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Raphæl; or Pages of the Book of Life at Twenty.

that had breathed to him their first vow of love, were now thin and compressed, as with pain. It was too much for Maltravers, and a bursting sob first revealed his presence. But we must not attempt to describe the interview: read it for yourself. We do not intend to enter upon a defence of Bulwer; but we defy any one who is not himself full of obscenity, to find anything calculated to minister to the appetite of the sensualist in the volume before us. With us it has always been a favorite. The plot is fine, and, what to young Misses is especially important, it ends well. After years of trouble, Maltravers finds Alice, and the meeting is a happy one. All the virtuous are rewarded, and the vicious punished.


The revolution in the French capital, of February, 1848, gave a brilliant, though perhaps only temporary, celebrity to Lamartine, and that éclat has created quite a demand for his productions. Some years since he gave to the world a book of poems, and a History of the Girondists followed not long after. His latest effort is embodied in the work quoted at the head of this article—a work to which we should be pleased to apply the rules of criticism fairly, and with what ability we might command, did room permit. But our space will barely suffice for a somewhat enlarged "table of contents."

We have heard of "an opinion as is an opinion," but it was reserved for Lamartine to denominate a book Raphæl which is descriptive of an entirely different personage. It seems the name was suggested by the hero's resemblance to the celebrated painter; and he was fortunate that his likeness to other great men permitted him to sport even this cognomen, for "Had he held a pencil, he would have painted the Virgin of Foligno; as a sculptor, he would have chiseled the Psyche of Canova; had he known the language in which sounds are written, he would have noted the aerial lament of the sea-breeze sighing among the fibres of Italian pines, or the breathing of a sleeping girl who dreams of one she will not name; [the reader is not advised as to the author who accomplished these two feats!] had he been a poet, he would have written the stanzas of Tasso's Erminia, the moonlight talk of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, or Byron's portrait of Haidee."

Verily Raphæl must have found it troublesome to know himself "all things by turns and nothing long."

But let us come down to the earth, and discourse to mortals, who are obliged to obtain knowledge only by means of previously acquired ideas. Raphæl was a descendant of a Spanish noble of limited means. His mother had, in early life, spent some time at Madrid, and when she removed to the country her good manners and refined language "never evaporated
entirely." Lamartine knew her son during his childhood, and after a separation of twelve years, met him again at his castle, in feeble health, and mourning the loss of his mother, wife, and child. During this interview, Raphaël destroyed a number of papers; but one, which he had not the courage to burn, was given to Lamartine, with the request that he should use it according to his discretion. In a few days Raphaël died, and was buried, and here endeth the Prologue.

It is scarcely necessary to say that Raphaël's manuscript is "Raphaël."

After some very minute sketching of mountain scenery, we learn that the little town of Aix, in Savoy, is seated on the slope of a hill, and boasts of a quiet secluded house where invalids are admitted to board. When his health began to fail, Raphaël became an inmate of this dispensary, and soon learned that an interesting stranger, very much of an invalid, occupied one of the apartments. To describe the complete perfection of this being, would be to extract one of the lengthiest chapters of the book. Two points must, therefore, suffice. "Her voice sounded like those small metallic lyres which the children of the Archipelago use when they play upon the sea-shore; and the light of her eyes seemed to come from a distance which I never measured in any other mortal eye." With such eyes alone, it was easy to captivate a far less susceptible admirer than Raphaël. How, then, could he hope to escape, when the love by which he was influenced, diffused itself, like an invisible miasma, through the atmosphere, until at length he could see the beauty through the wall of her chamber as though it had been transparent!

With the usual consistency of French writers, it is stated that Raphaël, overwhelmed with his feelings, had, nevertheless, no desire to know any thing about the stranger; that would have been vulgar. Accordingly, without inquiring, he learned from the physician that Julie hailed from Paris, where she had left a husband many years her senior, and that, feeling symptoms of a decline, she had come alone to Aix for the purpose of trying its waters. Fate in due time made them acquainted. The little lake, on which Julie sometimes sailed, one day became naughty and disobedient: her boat was disabled, and Raphaël came to her assistance just as she had fainted. She was carried to a fisherman's hut, where Raphaël watched her all night, sitting on a bag of corn meal, with his hands on his knees. Towards morning, while he was praying for her, she awaked, exclaiming, "Oh God! I thank thee! I now have a brother!"

Thenceforth, for many weeks, they grew better and better acquainted—the weather all the time conniving at their desire for rural recreations. And now for the poetry! We hope the uninitiated reader will leave us here, and turn to some other article.

On one occasion, Raphaël ceased to be a man, and was metamorphosed into a Living Hymn of Praise. His body lost all consciousness of its earthliness, and he no longer believed in Time, Space, or Death. But if
he walked the earth a breathing Ode, Julie parted with her gravitation, and grew so ethereal that Raphaël was compelled to grasp her feet with both hands and kiss them with great vigor, in order to detain her on this sublunary sphere. Then they discoursed of Thought, God, Eternity, Heaven, Fate, the Stars, Sun, and Christianity in lofty style; and, after a day of rambling over the scenery of Savoy, they spent nearly a whole night "conversing, in a low tone, through the interval between the floor and the rough wood-work of the door," "in words not used in the ordinary language of men," "revealing unutterable thoughts." And then they fell asleep.

And then Julie, without disguise, declared her resistless love, observing that, though wedded by law to the decrepit old gentleman at the capital, she was Raphaël's by nature. But time and the weather waxed ungracious to this precious couple, and, notwithstanding they could enjoy an eternity of happiness in a single moment, the sad truth came at last, that they must part. This fact weighed heavily during a ride on the lake, whereat Julie, in a fit of "heaven sickness," languishingly exclaimed, "Let us die!" Raphaël attempted to comply with this benevolent injunction, and had actually lashed her with boat-ropes to his side, preparatory to taking a dive in the blue water, when she fainted with bliss, and the scheme was frustrated. It is added, naturally enough, "we re-crossed the lake and returned home silently and thoughtfully."

On her route to Paris, he followed her unperceived, and returned to Savoy without speaking to her, inwardly rejoicing that he had not contaminated himself by making any body's acquaintance. A correspondence ensued, in which Raphaël encountered one severe want—an ignorance of the language of the skies. He had conversed with Julie by "Crying forth the cry of his soul." But the atmosphere, with all its load of love's miasma, would not consent to sound from Savoy to Paris; and in attempting to lash his pen into compliance with the heavenly dialect, he perspired rather freely, and often "opened the window to cool his fevered brow."

In the course of time he paid her a short visit, but want of the needful induced him to return home. Meanwhile Julie descended to the tomb. Her conversion from the religion of nature to that of the cross is thus described in one of her last letters.

"Midnight.

"Raphaël, your prayers have drawn down a blessing from heaven upon me. I thought yesterday of the tree of adoration at St. Cloud, at whose foot I saw God through your soul. I have discovered my soul to an old priest, and he has shed on it the love and light of God."

After reading the whole epistle, Raphaël occupied himself for some time in "sobbing without tears;" then, seizing his gun, he dashed out into the mountains, where he heard his name frequently called from heaven by her who had promised to watch over him from above; and for fifteen years he never ceased to believe her presence was with him.

"Here ended Raphaël's first manuscript." And here endeth ours.