves, while we admire the talent displayed in this work, we neither recommend nor approve it. We think it calculated to do harm. We think it teaches a lesson in that pernicious school of morals and manners, where the mind is prepared for intercourse with the world, by eradicating its best feelings. Time was, when in the training of a gentleman, the first lesson was to divest himself of selfishness, or at least of any appearance of it. The Genius of Almanacks, which, like the cholera, has found its way across the Atlantic, is introducing a new system. In that school of the Graces the first position is selfishness, the next insolence. The rest is in order.