

TREASURY

A  
MEMOIR  
OF  
LUCRETIA MARIA DAVIDSON;

BY  
THE AUTHOR OF "REDWOOD," "HOPE LESLIE,"  
&c., &c.

## P R E F A C E .

---

AN interesting memoir of Miss Davidson has already been written by Mr. Morse, and prefixed to the volume of her published poems, entitled "Amir Khan, and other Poems." That memoir, being a mere introductory prefix, was necessarily, as its title announces, a "sketch."

The editor of this biographical series, expressing it as his opinion of Miss Davidson, that "there is no record of a greater prematurity of intellect, or a more beautiful development of native delicacy, sensibility, and moral purity," requested a memoir from the writer of the subjoined.

It is little more than a transcript of the materials kindly furnished by Miss Davidson's mother. There has been no effort (as there was no need) to magnify the prodigious genius of the young poet. The object sought has been to set in a clear light before her young country-women the attractive model of Lucretia Davidson's character.

PREFACE

An interesting memoir of Miss Davidson has  
already been written by Mr. Fosse, and printed  
in the volume of her published poems, entitled  
"Annals, and other Poems." That memoir,  
being a mere introductory piece, was necessarily  
at its announcement a "sketch."

The editor of this biographical series ex-  
presses in his opinion of this Davidson, that "there  
is a record of a greater quantity of intellect,  
a more beautiful development of native talents,  
and a more liberal and moral spirit," together with  
than the writer of the subject.

It is little more than a transcript of the in-  
formation furnished by Mrs. Davidson's mother.  
There has been no effort (as there was no need)  
to magnify the prodigious genius of the young  
poet. The object sought has been to set in a clear  
light before her young country-women the attrac-  
tive model of Lauretta Davidson's character.

## LUCRETIA MARIA DAVIDSON.

---

LUCRETIA MARIA DAVIDSON was born at Plattsburg, in the State of New York, on the 27th of September, 1808. Her father, Dr. Oliver Davidson, is a lover of science, and a man of intellectual tastes. Her mother, Margaret Davidson (born Miller), is of a most respectable family, and received the best education her times afforded, at the school of the celebrated Scottish lady, Isabella Graham, an institution in the city of New York, that had no rival in its day, and which derived advantages from the distinguished individual that presided over it, that can scarcely be counterbalanced by the multiplied masters and multiform studies of the present day. The family of Miss Davidson lived in seclusion. Their pleasures and excitements were intellectual. Her mother has suffered year after year from ill health and debility; and, being a person of imaginative character, and of most ardent and susceptible feelings, employed on domestic incidents, and concentrated in maternal tenderness, she naturally loved and cherished her

daughter's marvellous gifts, and added to the intensity of the fire with which her genius and her affections, mingling in one holy flame, burned till they consumed their mortal investments. We should not have ventured to say thus much of the mother, who still survives to weep, and to rejoice over her dead child more than many parents over their living ones, were it not to prove that Lucretia Davidson's character was not miraculous, but that this flower of Paradise was nurtured and trained by natural means and influences.

The physical delicacy of this fragile creature was apparent in infancy. When eighteen months old, she had a typhus fever, which threatened her life; but nature put forth its mysterious energy, and she became stronger and healthier than before her illness. No records were made of her early childhood, save that she was by turns very gay and very thoughtful, exhibiting thus early these common manifestations of extreme sensibility. Her first literary acquisition indicated her after course. She learned her letters at once. At the age of four she was sent to the Plattsburg Academy, where she learned to read and to form letters in sand, after the Lancasterian method. As soon as she could read, her books drew her away from the plays of childhood, and she was constantly found absorbed in the little volumes that her father lavished upon her. Her mother, on some occasion

in haste to write a letter, looked in vain for a sheet of paper. A whole quire had strangely disappeared. She expressed a natural vexation. Her little girl came forward confused, and said, "Mamma, I have used it." Her mother, knowing she had never been taught to write, was amazed, and asked her what possible use she could have for it. Lucretia burst into tears, and replied that she "did not like to tell." Her mother respected the childish mystery, and made no further inquiries.

The paper continued to vanish, and the child was often observed with pen and ink, still sedulously shunning observation. At last her mother, on seeing her make a blank book, asked what she was going to do with it. Lucretia blushed, and left the room without replying. This sharpened her mother's curiosity. She watched the child narrowly, and saw that she made quantities of these little books, and that she was disturbed by observation; and, if one of the family requested to see them, she would burst into tears, and run away to hide her secret treasure.

The mystery remained unexplained till she was six years old, when her mother, in exploring a dark closet, rarely opened, found, behind piles of linen, a parcel of papers, which proved to be Lucretia's manuscript books. At first the hieroglyphics seemed to baffle investigation. On one side of the leaf was an artfully-sketched picture;

on the other Roman letters, some placed upright, others horizontally, obliquely, or backwards, not formed into words, nor spaced in any mode. Both parents pored over them till they ascertained the letters were poetical explanations, in metre and rhyme, of the picture on the reverse. The little books were carefully put away as literary curiosities. Soon after Lucretia came running to her mother, painfully agitated, her face covered with her hands, and tears trickling down between her slender fingers. "Oh mamma! mamma!" she cried, sobbing, "how could you treat me so? You have not used me well! *My little books!* You have shown them to papa, — Anne, — Eliza, I know you have. Oh, what shall I do!" Her mother pleaded guilty, and tried to soothe the child by promising not to do so again. Lucretia's face brightened, a sunny smile played through her tears, as she replied, "Oh mamma, I am not afraid you will do so again, for I have burned them all." And so she had! This reserve proceeded from nothing cold or exclusive in her character; never was there a more loving or sympathetic creature. It would be difficult to say which was most rare, her modesty or the genius it sanctified.

She did not learn to write till she was between six and seven. Her passion for knowledge was then rapidly developing. She read with the closest attention, and was continually running to her

parents with questions and remarks that startled them. At a very early age her mother implanted the seeds of religion, the first that should be sown in the virgin soil of the heart. That the dews of heaven fell upon them, is evident from the breathings of piety throughout her poetry, and still more from its precious fruit in her life. Her mother remarks, that, "from her earliest years she evinced a fear of doing any thing displeasing in the sight of God; and if, in her gayest sallies, she caught a look of disapprobation from me, she would ask with the most artless simplicity, 'Oh mother, was that wicked?'"

There are, very early, in most children's lives, certain conventional limits to their humanity, only certain forms of animal life that are respected and cherished. A robin, a butterfly, or a kitten is a legitimate object of their love and caresses; but woe to the beetle, the caterpillar, or the *rat*, that is thrown upon their tender mercies. Lucretia Davidson made no such artificial discriminations. She seemed to have an instinctive kindness for every living thing. When she was about nine, one of her schoolfellows gave her a young rat, that had broken its leg in attempting to escape from a trap. She tore off a part of her pocket handkerchief, bound up the maimed leg, carried the animal home, and nursed it tenderly. The rat, in spite of the care of its little leech, died, and

was buried in the garden, and honored with "the meed of a melodious tear." This lament has not been preserved; but one she wrote soon after on the death of a maimed pet robin, is given here as the earliest record of her muse that has been preserved.

ON THE DEATH OF MY ROBIN.

"UNDERNEATH this turf doth lie  
A little bird which ne'er could fly;  
Twelve large angle-worms did fill  
This little bird whom they did kill.  
Puss! if you should chance to smell  
My little bird from his dark cell,  
Oh! do be merciful, my cat,  
And not serve him as you did my rat!"

Her application to her studies at school was intense. Her mother judiciously, but in vain, attempted a diversion in favor of that legitimate sedative to female genius, the needle. Lucretia performed her prescribed tasks with fidelity and with amazing celerity, and was again buried in her books.

When she was about twelve, she accompanied her father to the celebration of Washington's birth-night. The music and decorations excited her imagination; but it was not with her, as with most children, the mere pleasure of stimulated sensations. She had studied the character and history of the father of her country, and the *fête* stirred up her enthusiasm, and inspired that feeling

of actual existence and presence peculiar to minds of her temperament. To the imaginative there is an extension of life, far back into the dim past, and forward into the untried future, denied to those of common mould.

The day after the *fête*, her elder sister discovered her absorbed in writing. She had sketched an urn, and written two stanzas beneath it. She was persuaded, with some difficulty, to show them to her mother. She brought them blushing and trembling. Her mother was ill in bed; but she expressed her delight with such unequivocal animation, that the child's face changed from doubt to rapture, and she seized the paper, ran away, and immediately added the concluding stanzas. When they were finished, her mother pressed her to her bosom, wept with delight, and promised her leisure, and all the instruction she could give her. The sensitive child burst into tears. "And do you *wish* me to write, mamma?" she said, "and will papa approve? and will it be *right* that I should do so?" This delicate conscientiousness gives an imperishable charm to the stanzas, and to fix it in the memory of our readers we here quote them from her published poems.

"AND does a hero's dust lie here?  
Columbia! gaze and drop a tear!  
His country's and the orphan's friend,  
See thousands o'er his ashes bend!

“ Among the heroes of the age,  
He was the warrior and the sage!  
He left a train of glory bright,  
Which never will be hid in night!

“ The toils of war and danger past,  
He reaps a rich reward at last;  
His pure soul mounts on cherub’s wings,  
And now with saints and angels sings.

“ The brightest on the list of Fame,  
In golden letters shines his name;  
Her trump shall sound it through the world,  
And the striped banner ne’er be furled!

“ And every sex and every age,  
From lisping boy to learned sage,  
The widow and her orphan son,  
Revere the name of Washington.”

Lucretia did not escape the common trial of precocious genius. A literary friend, to whom Mrs. Davidson showed the stanzas, suspected the child had, perhaps unconsciously, repeated something she had gathered from the mass of her reading, and she betrayed her suspicions to Lucretia. She felt her rectitude impeached, and this, and not the wounded pride of the young author, made her weep till she was actually ill. As soon as she recovered her tranquillity, she offered a poetic and playful remonstrance,\* which set the matter at rest, and put an end to all future question of the authenticity of her productions.

---

\* See the Biographical Sketch prefixed to “Amir Kkan, and other Poems,” p. ix.

Before she was twelve years old, she had read the English poets. "The English poets," says Southey, in his review of Miss Davidson's poems, "though a vague term, was a wholesome course for such a mind."\* She had read beside much history, sacred and profane, novels, and other works of imagination. Dramatic works were particularly attractive to her. Her devotion to Shakspeare is expressed in an address to him written about this time, from which we extract the following stanza;

"Heaven, in compassion to man's erring heart,  
Gave thee of virtue, then of vice a part,  
Lest we in wonder here should bow before thee,  
Break God's commandment, worship and adore thee."

Ordinary romances, and even those highly wrought fictions, that without any type in nature have such a mischievous charm for most imaginative young persons, she instinctively rejected. Her healthy appetite, keen as it was, was under the government of a pure and sound nature. Her mother, always aware of the worth of the gem committed to her keeping, amidst her sufferings from ill health and other causes, kept a watchful eye on her child, directed her pursuits, and sympathized in all her little school labors and trials. She perceived that Lucretia was growing pale and sickly over her studies, and she judiciously withdrew her, for a time, from school.

---

\* See the London Quarterly Review, No. 82.

She was soon rewarded for this wise measure by hearing her child's bounding step as she approached her sick-room, and seeing the cheek bent over her pillow, blooming with returning health. How miserably mistaken are those, who fancy that all the child's lessons must be learned from the school-book, and in the school-room! This apt pupil of Nature had only changed her books and her master. Now she sat at the feet of the great teacher, Nature, and read and listened, and thought, as she wandered along the Saranac, or contemplated the varying aspects of Cumberland Bay. She would sit for hours and watch the progress of a thunder-storm, from the first gathering of the clouds to the farewell smile of the rainbow. We give a specimen of the impression of these studies in the following extract from her unpublished poems.

TWILIGHT.

"How sweet the hour when daylight blends  
 With the pensive shadows on evening's breast,  
 And dear to the heart is the pleasure it lends,  
 For 't is like the departure of saints to their rest.

"Oh 'tis sweet, Saranac, on thy loved banks to stray,  
 To watch the last day-beam dance light on thy wave,  
 To mark the white skiff as it skims o'er the bay,  
 Or heedlessly bounds o'er the warrior's grave.\*

---

\* Cumberland Bay was the scene of a battle during the last war.

"Oh 't is sweet to a heart unentangled and light,  
 When with hope's brilliant prospects the fancy is blest,  
 To pause 'mid its day-dreams so witchingly bright,  
 And mark the last sunbeams while sinking to rest."

The following, from her unpublished poems, is  
 the result of the same pensive meditations,

THE EVENING SPIRIT.

"WHEN the pale moon is shining bright,  
 And nought disturbs the gloom of night,  
 'T is then upon yon level green,  
 From which St. Clair's dark heights are seen,  
 The Evening Spirit glides along,  
 And chants her melancholy song ;  
 Or leans upon a snowy cloud,  
 And its white skirts her figure shroud.  
 By zephyrs light she 's wafted far,  
 And contemplates the northern star,  
 Or gazes from her silvery throne,  
 On that pale queen, the silent moon.  
 Who is the Evening Spirit fair,  
 That hovers o'er thy walls, St. Clair ?  
 Who is it that with footsteps light  
 Breathes the calm silence of the night ?  
 Ask the light zephyr, who conveys  
 Her fairy figure o'er the waves.  
 Ask yon bright fleecy cloud of night,  
 Ask yon pale planet's silver light,  
 Why does the Evening Spirit fair  
 Sail o'er the walls of dark St. Clair ?"

In her thirteenth year the clouds seemed heavily  
 gathering over her morning. Her father had suf-

ferred many losses and discouragements during the war. The result of his professional labors was scarcely adequate to the wants of his family. Her mother was so ill that she could no longer extend to her child the sympathy, help, and encouragement that she needed. Lucretia was oppressed with the apprehension of losing this fond parent, who for weeks and months seemed on the verge of the grave. There are among her unpublished poems, some touching lines to her mother, written, I believe, about this time, concluding thus :

“ Hang not thy harp upon the willow ;  
That weeps o'er every passing wave ;  
This life is but a restless pillow,  
There 's calm and peace beyond the grave.”

But far more touchingly than by the most eloquent song, did she evince her filial affection. Dr. Davidson's well-selected library, which had been, at all times, the dearest solace of his daughter, had been broken up and dispersed at the invasion of Plattsburg, and Lucretia sighed over the empty shelves. Her father met, at a friend's house, an English gentleman, who, saying he had heard much of the little girl who promised to do great honor to American literature, expressed a strong desire to see some of her productions. With difficulty her father obtained her permission to send copies of a few of them to the stranger. He returned a polite note to the father, expressing

his gratification, and enclosed a twenty-dollar note for Lucretia. Her father gave it to her, telling her to regard it as the first fruit of her poetical merit. She took the bank note and examined it with eager simplicity, and exclaiming, "Oh papa! how many books it will buy!" then, casting her eyes to the bed where her suffering mother was lying, a shade of tenderness passed over her radiant face, and she added, "Oh no, no, no! I cannot spend it; take it, papa, I do not want it, take it and buy something for mamma!" How must those parents have blessed the darkness of that adversity, on which such light from heaven shone! To them it must have been given to see the gracious ministry of what the world calls poverty, in nurturing those virtues that were rapidly ripening for immortality.

Mrs. Davidson's health gradually amended, and with it returned her desire to give her daughter leisure, and every other means within her power to aid the developement of her extraordinary genius. For this some blamed, and others laughed at her. The taunts of vulgar minds reached Lucretia's ears. "Was she to be made a learned lady? a reverend? or fitted for the law?" This she might have borne; but, when she heard whispers that it was her filial duty to sacrifice her literary tastes, and to bear a part of the domestic burden that weighed too heavily on her mother, she made a

secret resolution, to devote herself exclusively to the tasks thus gratuitously prescribed. She put her books aside, and her mother observed her assiduously devoted to her needle, and to household labors. Her mind languished for its daily bread. She became pale and dejected; and her vigilant mother, after much pains, extracted the reason of her change of pursuits, and persuaded her to resume her books and pen. Her cheerfulness returned, and she was again the life and charm of her home. Her extreme sensibility and delicate health subjected her, at times, to depression of spirits; but she had nothing of the morbid dejection, the exclusiveness, and hostility to the world, that are the results of self-exaggeration, selfishness, and self-idolatry, and not the natural offspring of genius and true feeling, which, in their healthy state, are pure and living fountains, flowing out in abundant streams of love and kindness.\*

Indulgent as Mrs. Davidson was, she was too wise to permit Lucretia to forego entirely the customary employments of her sex. When engaged with these, it seems she sometimes played truant with her Muse. Once she had promised to do a sewing-task, and had eagerly run off for her work-

---

\* Genius, like many other sovereigns, has been allowed the exercise of unreasonable prerogatives; but none, perhaps much more mischievous, than the right to confer on self-indulgence the gracious name of *sensibility*.

basket. She loitered, and, when she returned, she found her mother had done the work, and that there was a shade of just displeasure on her countenance. "Oh mamma!" she said, "I did *forget*, I am grieved. I did not mean to neglect you." "Where have you been, Lucretia?" "I have been *writing*," she replied, confused. "As I passed the window, I saw a solitary sweet-pea. I thought they were all gone; this was alone; I ran to smell it; but, before I could reach it, a gust of wind broke the stem. I turned away disappointed, and was coming back to you; but, as I passed the table, there stood the inkstand, and I forgot you." If our readers will turn to her printed poems,\* and read "The Last Flower of the Garden," they will not wonder that her mother kissed her, and bade her never resist a similar impulse.

When in her "happy moments," as she termed them, the impulse to write was irresistible. She always wrote rapidly, and sometimes expressed a wish that she had two pairs of hands, to record as fast as she composed. She wrote her short pieces standing, often three or four in a day, in the midst of the family, blind and deaf to all around her, wrapt in her own visions. She herself describes these visitations of her Muse, in an address to her, beginning;

---

\* Amir Khan and Other Poems, p. 87.

“Enchanted when thy voice I hear,  
I drop each earthly care;  
I feel as wafted from the world  
To Fancy’s realms of air.”

When composing her long and complicated poems, like “Amir Khan,” she required entire seclusion. If her pieces were seen in the process of production, the spell was dissolved; she could not finish them, and they were cast aside as rubbish.

When writing a poem of considerable length, she retired to her own apartment, closed the blinds, and, in warm weather, placed her Æolian harp in the window. Her mother has described her, on one of these occasions, when an artist would have painted her as a young genius communing with her Muse. We quote her mother’s graphic description: “I entered her room. She was sitting with scarcely light enough to discern the characters she was tracing. Her harp was in the window, touched by a breeze just sufficient to rouse the spirit of harmony. Her comb had fallen on the floor, and her long dark ringlets hung in rich profusion over her neck and shoulders, her cheek glowed with animation, her lips were half unclosed, her full, dark eye was radiant with the light of genius, and beaming with sensibility, her head rested on her left hand, while she held her pen in her right. She looked like the inhabitant of another sphere. She was so wholly absorbed,

that she did not observe my intrusion. I looked over her shoulder, and read the following lines ;

‘What heavenly music strikes my ravished ear,  
 So soft, so melancholy, and so clear ?  
 And do the tuneful Nine then touch the lyre,  
 To fill each bosom with poetic fire ?  
 Or does some angel strike the sounding strings,  
 Who caught from echo the wild note he sings ?  
 But ah ! another strain, how sweet ! how wild -  
 Now rushing low, ’t is soothing, soft, and mild.’

“The noise I made in leaving the room roused her, and she soon after brought me her ‘Lines to an Æolian harp.’”

During the winter of 1822 she wrote a poetical romance, entitled “Rodri.” She burned this, save a few fragments found after her death. These indicate a well-contrived story, and are marked by the marvellous ease and grace that characterized her versification. During this winter she wrote also a tragedy, “The Reward of Ambition,” the only production she ever read aloud to her family. The following summer, her health again failing, she was withdrawn from school, and sent on a visit to some friends in Canada. A letter, too long to be inserted here entire, gives a very interesting account of the impression produced on this little thoughtful and feeling recluse by new objects and new aspects of society. “We visited,” says the writer, “the British fortifications at Isle-aux-Noix.

The broad ditch, the lofty ramparts, the draw-bridge, the covered gate-way, the wide-mouthed cannon, the arsenal, and all the imposing paraphernalia of a military fortress, seemed connected in her mind with powerful associations of what she had read, but never viewed before. Instead of shrinking from objects associated with carnage and death, like many who possess not half her sensibility, she appeared for the moment to be attended by the god of war, and drank the spirit of battles and sieges, with the bright vision before her eyes of conquering heroes and wreaths of victory."

It is curious to see thus early the effect of story and song in overcoming the instincts of nature; to see this tender, gentle creature contemplating the engines of war, not with natural dread, as instruments of torture and death, but rather as the forges by which triumphal cars and wreaths of victory were to be wrought.

A similar manifestation of the effect of tradition and association on her poetic imagination is described in the following passages from the same letter. "She found much less in the Protestant than in the Catholic churches to awaken those romantic and poetic associations, created by the record of events in the history of antiquity and traditional story, and much less to accord with the fictions of her high-wrought imagination. In viewing the buildings of the city, or the paintings in the

churches, the same uniformity of taste was observable. The modern, however beautiful in design or execution, had little power to fix her attention; while the grand, the ancient, the romantic, seized upon her imagination with irresistible power. The sanctity of time seemed, to her mind, to give a sublimity to the simplest objects; and whatever was connected with great events in history, or with the lapse of ages long gone by, riveted and absorbed every faculty of her mind. During our visit to the nunneries she said but little, and seemed abstracted in thought, as if, as she herself so beautifully expresses it, to

‘Roll back the tide of time, and raise  
The faded forms of other days.’

“She had an opportunity of viewing an elegant collection of paintings. She seemed in ecstasies all the evening, and every feature beamed with joy.”

The writer, after proceeding to give an account of her surprising success in attempts at pencil-sketches from nature, expresses his delight and amazement at the attainments of this girl of fourteen years in general literature, and at the independence and originality of mind that resisted the subduing, and, if I may be allowed the expression, the subordinating effect of this early intimacy with captivating models. A marvellous resistance, if we take into the account “that timid, retiring

modesty," which, as the writer of the letter says "marked her even to a painful excess."

Lucretia returned to her mother with renovated health, and her mind bright with new impressions and joyous emotions. Religion is the natural, and only sustaining element of such a character. Where, but at the ever fresh, sweet, and life-giving fountains of the Bible, could such a spirit have drunk, and not again thirsted? During the winter of 1823, she applied herself more closely than ever to her studies. She read the Holy Scriptures with fixed attention. She almost committed to memory the Psalms of David, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and the Book of Job, guided in her selection by her poetic taste. Byron somewhere pronounces the Book of Job the sublimest poetry on record. During the winter, Miss Davidson wrote "A Hymn on Creation," the "Exit from Egyptian Bondage," and versified many chapters of the Bible. She read the New Testament, and particularly those parts of it that contain the most affecting passages in the history of our Savior, with the deepest emotion.

In her intellectual pursuits and attainments only was she premature. She retained unimpaired the innocence, simplicity, and modesty of a child. We have had descriptions of the extreme loveliness of her face, and gracefulness of her person; from less doubtful authority than a fond mother.

Our country towns are not regulated by the conventional systems of the cities, where a youthful beauty is warily confined to the nursery and the school, till the prescribed age for the *coming out*, the *coup-de-théâtre* of every young city-woman's life, arrives. In the country, as soon as a girl can contribute to the pleasures of society, she is invited into it. During the winter of 1823, Plattsburg was gay, and Miss Davidson was eagerly sought to embellish the village dances. She had been at a dancing-school, and, like most young persons, enjoyed excessively this natural exercise; for that may be called natural which exists among all nations, barbarous and civilized. Mrs. Davidson has given a history of her daughter's *first ball*, which all young ladies at least will thank us for transcribing almost verbatim, as it places her more within the circle of their sympathies. Her mother had consented to her attending one or two public assemblies, in the hope they might diminish her extreme timidity, painful both to Lucretia and to her friends.

The day arrived; Mrs. Davidson was consulting with her eldest daughter upon the all-important matter of the dresses for the evening. Lucretia sat by, reading, without raising her eyes from the book, one of the Waverley novels. "Mamma, what shall Luly wear?" asked her elder sister, calling her by the pretty diminutive by which they

usually addressed her at home. "Come, Lucretia, what color do you wear to-night?" "Where?" "Where! why, to the assembly to be sure." "The assembly! Is it to-night? So it is!" and she tossed away the book and danced about the room, half wild with delight; her sister at length called her to order, and the momentous question respecting the dress was definitively settled. She then resumed her reading, and, giving no farther thought to the ball, she was again absorbed in her book.

This did not result from carelessness of appearance or indifference to dress. On the contrary, she was rather remarkable for that nice taste, which belongs to an eye for proportion and coloring; and any little embellishment or ornament she wore, was well chosen, and well placed. But she had that right estimate of the relative value of objects, which belongs to a superior mind. When the evening approached, the star of the ball again shone forth, she threw aside her book, and began the offices of the toilet with girlish interest, and it might be with some heart-beatings at the probable effect of the lovely face her mirror reflected. Her sister was to arrange her hair, and Lucretia put on her dressing-gown to await her convenience; but, when the time came, she was missing. "We called her in vain," says Mrs. Davidson; "at last, opening the parlor-door, I indistinctly saw, for it was twilight, some person sitting behind the great

close stove. I approached nearer, and found Lucretia writing poetry! moralizing 'on what the world calls pleasure'! I was almost dumb with amazement. She was eager to go, delighted with the prospect of pleasure before her; yet she acted as if the time were too precious to spend in the necessary preparations, and she sat still and finished the last stanza, while I stood by, mute with astonishment at this strange bearing in a girl of fourteen, preparing to attend her first ball, an event she had anticipated with so many mingled emotions." "She returned from the assembly," continues her mother, "wild with delight. 'Oh mamma,' said she, 'I wish you had been there! When I first entered, the glare of light dazzled my eyes, my head whizzed, and I felt as if I were treading on air; all was so gay, so brilliant! But I grew tired at last, and was glad to hear sister say it was time to go home.'"

The next day the ball was dismissed from her mind, and she returned to her studies with her customary ardor. During the winter she read Josephus, Charles the Fifth, Charles the Twelfth, read over Shakspeare, and various other works in prose and poetry. She particularly liked Addison, and read, almost every day, a portion of the Spectator. Her ardent love of literature seldom interfered with her social dispositions, never with her domestic affections. She was the life and joy of the home circle.

Miss Davidson's tranquillity was again interrupted by those misjudging persons, who, mistaking a woman's *first* duty for her *whole* duty, were much disturbed by this little girl's devotion to literature. Her conscience, stimulated by her affection, easily took the alarm, when they represented her mother as sinking beneath her burdens; and she again *secretly* resolved to abandon her beloved studies, to throw away her pen, and to devote herself exclusively to domestic occupations. She was now older, and more determined and rigorous in the execution of her resolution. But to carry it into effect, as those will easily comprehend who know the details of a country family in narrow circumstances, required strength of body as well as strength of mind. Great demands were made on her feelings about this time by two extraordinary domestic events; the marriage and removal of her elder sister, her beloved friend and companion; and the birth of another, the little Margaret, so often the fond subject of her poetry. New, and doubtless sanative, emotions were called forth by this last event. The following lines from her published poems were written about this time.

ON THE BIRTH OF A SISTER.

"SWEET babe! I cannot hope that thou'lt be freed  
From woes, to all since earliest time decreed;  
But mayst thou be with resignation blessed,  
To bear each evil, howsoe'er distressed.

"May Hope her anchor lend amid the storm,  
 And o'er the tempest rear her angel form;  
 May sweet Benevolence, whose words are peace,  
 To the rude whirlwind softly whisper 'Cease!'

"And may Religion, Heaven's own darling child,  
 Teach thee at human cares and griefs to smile;  
 Teach thee to look beyond this world of woe,  
 To Heaven's high fount, whence mercies ever flow.

"And when this vale of years is safely passed,  
 When death's dark curtain shuts the scene at last,  
 May thy freed spirit leave this earthly sod,  
 And fly to seek the bosom of thy God."

The following lines, never before published, and, as we think, marked by more originality and beauty, were written soon after, and, as those above, with her infant sister on her lap. What a subject for a painter would this beautiful impersonation of genius and love have presented!

THE SMILE OF INNOCENCE.

[Written at the age of fifteen.]

"THERE is a smile of bitter scorn,  
 Which curls the lip, which lights the eye;  
 There is a smile in beauty's morn  
 Just rising o'er the midnight sky.

"There is a smile of youthful joy,  
 When hope's bright star 's the transient guest;  
 There is a smile of placid age,  
 Like sunset on the billow's breast.

“There is a smile, the maniac’s smile,  
Which lights the void which reason leaves,  
And, like the sunshine through a cloud,  
Throws shadows o’er the song she weaves.

“There is a smile of love, of hope,  
Which shines a meteor through life’s gloom;  
And there ’s a smile, Religion’s smile,  
Which lights the weary to the tomb.

“There is a smile, an angel smile,  
That sainted souls behind them leave;  
There is a smile, which shines through toil,  
And warms the bosom, though in grief.

“And there ’s a smile on nature’s face,  
When evening spreads her shades around;  
It is a smile which angels might  
Upon their brightest lists enrol.

“It is the smile of innocence,  
Of sleeping infancy’s light dream;  
Like lightning on a summer’s eve,  
It sheds a soft, a pensive gleam.

“It dances round the dimpled cheek,  
And tells of happiness within;  
It smiles what it can never speak,  
A human heart devoid of sin.”

The three last most beautiful stanzas must have been inspired by the sleeping infant on her lap, and they seem to have reflected her soul’s image, as we have seen the little inland lake catch and give back the marvellous beauty of the sunset clouds.

At this time, in pursuance of her resolution to devote herself to domestic duties, gall the harness as it might, she wrote no poetry except with her sister in her arms. Her labors were augmented by accidental circumstances. Her elder sister had removed to Canada; her mother, who was very ill, lost her monthly nurse; the infant, too, was ill. Lucretia for a while sustained her multiplied and varied cares with firmness and efficiency. The belief, that she was doing her duty, gave her strength almost preternatural. I shall quote her mother's words, for I should fear to enfeeble, by any version of my own, the beautiful example of this conscientious little being.

"Lucretia astonished us all. She took her station in my sick-room, and devoted herself wholly to the mother and child; and, when my recovery became doubtful, instead of resigning herself to grief, her exertions were redoubled, not only for the comfort of the sick, but she was an angel of consolation to her afflicted father. We were astonished at the exertions she made, and the fatigue she endured; for, with nerves so weak, a constitution so delicate, and a sensibility so exquisite, we trembled lest she should sink with anxiety and fatigue. Until it ceased to be necessary, she performed not only the duty of a nurse, but acted as superintendent of the household."

When her mother became convalescent, Lu-

Lucretia continued her exclusive devotion to household affairs. She did not so much yield to her ruling passion as to look into a book, or take up a pen, as was to be expected from the intimate union of soul and body. When her mind was starved, it became dejected, and her body weak, and, in spite of her filial efforts, her mother detected tears on her cheeks, was alarmed by her excessive paleness, and expressed her apprehensions that she was ill. "No, mamma," she replied, "not ill, only out of spirits." Her mother then said she had observed, that of late she neither wrote nor read. She burst into tears. "Oh mamma, don't name it!" she said; "I have resigned all these things." A full explanation followed, and the generous mother succeeded in convincing her child, that she had been misguided in the course she had adopted, that the strongest wish of her heart was to advance her in her literary career, and that for this she would make every exertion and sacrifice; at the same time she very judiciously advised her to intersperse her literary pursuits with those domestic occupations so essential to prepare every woman in our land for a housewife, her probable destiny.

This conversation had a most happy effect. The stream flowed again in its natural channels, and Lucretia became cheerful, read, and wrote, and practised drawing. She had a decided taste for drawing, and excelled in it. She sung over her

work, and in every way manifested the healthy condition, that results from a wise obedience to the laws of nature.

We trust there are thousands of young ladies in our land, who, at the call of filial duty, would cheerfully perform domestic labor ; but, if there are any, who would make a strong love for more elevated and refined pursuits an excuse for neglecting these coarser duties, we would commend them to the example of this conscientious child. She, if any could, might have pleaded her genius, or her delicate health, or her mother's most tender indulgence, for a failure, that, in her, would have hardly seemed to us a fault.

During this summer she went to Canada with her mother, where she revelled in an unexplored library, and enjoyed most heartily the social pleasures at her sister's. They had a family concert of music every evening. Mrs. Townsend, her sister, accompanied the instruments with her fine voice. Lucretia was often moved by the music, and particularly by her favorite song, Moore's "Farewell to my Harp." This she would have sung to her at twilight, when it would excite a shivering through her whole frame. On one occasion she became cold and pale, and was near fainting, and afterwards poured her excited feelings forth in the following address ;

## TO MY SISTER.

"WHEN evening spreads her shades around,  
 And darkness fills the arch of Heaven ;  
 When not a murmur, nor a sound  
 To fancy's sportive ear is given ;

"When the broad orb of Heaven is bright  
 And looks around with golden eye ;  
 When nature, softened by her light,  
 Seems calmly, solemnly to lie ;

' Then, when our thoughts are raised above  
 This world, and all this world can give ;  
 Oh sister, sing the song I love,  
 And tears of gratitude receive.

' The song which thrills my bosom's core,  
 And hovering, trembles, half afraid,  
 Oh sister, sing the song once more,  
 Which ne'er for mortal ear was made.

"'T were almost sacrilege to sing  
 Those notes amid the glare of day ;  
 Notes borne by angel's purest wing,  
 And wafted by their breath away.

"When sleeping in my grass-grown bed,  
 Should'st thou *still* linger here above,  
 Wilt thou not kneel beside my head,  
 And, sister, sing the song I love ?"

We insert here a striking circumstance that occurred during a visit she made to her sister the following year. She was at that time employed

in writing her longest published poem, "Amir Khan." Immediately after breakfast she went out to walk, and, not returning to dinner, nor even when the evening approached, Mr. Townsend set forth in search of her. He met her, and, as her eye encountered his, she smiled and blushed, as if she felt conscious of having been a little ridiculous. She said she had called on a friend, and, having found her absent, had gone to her library, where she had been examining some volumes of an Encyclopædia, to aid her, we believe, in the Oriental story she was employed upon. She forgot her dinner and her tea, and had remained reading, standing, and with her hat on, till the disappearance of daylight brought her to her senses.

In the interval between her visits, she wrote several letters to her friends, which are chiefly interesting from the indications they afford of her social and affectionate spirit. We subjoin a few extracts. She had returned to Plattsburg amid the bustle of a Fourth of July celebration. "We found," she says, "our brother Yankees had turned out well to celebrate the Fourth. The wharf from the hill to the very edge of the water, even the rafts and sloops, were black with the crowd. If some very good genius, who presided over my destiny at that time, had not spread its protecting pinions round me, like every thing else in my possession, I should have lost even my

precious self. What a truly lamentable accident it would have been just at that moment! We took a carriage, and were extricating ourselves from the crowd, when Mr. —, who had pressed himself through, came to shake hands, and bid good bye. He is now on his way to —. Well! here is health, happiness, and ‘a bushel of love’ to all *married* people! Is it possible, you ask, that Sister Lue could ever have permitted such a toast to pass her lips? We arrived safely at our good old house, and found every thing as we had left it. The chimney swallows had taken up their residence in the chimney, and rattled the soot from their sable habitations over the hearth and carpet. It looked like desolation indeed. The grass is high in the door-yard; the wild-roses, double-roses, and sweet-briar are in full bloom, and, take it all in all, the spot looks much as the garden of Eden did after the expulsion of Adam and Eve.

“We had just done tea when M— came in, and sat an hour or two. What, in the name of wonder, could he have found to talk about all that time? Something, dear sister, you would not have thought of; something of so little consequence, that the time he spent glided swiftly, almost unnoticed. I had him all to myself, *tête-à-tête*.

“I had almost forgotten to tell you I had yesterday a present of a most beautiful bouquet. I

wore it to church in the afternoon ; but it has withered and faded,

‘Withered like the world’s treasures,  
Faded like the world’s pleasures.’”

From the sort of mystical, girl-like allusions in the above extracts, to persons whose initials only are given, to bouquets and *tête-à-têtes*, we infer that she thus early had declared lovers. Even at this age, for she was not yet sixteen, her mother says she had resolved never to marry. “Her reasons,” continues her mother, “for this decision, were, that her peculiar habits, her entire devotion to books and scribbling (as she called it), unfitted her for the care of a family. She could not do justice to husband or children while her whole soul was absorbed in literary pursuits ; she was not willing to resign them for any man, therefore she had formed the resolution to lead a single life ;” a resolution that would have lasted probably till she had passed under the dominion of a stronger passion than her love for the Muses. With affections like hers, and a most lovely person and attractive manners, her resolution would scarcely have enabled her to escape the common destiny of her sex.

The following is an extract from a letter written after participating in several gay parties ;

“Indeed my dear father, I have turned round

like a top for the last two or three weeks, and am glad to seat myself once more in my favorite corner. How, think you, should I stand it to be whirled in the giddy round of dissipation? I come home from the blaze of light, from the laugh of mirth, the smile of complaisance and seeming happiness, and the vision passes from my mind like the brilliant, but transitory hues of the rainbow; and I think with regret on the many, very many happy hours I have passed with you and Anne. Oh, I do want to see you, indeed I do. You think me wild, thoughtless, and perhaps unfeeling; but I assure you I can be sober, I *sometimes* think, and I *can* and *do* feel. Why have you not written? Not one word in almost three weeks! Where are your promises of punctual correspondence? Mamma feels almost distracted. 'They have forgotten me!' she said to-day when the boat arrived and brought no letter, and burst into tears. Oh, do write."

"Dear brother and sister, I must write; but, dear Anne, I am now doomed to dim your eye and cloud your brow, for I know, that what I have to communicate will surprise and distress you. Our dear, dear cousin John is dead! Oh, I need not tell you how much, how deeply he is lamented. You knew him, and, like every one else who did, you loved him. Poor Eliza! how my heart aches for her! her father, her mother, her brother, all

gone, almost the last, the dearest tie is broken which bound her to life. What a vacancy must there be in her heart. How fatal would it prove to almost every hope in life, were we allowed even a momentary glimpse of futurity ! for often half the enjoyments of life consist in the anticipation of pleasures, which may never be ours."

Soon after this, Lucretia witnessed the death of a beloved young friend. It was the first death she had seen, and it had its natural effect on a reflecting and sensitive mind. Her thoughts wandered through eternity by the light of religion, the only light that penetrates beyond the death-bed. She wrote many religious pieces ; but, as I hope another volume of her poems will be given to the public, I have merely selected the following.

"OH that the eagle's wing were mine,  
I 'd soar above the dreary earth ;  
I 'd spread my wings, and rise to join  
The immortal fountain of my birth.

"For what is joy ? How soon it fades,  
The childish vision of an hour !  
Though warm and brilliant are its shades,  
'T is but a frail and fading flower.

"And what is hope ? It is a light  
Which leads us on, deluding ever,  
Till lost amid the shades of night  
We sink, and then it flies for ever.

\* And what is love? It is a dream,  
A brilliant fable framed by youth;  
A bubble dancing on life's stream,  
And sinking 'neath the eye of truth.

"And what are honor, glory, fame,  
But death's dark watch-words to the grave?  
The victim dies, and lo! his name  
Is stamped in life's red-rolling wave.

"And what are all the joys of life,  
But vanity, and toil, and woe?  
What but a bitter cup of grief,  
With dregs of sin and death below?

"This world is but the first dark gate  
Unfolded to the waking soul;  
But Death unerring, led by Fate,  
Shall Heaven's bright portals backward roll.

"Then shall this unchained spirit fly  
On, to the God who gave it life;  
Rejoicing, as it soars on high,  
Released from danger, doubt, and strife.

"There will it pour its anthems forth,  
Bending before its Maker's throne,  
The great I AM, who gave it birth,  
The Almighty God, the dread Unknown."

During this winter her application to her books was so unremitting, that her parents again became alarmed for her health, and persuaded her occasionally to join in the amusements of Plattsburg. She came home one night at twelve o'clock from

a ball ; and, after giving a most lively account of all she had seen and heard to her mother, who, as usual, had been sitting up for her, she quietly seated herself at the table, and wrote her "Reflections after leaving a Ball-room." Her spirit, though it glided with kind sympathies into the common pleasures of youth, never seemed to relax its tie to the spiritual world.

During the summer of 1824, Captain Partridge visited Plattsburg with his soldier-scholars. Military display had its usual exciting effect on Miss Davidson's imagination, and she addressed "To the Vermont Cadets" the following spirited stanzas, which might have come from the martial Clorinda.

"PASS on! for the bright torch of glory is beaming ;  
Go, wreath round your brows the green laurels of  
fame ;  
Around you a halo is brilliantly streaming,  
And history lingers to write down each name.

"Yes ; ye are the pillars of Liberty's throne ;  
When around you the banner of glory shall wave,  
America proudly shall claim you her own ;  
And Freedom and Honor shall pause o'er each grave

"A watch-fire of glory, a beacon of light,  
Shall guide you to honor, shall point you to fame ;  
The heart that shrinks back, be it buried in night,  
And withered with dim tears of sorrow and shame.

“Though death should await you, ’t were glorious to die  
With the glow of pure honor still warm on the brow ;  
With a light sparkling brightly around the dim eye,  
Like the smile of a spirit still lingering below.

“Pass on! and when War in his strength shall arise,  
Rush on to the conflict, and conquer or die ;  
Let the clash of your arms proudly roll to the skies  
Be blest, if victorious, — and cursed, if you fly !”

It was about this time that she finished “Amir Khan,” and began a tale of some length, which she entitled “The Recluse of the Saranac.” Amir Khan has long been before the public, but we think it has suffered from a general and very natural distrust of precocious genius. The versification is graceful, the story beautifully developed, and the Orientalism well sustained. We think it would not have done discredit to our best popular poets in the meridian of their fame. As the production of a secluded girl of fifteen, it seems *prodigious*. On her mother accidentally discovering and reading a part of her romance, Lucretia manifested her usual shrinkings, and with many tears exacted a promise that she would not again look at it till it was finished. She never again saw it till after her daughter’s death. Lucretia had a most whimsical fancy for pasting narrow slips of paper together, and writing on both sides ; and once playfully boasting to her mother of having written some *yards* of poetry, she produced

a roll, and, forbidding her approach, she measured off twenty yards!

She continued her favorite employments, but now with a secret disquietude that did not escape Mrs. Davidson's vigilant eye. She claimed her child's unqualified confidence, and Lucretia, laying her head on her mother's bosom, and weeping bitterly, confessed her irrepressible longings for more effective means and helps to pursue her studies. "Dear mamma," she said, "had I but half the advantages which I see others slighting, I should be the happiest of the happy. I am now sixteen years old, and what do I know? Nothing! nothing, indeed, compared with what I have yet to learn. The time is rapidly passing, allotted to the improvement of youth, and how dark are my prospects in regard to the favorite wish of my heart!" Her mother, instead of remonstrating, wept with her, and her sympathy was more efficacious than the most elaborate reasoning upon the futility and extravagance of her child's desires. "She became more cheerful," says her mother, "though it was still apparent that her heart was ill at ease."

She often expressed a wish to spend one fortnight alone, even to the exclusion of her little pet sister; and Mrs. Davidson, eager to afford her every gratification in her power, had a room prepared for her recess. Her dinner was sent up to

her. She declined coming down to tea, and her mother, on going to her apartment, found her writing, her plate untouched. Some secret joy it was natural the mother should feel at this devotion to intellectual pleasure ; but her good sense, or her maternal anxiety, got the better of it, and she persuaded Lucretia to consent to the interruption of a daily walk. It was during one of these walks, that she was first seen by the gentleman who was destined to govern the brief space of life that remained to her. His benevolent mind had been interested by the reputation of her genius and loveliness, and no wonder that the beautiful form in which it was enshrined should have called this interest into sudden and effective action. Miss Davidson was just sixteen. Her complexion was the most beautiful brunette, clear and brilliant, of that warm tint that seems to belong to lands of the sun rather than to our chilled regions. Indeed, her whole organization, mental as well as physical, her deep and quick sensibility, her early-developement, were characteristics of a warmer clime than ours. Her stature was low, her form slight and symmetrical, her hair profuse, dark, and curling, her mouth and nose regular, and as beautiful as if they had been chiselled by an inspired artist ; and through this fitting medium beamed her angelic spirit.

The gentleman, to whom we have alluded, at

once determined to give to this rich gem whatever polishing could be given by adventitious circumstances. He went to her father's house, offered to take her under his protection, and to give her every facility for education that could be obtained in this country. Some conversation ensued, as to different institutions for education, and Mrs. Willard's celebrated school at Troy was decided on. "You do not know, Sir," says her mother, in a letter to Lucretia's patron, written long after, "the gratitude, the depth of feeling, which your disinterested conduct excited in our lamented child. She had left the room when you went away; I followed her. She had thrown herself into a chair. Her face was as pale as death; I took her hands in mine; they were as cold as marble. I spoke, she made no reply, and I discovered she had fainted! After the application of suitable remedies, she began to recover," continues her mother, "and burst into tears, and wept long and violently. When she was sufficiently composed, I asked her if she was willing to accept your generous offer. 'Oh yes, mamma! oh yes! but my feelings overpower me.'"

On the same evening she wrote the following letter to her brother and sister.

"What think you? 'Ere another moon shall fill round as my shield,' I shall be at Mrs. Willard's Seminary. A kind and generous friend has invited, yes, urged me, to accept an offer so

every way advantageous to myself; and his benevolent offer has been accepted. In a fortnight I shall probably have left Plattsburg, not to return at least until the expiration of six months. Oh! I am so happy! so delighted! I shall scarcely eat, drink, or sleep for a month to come. You and Anne must both write to me often, and you must not laugh when you think of poor Luly in the far-famed city of Troy, dropping handkerchiefs, keys, gloves, &c., in short, something of every thing I have. It is well if you can read what I have written, for papa and mamma are talking, and my head whirls like a top. Oh! how my poor head aches! Such a surprise as I have had!"

On the 24th of November, 1824, she left home, health on her cheek and in her bosom, and flushed with the most ardent expectations of getting rapidly forward in the career her desires were fixed upon. But even at this moment her fond devotion to her mother was beautifully expressed in some stanzas, which she left where they would meet her eye as soon as the parting tears were wiped away. These stanzas are already published, and I shall only quote two from them, striking for their tenderness and truth.

"To thee my lay is due, the simple song  
Which nature gave me at life's opening day,  
To thee these rude, these untaught strains belong,  
Whose heart, indulgent, will not spurn my lay.

"Oh say, amid this wilderness of life,

What bosom would have throbb'd like thine for me?  
Who would have smiled responsive? Who in grief  
Would e'er have felt, and feeling grieved like thee?"

The following extracts from her letters, which were always filled with yearnings for home, will show that her affections were the strong-hold of her nature.

"*Troy Seminary, December 6th, 1824.* Here I am at last; and what a naughty girl I was, when I was at Aunt Schuyler's, that I did not write you every thing! But to tell the truth, I was topsyturvy, and so I am now; but, in despite of calls from the young ladies, and of a hundred new faces, and new names which are constantly ringing in my ears, I have set myself down, and will not rise until I have written an account of every thing to my dear mother. I am contented; yet, notwithstanding, I have once or twice turned a wishful glance towards my dear-loved home. Amidst all the parade of wealth, in the splendid apartments of luxury, I can assure you, my dearest mother, that I had rather be with you *in our own lowly home*, than in the midst of all this ceremony."

"Oh, mamma, I like Mrs. Willard. 'And so this is my girl, Mrs. Schuyler?' said she, and took me affectionately by the hand. Oh, I want to see you so much! But I must not think of it now. I must learn as fast as I can, and think only of my

studies. Dear, dear little Margaret! kiss her and the little boys for me. How is dear father getting on in this rattling world?"

The letters that followed were tinged with melancholy from her "bosom's depth," and her mother has withheld them. In a subsequent one she says, "I have written two long letters; but I wrote when I was ill, and they savor too much of sadness. I feel a little better now, and have again commenced my studies. Mr. ——\* called here to-day. Oh, he is very good! He stayed some time, and brought a great many books; but I fear I shall have little time to read aught but what appertains to my studies. I am consulting Kames's 'Elements of Criticism,' studying French, attending to Geological lectures, composition, reading, paying some little attention to painting, and learning to dance."

A subsequent letter indicated great unhappiness and debility, and awakened her mother's apprehensions. The next was written more cheerfully. "As I fly to you," she says, "for consolation in all my sorrows, so I turn to you, my dear mother, to participate all my joys. The clouds that envel-

---

\* This hiatus should be filled with the name of her benefactor; but, as his patronage was marked with the delicacy that characterizes true generosity, I cannot, without his expressed permission, publish his name. The world's praise could be little to him, who enjoyed the gratitude of this young earthly angel.

oped my mind have dispersed, and I turn to you with a far lighter heart than when I last wrote. The ever kind Mr. ——— called yesterday." She then describes the paternal interest her benefactor took in her health and happiness, expresses a trembling apprehension lest he should be disappointed in the amount of her improvement, and laments the loss of time from her frequent indispositions. "How, my dear mother," she says, "shall I express my gratitude to my kind, my excellent friend? What is felt as deeply as I feel this obligation, *cannot* be expressed; but I can feel, and *do* feel." It must be remembered that these were not formal and obligatory letters to her benefactor, but the spontaneous overflowing of her heart in her private correspondence with her mother.

We now come to a topic, to which we would ask the particular attention of our readers. Owing to many causes, but chiefly, we believe, to the demand for operatives in every department of society in our country, the work of *school* education is crowded into a very few years. The studies, instead of being selected, spread through the whole circle of the sciences. The school period is the period of the young animal's physical growth and developement; the period when the demands of the physical nature are strongest, and the mental weakest. Then our young men

are immured in colleges, law schools, divinity schools, &c., and our young ladies in boarding-schools, where, even in the best regulated, the provisions for exercise in the open air are very insufficient. In the city schools, we are aware, that the difficulties to be overcome to achieve this great object are nearly insuperable, we believe quite so; and, if they are so, should not these establishments be placed in the country? Are not health and physical vigor the basis of mental health and vigor, of usefulness and happiness? What a proportion of the miseries of the more favored classes of our females result from their *invalidism*! What feebleness of purpose, weakness of execution, dejection, fretfulness, mental and moral imbecility!

The case would not be so bad, if the misery ended with one generation, with the mother, cut off in the midst of her days, or dragging on, to threescore and ten, her unenjoyed and profitless existence. But that it is not so, there are hosts of living witnesses in the sickly, pale, drooping children of our nurseries. There are multitudes who tell us, that our climate will not permit a delicate female to exercise in the open air. If the climate is bad, so much the more important is it to acquire strength to resist it. Besides, if out-of-doors exercise is not at all times attractive, we know it is not impossible. We *know* delicately

bred females, who, during some of our hardest winters, have not for more than a day or two lost their exercise abroad. When, in addition to the privation of pleasurable exercise, (for the walk in funeral procession, attended by martinets, and skewered by city decorums, can scarcely be called *pleasurable*,) the school girl is confined to her tasks from eight to ten hours in rooms sometimes too cold, sometimes too hot, where her fellow sufferers are *en masse*, can we wonder at the result?

How far this evil may have operated in shortening the life of Lucretia Davidson, we cannot say; but we cannot but think, that her devoted and watchful friend erred in sending a creature so delicate in her construction to any boarding-school, even the best-conducted institution. We certainly do not mean to express or imply any censure of the "Troy Seminary." We have no personal knowledge of it; but we believe no similar institution has more the confidence of the community; and, as it has been now many years established and tried, it is fair to believe it deserves it.

An arrangement of these boarding-schools, that bore very hard upon Miss Davidson, was the public examination.\* These examinations are

---

\*I did not intend remarking upon the influence these examinations have on the scholar's progress; but I cannot forbear quoting the following pertinent passage from President Hopkins's Inaugural Address. "There are

appalling to a sensitive mind. Could they be proved to be of manifest advantage to the scholarship of the young ladies, we should doubt their utility on the whole. But, even where they are conducted with perfect fairness, are they a test of scholarship? Do not the bold outface, and the indolent evade them? The studious are stimulated, and the sensitive and shrinking, if stimulated, are appalled and disconcerted by them; so that the condiment affects those only, whose appetites are already too keen.

But the experience of Miss Davidson is more persuasive than any reasoning of ours, and we shall give it in her own language, in occasional extracts from her letters to her mother.

“We now begin to dread the examination. Oh, horrible! seven weeks, and I shall be posted up before all Troy, all the students from Schenectady, and perhaps five hundred others. What shall I do?”

“I have just received a note from Mr. —, in which he speaks of your having written to him of my illness. I was indeed ill, and very ill for  

---

not wanting schools in this country, in which the real interests and progress of the pupils are sacrificed to their appearance at examination. But the vanity of parents must be flattered, and the memory is overburdened, and studies are forced on prematurely, and a system of infant-school instruction is carried forward into maturer life.”

several days, and in my deepest dejection wrote to you; but do not, my dearest mother, be alarmed about me. My appetite is not perfectly good, but quite as well as when I was at home. Mr. —'s letter was accompanied by a French Testament. The letter was just such a one as was calculated to soothe my feelings, and set me completely at rest, and I begin to think he is truly my 'guardian angel.' He expressed a wish that my stay here should be prolonged. What think you, mother? I should be delighted by such an arrangement. This place really seems quite like a home to me, though not *my own dear home*. I like Mrs. Willard, I love the girls, and I have the vanity to think I am not actually disagreeable to them."

We come now to another expression (partly serious, and partly bantering, for she seems to have uniformly respected her instructress) of her terrors of "examination."

"We are all engaged, heart and hand, preparing for this awful examination. Oh, how I dread it! But there is no retreat. I must stand firm to my post, or experience all the anger, vengeance, and punishment, which will, in case of delinquency or flight, be exercised with the most unforgiving acrimony. We are in such cases excommunicated, henceforth and for ever, under the awful ban of holy Seminary; and the evil eye of false report

is upon us. Oh mamma, I do though, jesting apart, dread this examination; but nothing short of real and absolute sickness can excuse a scholar in the eyes of Mrs. Willard. Even that will not do it to the Trojan world around us; for, if a young lady is ill at examination, they say with a sneer, 'Oh, she is ill of an examination fever!' Thus you see, mamma, we have no mercy either from friends or foes. We must '*do or die.*' Tell Morris he must write to me. Kiss dear, dear little Margaret for me, and don't let her forget *poor sister Luly*, and tell all who inquire for me that I am well, but in awful dread of a great examination."

The following extract is from a letter to her friends, who had written under the impression, that all letters received by the young ladies were, of course, read by some one of the officers of the institution.

"Lo! just as I was descending from the third story, (for you must know I hold my head high,) your letter was put into my hands. Poor little wanderer! I really felt a sisterly compassion for the poor little folded paper. I kissed it for the sake of those who sent it forth into the wide world, and put it into my bosom. But oh, when I read it! Now, Anne, I will tell you the truth; it was cold, perhaps it was written on one of your cold Canada days, or perchance it lost a little heat on

the way. It did not seem to come from the very heart of hearts; it looked as though it were written 'to a young lady at the Troy Seminary,' not to your dear, dear, *dear sister Luly*. Mr. — has thus far been a father to me, and I thank him; but I will not mock my feelings by attempting to say how much I thank him. I can never do them justice. What inducement can he have to do what he is now doing? I know of none. Personal merit on my part is out of the question. His heart is naturally benevolent; he wishes to do good; he saw me, and by some unaccountable means I am where I am. The *Father* of those, who are in adversity struggling against despair, undoubtedly should receive my heart-felt thanks and praises as the original, the moving cause of all these blessings; and I hope they are as mercifully received as they are sincerely given."

"My dear mother! oh how I wish I could lay my head upon your bosom! I hope you do not keep my letters, for I certainly have burned all yours,\* and I stood like a little fool and wept over their ashes, and, when I saw the last one gone, I felt as though I had parted with my last friend." Then, after expressing an earnest wish that her mother would destroy her letters, she says, "They have no connexion. When I

---

\* This was in consequence of a positive command from her mother.

write, every thing comes crowding upon me at once; my pen moves too slow for my brain and my heart, and I feel vexed at myself, and tumble in every thing together, and a choice medley you have of it."

"I attended Mr. Ball's public [assembly] last night, and had a delightful evening; but now for something of more importance, *Ex-am-i-na-tion!* I had just begun to be engaged, heart and hand, preparing for it, when, by some means, I took a violent cold. I was unable to raise my voice above a whisper, and coughed incessantly. On the second day Mrs. Willard sent for Dr. Robbins; he said I must be bled, and take an emetic; this was sad; but, oh mamma, I could not speak nor breathe without pain." There are farther details of pains, remedies, and consequent exhaustion; and yet this fragile and precious creature was permitted by her physician and friends, kind and watchful friends too, to proceed in her suicidal preparations for examination! There was nothing uncommon in this injudiciousness. Such violations of the laws of our physical nature are every day committed by persons, in other respects, the wisest and the best, and our poor little martyr may not have suffered in vain, if her experience awakens attention to the subject.

In the letter, from which we have quoted above, and which is filled with expressions of love for the

dear ones at home, she thus continues; "Tell Morris I will answer his letter in full next quarter; but now I fear I am doing wrong, for I am yet quite feeble, and when I get stronger I shall be very avaricious of my time, in order to prepare for the coming week. We must study morning, noon, and night. *I shall rise between two and four now every morning, till the dreaded day is past.* I rose the other night at twelve, but was ordered back to bed again. You see, mamma, I shall have a chance to become an early riser here." "Had I not written you that I was coming home, I think I should not have seen you this winter. All my friends think I had better remain here, as the journey will be long and cold; but oh! there is that at the journey's end, which would tempt me through the wilds of Siberia, — father, mother, brothers, sister, *home.* Yes, I shall come."

We insert some stanzas, written about this time, not so much for their poetical merit, as for the playful spirit that beams through them, and which seems like sunbeams smiling on a cataract.

A WEEK BEFORE EXAMINATION.

"ONE has a headache, one a cold,  
 One has her neck in flannel rolled;  
 Ask the complaint, and you are told,  
 'Next week's examination.'

"One frets and scolds, and laughs and cries,  
 Another hopes, despairs, and sighs;  
 Ask but the cause, and each replies,  
 'Next week's examination.'

“One bans her books, then grasps them tight,  
 And studies morning, noon, and night,  
 As though she took some strange delight  
 In these examinations.

“The books are marked, defaced, and thumbed,  
 The brains with midnight tasks benumbed,  
 Still all in that account is summed,  
 ‘Next week’s examination!’”

In a letter of February 10th, she says, “The dreaded work of examination is now going on, my dear mother. To-morrow evening, which will be the last, and is always the most crowded, is the time fixed upon for my *entrée* upon the field of action. Oh! I hope I shall not disgrace myself. It is a rule here to reserve the best classes till the last; so I suppose I may take it as a compliment that we are delayed.”

“*February 12th.* The examination is over. E—— E—— did herself and her native village honor; but as for your poor Luly, she acquitted herself, I trust, decently. Oh! mamma, I was so frightened! but, although my face glowed and my voice trembled, I did make out to get through, for I knew my lessons. The room was crowded almost to suffocation. All was still, the fall of a pin could have been heard, and I tremble when I think of it even now.” No one can read these melancholy records without emotion.

Her visit home during the vacation was given up, in compliance with the advice of her guardian

"I wept a good long hour or so," she says, with her characteristic gentle acquiescence, "and then made up my mind to be content."

In her next letter she relates an incident very striking in her uneventful life. It occurred in returning to Troy, after her vacation, passed happily with her friends in the vicinity. "Uncle went to the ferry with me," she says, "where we met Mr. Paris. Uncle placed me under his care and, snugly seated by his side, I expected a very pleasant ride, with a very pleasant gentleman. All was pleasant, except that we expected every instant that all the ice in the Hudson would come drifting against us, and shut in scow, stage, and all, or sink us to the bottom, which, in either case, you know, mother, would not have been quite so agreeable. We had just pushed from the shore, I watching the ice with anxious eyes, when, lo! the two leaders made a tremendous plunge, and tumbled headlong into the river. I felt the carriage following fast after; the other two horses pulled back with all their power, but the leaders were dragging them down, dashing and plunging, and flouncing in the water. 'Mr. Paris, in mercy let us get out!' said I. But, as he did not see the horses, he felt no alarm. The moment I informed him they were overboard, he opened the door and cried, 'Get out and save yourself, if possible; I am old and stiff, but I will follow in an instant.'

‘Out with the lady! let the lady out!’ shouted several voices at once; ‘the other horses are about to plunge, and then all will be over.’ I made a lighter spring than many a lady does in a cotillon, and jumped upon a cake of ice. Mr. Paris followed, and we stood, (I trembling like a leaf,) expecting every instant that the next plunge of the drowning horses would detach the piece of ice upon which we were standing, and send us adrift; but, thank Heaven, after working for ten or fifteen minutes, by dint of ropes and cutting them away from the other horses, they dragged the poor creatures out more dead than alive.

“Mother, don’t you think I displayed some courage? I jumped into the stage again, and shut the door, while Mr. Paris remained outside, watching the movement of affairs. We at length reached here, and I am alive, as you see, to tell the story of my woes.”

In her next letter she details a conversation with Mrs. Willard, full of kind commendation and good counsel. “Mamma,” she concludes, “you would be justified in thinking me a perfect lump of vanity and egotism; but I have always related to you every thought, every action, of my life. I have had no concealments from you, and I have stated these matters to you because they fill me with surprise. Who would think the accomplished Mrs. Willard would admire my poor daubing, or

my poor any thing else! Oh, dear mamma, I am so happy now! so contented! Every unusual movement startles me, I am constantly afraid of something to mar it." \*

---

\* This letter manifests strikingly, what all her letters indicate, her entire unconsciousness of superiority, her freedom from vanity, or any approach even to self-complacency. I insert here some extracts from a very interesting letter from Mrs. Willard, with which I was favored too late to incorporate it in the narrative.

"Though you have doubtless more exact descriptions of Miss Davidson, than I shall be able, after the lapse of so many years, to afford, yet I will give you truly my impressions concerning her. They may be of some value, as they are formed with the advantage of extensive comparison with those of her own age, known under similar circumstances.

"Miss Davidson was scarcely of a middling height, delicately formed, with regular features, a fine roseate bloom, bright, round black eyes, and dark brown hair, which flowed in fine curls about her face. She had all the elements of personal beauty; yet she was so excessively shy, that many a girl, less perfectly endowed in that respect, would be sooner noticed by a stranger. Her fine eyes, especially in the presence of those with whom she was not familiar, would be bent downwards; and there was a certain shrinking of her person, as if she would fain make herself so little as not to be seen.

"From the same excessive timidity she would, under the same circumstances, shrink her mind as well as her person; not conversing fluently, or bringing out in speech those flashes of fancy, and that delicacy of sentiment, which marked her written compositions. Hence her

The next extract is from a letter, the emanation of her affectionate spirit, to a favorite brother seven years old.

“Dear L——, I am obliged to you for your two very interesting epistles, and much doubt whether I could spell more ingeniously myself. Really, I have some idea of sending them to the printer’s, to be struck off in imitation of a Chinese puzzle. Your questions about the stars I have been cogitating upon for some time past, and am of the

---

teachers did not find her recitations brilliant, although well satisfied that she understood her author. There was also a degree of irregularity in her performances, her mind operating at different times with different degrees of force. I recollect that she was a fine scholar in Kames’s ‘Elements of Criticism.’ She was studying that work at the same time with Paley’s ‘Moral Philosophy.’ Her companions found Paley a much easier author to understand. This surprised Miss Davidson, who found Kames much less difficult, because, she said, the work was more connected. It was in truth more connected with her internal sensibilities. The ‘ideal presence’ of Kames was more congenial to her, than the ‘general consequences’ of Paley. She loved better to dwell in the high regions of imagination and taste, than in the lower but more extensive world of common things.

“However it might be with her recitations, she soon became distinguished in school by her compositions. My sister, Mrs. Lincoln (now Mrs. Phelps), superintended the class in that branch of which Miss Davidson was a member. I well remember the high satisfaction with

opinion, that, if there are beings inhabiting those heavenly regions, they must be content to feed, cameleon-like, upon air; for, even were we disposed to spare them a portion of our earth sufficient to plant a garden, I doubt whether the attraction of gravitation would not be too strong for resistance, and the unwilling clod return to its pale brethren of the valley, 'to rest in ease inglorious.' So far from burning your precious letters, my dear little brother, I carefully preserve them in a little pocket-book, and when I feel lonely and desolate, and

---

which she came to show me one of her first school productions, the subject of which was 'The Discovery of America.' But in nothing, not even in poetry, of which some of her finest pieces were written here, did she evince the superiority of her genius, more than in drawing and painting; and I am convinced that she wanted nothing but practice, with some good instruction, to have painted in a style as elegant, and as peculiarly her own, as were her finest literary productions. In several respects she would improve upon the copies given her. She not only seemed to seize the artist's idea, and to know exactly what effect he wished to produce; but she brought out from her own imagination more picturesque forms, and sometimes fine touches which were quite original. I speak of Miss Davidson's painting, not in comparison with those of the practised artist, but with those of other school-girls, and of the many who have been under my instruction.

"I do not now recollect one, of whose native genius I had so high an opinion; although we have had many who, in consequence of much more practice and instruc-

think of my dear home, I turn them over and over again. Do write often, my sweet little correspondent, and believe me," &c. &c.

Her next letter to her mother, written in March, was in a melancholy strain; but, as if to avert her parent's consequent anxieties, she concludes,

"I hope you will feel no concern for my health or happiness; for, save the thought of my dear mother and her lonely life, and the idea that my dear father is vainly spending his time and talents in fruitless exertions for his helpless family, save

---

tion, have made better performances. The native uneducated poet brings forth the inspirations of his genius in words. These he uses from his infancy, and, though his stock may be comparatively small, yet of this stock he may perfectly apprehend the meaning and use. Not so with the uninstructed genius in painting. However delightful and original the forms with which his imagination may be stored, he must *learn* the medium of lines and shades and colors, before he can develop them to others. Miss Davidson, I am persuaded, had but to do this, to become eminent in painting.

"Lucretia's moral nature was exquisitely touched with all the finer sensibilities. She loved with the utmost tenderness those who loved her, and were kind to her; and she loved those who were good, and the more, if they were unfortunate. Hence a fund of genuine affection arose for her, in the hearts of her companions, and among *them* her conversation was entertaining, and often witty. To amuse them she sometimes wrote, as well as talked. Her 'Examination' poem was thus produced, which was, at the time, much quoted and copied among the young ladies."

these thoughts (and I assure you, mamma, they come not seldom), I am happy. Do, my dear mother, try to be cheerful, and have good courage."

"I have been to the Rensselaer school, to attend the philosophical lectures. They are delivered by the celebrated Mr. Eaton, who has several students, young gentlemen. I hope they will not lose their hearts among twenty or thirty pretty girls. For my part, I kept my eyes fixed as fast as might be upon the good old lecturer, as I am of the opinion, that he is the best possible safeguard, with his philosophy and his apparatus; for you know philosophy and love are sworn enemies!"

Miss Davidson returned to Plattsburg during the spring vacation. Her mother, when the first rapture of reunion was over, the first joy at finding her child unchanged in the modesty and naturalness of her deportment, and fervor of her affections, became alarmed at the indications of disease, in the extreme fragility of her person, and the deep and fluctuating color of her cheek. Lucretia insisted, and, deceived by that ever-deceiving disease, believed she was well. She was gay and full of hope, and could hardly be persuaded to submit to her father's medical prescriptions. During her stay at home she wrote a great deal. Like the bird, which is to pass away with the summer, she seems to have been ever on the

wing, pouring forth the spontaneous melodies of her soul. The following are a few stanzas from a piece "On Spring."

"I have seen the fair Spring, I have heard her sweet  
 song,  
 As she passed in her lightness and freshness along;  
 The blue wave rolled deeper, the moss-crest looked  
 bright,  
 As she breathed o'er the regions of darkness and night.

"I have seen the rose bloom on the youthful cheek,  
 And the dew of delight 'neath the bright lash break;  
 The bounding footstep, scarce pressing the earth,  
 And the lip which speaks of a soul of mirth.

"I have seen the Winter with brow of care,  
 With his soulless eye and his snow-white hair;  
 And whate'er his footsteps had touched was cold,  
 As the lifeless stone which the sculptors mould.

\* \* \* \* \*

"As I knelt by the sepulchre, dreary and lone,  
 Lay the beautiful form in its temple of stone;  
 I looked for its coming, — the warm wind passed by, —  
 I looked for its coming on earth and on high.

"The young leaves gleamed brightly around the cold  
 spot;  
 I looked for the spirit, yet still it came not.  
 Shall the flower of the valley burst forth to the light,  
 And man in his beauty lie buried in night?

"A voice on the waters, a voice in the sky,  
 A voice from beneath, and a voice from on high,  
 Proclaims that he shall not; that Spring, in her light,  
 Shall waken the spirit from darkness and night."

These were singular speculations for a beautiful girl of sixteen. Were there not spirits ministering to her from that world to which she was hastening?

The physician, called in to consult with her father, was of opinion that a change of air and scene would probably restore her, and it was decided that she should *return to school!* Miss Gilbert's boarding-school at Albany was selected for the next six months. There are few more of her productions of any sort, and they seem to us to have the sweetness of the last roses of summer. The following playful passages are from her last letter at home to her sister in Canada.

"The boat will be here in an hour or two, and I am all ready to start. Oh, I am half sick. I have taken several doses of something quite delectable for a visiting-treat. Now," she concludes her letter, "by your affection for me, by your pity for the wanderer, by your remembrance of the absent, by your love for each other, and by all that is sacred to an absent friend, I charge you, write to me, and write often. As ye hope to prosper, as ye hope your boy to prosper (and grow fat!), as ye hope for my gratitude and affection now and hereafter, I charge you, write. If ye sinfully neglect this last and solemn injunction of a parting friend, my injured spirit will visit you in your transgressions. It shall pierce you with goose-quills, and hurl down upon your recreant heads the brim-

ming contents of the neglected inkstand. This is my threat, and this my vengeance. But if, on the contrary, ye shall see fit to honor me with numerous epistles, which shall be duly answered, know ye, that I will live and love you, and not only you, but your boy. You now see that upon your bearing depends the fate of your little boy, 'to be beloved, or not to be beloved!' They have come! Farewell, a long farewell!"

She proceeded to Albany, and in a letter dated May 12th, 1825, she seems delighted with her reception, accommodations, and prospects at Miss Gilbert's school. She has yet no anxieties about her health, and enters on her career of study with her customary ardor. With the most delicate health and constant occupation, she found time always to write long letters to her mother, and the little children at home, filled with fond expressions. What an example and rebuke to the idle school-girl, who finds no time for these minor duties! But her studies, to which she applied herself beyond her strength, from the conscientious fear of not fulfilling the expectations of her friends, were exhausting the sources of life. Her letters teem with expressions of gratitude to her benefactor, to Miss Gilbert, and to all the friends around her. She complains of debility and want of appetite, but imputes all her ailings to not hearing regularly from home. The mails, of course, were

at fault, for her mother's devotion never intermitted. The following expressions will show that her sensibility, naturally acute, was rendered intense by physical disease and suffering.

"Oh, my dear mother, cannot you send your *Luby* one little line. Not one word in two weeks! I have done nothing but weep all day long. I feel so wretchedly! I am afraid you are ill."

"I am very wretched, indeed I am. My dear mother, am I never to hear from you again? I am *homesick*. I know I am foolish; but I cannot help it. To tell the truth, I am half sick. I am so weak, so languid, I cannot eat. I am nervous, I know I am; I weep the most of the time. I have blotted the paper so, that I cannot write. I cannot study much longer, if I do not hear from you."

Letters from home renovated her for a few days, and, at Mr. ——'s request, she went to the theatre, and gave herself up, with all the freshness of youthful feeling, to the spells of the drama, and raved about Hamlet and Ophelia like any other school-girl.

But her next letter recurs to her malady, and, for the first time, she expresses a fear that her disease is beyond the reach of common remedies. Her mother was alarmed, and would have gone immediately to her, but she was herself confined to her room by illness. Her father's cooler judg-

ment inferred from their receiving no letters from Lucretia's friends, that there was nothing serious in her disease.

The next letter removed every doubt. It was scarcely legible ; still she assures her mother she is better, and begs she will not risk the consequences of a long journey. But neither health nor life weighed now with the mother against seeing her child. She set off, and, by appointment, joined Mr. — at Whitehall. They proceeded thence to Albany, where, after the first emotions of meeting were over, Lucretia said, "Oh mamma, I thought I should never have seen you again! But, now I have you here, and can lay my aching head upon your bosom, I shall soon be better."

For a few days the balm seemed effectual ; she was better, and the physicians believed she would recover ; but her mother was no longer to be persuaded from her conviction of the fatal nature of the disease, and arrangements were immediately made to convey her to Plattsburg. The journey was effected, notwithstanding it was during the heats of July, with less physical suffering than was apprehended. She shrunk painfully from the gaze her beauty inevitably attracted, heightened as it was by that disease which seems to delight to deck the victim for its triumph. "Her joy upon finding herself at home," says her mother, "operated, for a time, like magic." The sweet,

health-giving influence of domestic love, the home atmosphere, seemed to suspend the progress of her disease, and again her father, brothers, and friends were deluded; all, but the mother and the sufferer. She looked, with prophetic eye, calmly to the end. There was nothing to disturb her. That kingdom that cometh 'without observation' was within her, and she was only about to change its external circumstances, about to put off the harness of life in which she had been so patient and obedient. To the last she manifested her love of books. A trunk filled with them, given to her by her benefactor, had not been unpacked. She requested her mother to open it at her bed-side, and, as each book was given to her, she turned over the leaves, kissed it, and desired to have it placed on a table at the foot of her bed. There they remained to the last, her eye often fondly resting on them.

She expressed a strong desire to see Mr. — once more, and a fear that, though he had been summoned, he might not arrive in time. He came, however, to receive the last expressions of her gratitude, and to hear the last word pronounced by her lips, his own name.

The "Fear of Madness" was written by her while confined to her bed, and was the last piece she ever wrote. As it constitutes a part of the

history of her disease, it is, though already published, inserted here.

“THERE is a something which I dread ;  
It is a dark, and fearful thing ;  
It steals along with withering tread,  
Or sweeps on wild destruction’s wing.

“That thought comes o’er me in the hour  
Of grief, of sickness, or of sadness ;  
’T is not the dread of death ; ’t is more, —  
It is the dread of madness.

“Oh! may these throbbing pulses pause,  
Forgetful of their feverish course ;  
May this hot brain, which, burning, glows  
With all a fiery whirlpool’s force,

“Be cold, and motionless, and still,  
A tenant of its lowly bed ;  
But let not dark delirium steal” —

[*Unfinished.*]

That the records of the last scenes of Lucretia Davidson’s life are scanty, is not surprising. The materials for this memoir, it must be remembered, were furnished by her mother. A victim stretched on the rack cannot keep records. She says, in general terms, “Lucretia frequently spoke to me of her approaching dissolution, with perfect calmness, and as an event that must soon take place. In a conversation with Mr. Townsend, held at intervals, as her strength would permit, she expressed the same sentiments she expressed to

me before she grew so weak. She declared her firm faith in the Christian religion, her dependence on the divine promises, which she said had consoled and sustained her during her illness. She said her hopes of salvation were grounded on the merits of her Savior, and that death, which had once looked so dreadful to her, was now divested of all its terrors.”

Welcome, indeed, should that messenger have been, that opened the gates of knowledge, and blissful immortality, to such a spirit!

During Miss Davidson's residence in Albany, which was less than three months, she wrote several miscellaneous pieces, and began a long poem, divided into cantos, and entitled “*Mari-torne, or the Pirate of Mexico.*” This she deemed better than any thing she had previously produced. The amount of her compositions, considering the shortness and multifarious occupations of a life of less than seventeen years, is surprising.\* We copy the subjoined paragraph from the biographical sketch prefixed to “*Amir Khan.*” “Her poetical writings, which have been collected, amount in all to two hundred and seventy-eight pieces, of various lengths. When it is considered that there are among these at least five regular poems of several cantos each, some esti-

---

\* She died on the 27th of August, 1825, just a month before her seventeenth birth-day.

mate may be formed of her poetical labors. Besides these were twenty-four school exercises, three unfinished romances, a complete tragedy, written at thirteen years of age, and about forty letters, in a few months, to her mother alone." This statement does not comprise the large proportion (at least one third of the whole) which she destroyed.

The genius of Lucretia Davidson has had the meed of far more authoritative praise than ours. The following tribute is from the London "Quarterly Review"; a source whence praise of American productions is as rare as springs in the desert. The notice is by Mr. Southey, and is written with the earnest feeling, that characterizes that author, as generous as he is discriminating. "In these poems" [Amir Khan, &c.] "there is enough of originality, enough of aspiration, enough of conscious energy, enough of growing power, to warrant any expectations, however sanguine, which the patron, and the friends, and parents of the deceased could have formed."

But, prodigious as the genius of this young creature was, still marvellous after all the abatements that may be made for precociousness and morbid developement, there is something yet more captivating in her moral loveliness. Her modesty was not the infusion of another mind, not the result of cultivation, not the effect of good taste;

nor was it a veil, cautiously assumed and gracefully worn; but an innate quality, that made her shrink from incense, even though the censer were sanctified by love. Her mind was like the exquisite mirror, that cannot be stained by human breath.

Few may have been gifted with her genius, but all can imitate her virtues. There is a universality in the holy sense of duty, that regulated her life. Few young ladies will be called on to renounce the Muses for domestic service; but many may imitate Lucretia Davidson's meek self-sacrifice, by relinquishing some favorite pursuit, some darling object, for the sake of an humble and unpraised duty; and, if few can attain her excellence, all may imitate her in her gentleness, humility, industry, and fidelity to her domestic affections. We may apply to her the beautiful lines, in which she describes one of those

“forms, that, wove in fancy's loom,  
Float in light visions round the poet's head.”

“She was a being formed to love and bless,  
With lavish nature's richest loveliness;  
Such I have often seen in Fancy's eye,  
Beings too bright for dull mortality.  
I've seen them in the visions of the night,  
I've faintly seen them when enough of light  
And dim distinctness gave them to my gaze,  
As forms of other worlds, or brighter days.”

This memoir may be fitly concluded by the following “Tribute to the Memory of my Sister,”

by Margaret Davidson, who was but two years old at the time of Lucretia's death, and whom she so often mentions with peculiar fondness. The lines were written at the age of *eleven*. May we be allowed to say, that the mantle of the elder sister has fallen on the younger, and that she seems to be a second impersonation of her spirit?

*"Though thy freshness and beauty are laid in the tomb,  
Like the floweret which drops in its verdure and bloom;  
Though the halls of thy childhood now mourn thee in  
vain,*

*And thy strains shall ne'er waken their echoes again,  
Still o'er the fond memory they silently glide,  
Still, still thou art ours, and America's pride.*

*Sing on, thou pure seraph, with harmony crowned,*

*And pour the full tide of thy music along,  
O'er the broad arch of Heaven the sweet note shall re-  
sound,*

*And a bright choir of angels shall echo the song.  
The pure elevation which beamed from thine eye,  
As it turned to its home in yon fair azure sky,  
Told of something unearthly; it shone with the light  
Of pure inspiration and holy delight.  
Round the rose that is withered a fragrance remains,  
O'er beauty in ruins the mind proudly reigns.  
Thy lyre has resounded o'er ocean's broad wave,  
And the tear of deep anguish been shed o'er thy grave;  
But thy spirit has mounted to mansions on high,  
To the throne of its God, where it never can die."*

