

from his horse a few evenings before; and that, dying intestate, the allowance which had hitherto enabled me to prosecute my studies necessarily dropped. I crumpled up the paper in my hand.

“You have learned something very unpleasant,” said Ferguson. “Pardon me, I have no wish to intrude; but, if at all agreeable, I would fain spend the evening with you.”

My heart filled, and, grasping his hand, I briefly intimated the purport of my communication; and we walked out together in the direction of the ruins.

“It is perhaps as hard, Mr. Ferguson,” I said, “to fall from one’s hopes as from the place to which they pointed. I was ambitious, — too ambitious it may be, — to rise from that level on which man acts the part of a machine, and tasks merely his body, to that higher level on which he performs the part of a rational creature, and employs only his mind. But that ambition need influence me no longer. My poor mother, too, — I had trusted to be of use to her.”

“Ah! my friend,” said Ferguson, “I can tell you of a case quite as hopeless as your own — perhaps more so. But it will make you deem my sympathy the result of mere selfishness. In scarce any respect do our circumstances differ.”

We had reached the ruins. The evening was calm and mild as when I had walked out on the preceding one; but the hour was earlier, and the sun hung higher over the hill. A newly-formed grave occupied the level spot in front of the little ivied corner.

“Let us seat ourselves here,” said my companion, “and I will tell you a story, — I am afraid a rather tame one; for there is nothing of adventure in it, and nothing of