

# **Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe**

**Digitale Sammlung der Badischen Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe**

## **The Pilgrims of the Rhine**

**Lytton, Edward Bulwer Lytton**

**London, 1834**

Chapter VIII.

[urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-120544](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:bsz:31-120544)

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE SOUL IN PURGATORY ; OR LOVE STRONGER THAN DEATH.

THE angels strung their harps in Heaven, and their music went up like a stream of odours to the pavilions of the Most High. But the harp of Seralim was sweeter than that of his fellows, and the voice of the Invisible One (for the angels themselves know not the glories of Jehovah—only far in the depths of Heaven, they see one Unsleeping Eye watching for ever over creation) was heard saying,  
“ Ask a gift for the love that burns upon thy song, and it shall be given thee.”

And Seralim answered—

“ There are in that place which men call Purgatory, and which is the escape from Hell, but the painful porch of Heaven, many souls that adore Thee, and yet are punished justly for their sins; grant me the boon to visit them at times, and solace their suffering by the hymns of the harp that is consecrated to Thee !”

And the voice answered—

“ Thy prayer is heard, oh gentlest of the angels; and it seems good to Him who chastises but from love. Go ! Thou hast thy will.”

Then the angel sang the praises of God, and when the song was done, he rose from his azure throne at the right hand of Gabriel, and spreading his rainbow wings, he flew to that melancholy orb, which, nearest to earth, echoes with the shrieks of souls, that by torture become pure. There the unhappy ones see from afar the bright courts they are hereafter to obtain, and the shapes of glorious beings, who, fresh from the Fountains of Immortality, walk amidst the gardens of Paradise, and feel that their happiness hath no morrow;—and this thought consoles amidst their torments, and makes the true difference between Purgatory and Hell.

Then the angel folded his wings, and entering the crystal gates, sat down upon a blasted rock, and struck his divine lyre, and a peace fell over the wretched; the demon ceased to torture, and the victim to wail. As sleep to the mourners of earth was the song of the angel to the souls of the purifying star: one only voice amidst the general stillness seemed not lulled by the angel; it was the voice of a woman, and it continued to cry out with a sharp cry—

“Oh, Adenheim—Adenheim, mourn not for the lost!”

The angel struck chord after chord, till his most skilful melodies were exhausted, but still the solitary voice, unheeding—unconscious even of—the sweetest harp of the angel choir, cried out—

“Oh, Adenheim—Adenheim, mourn not for the lost!”

Then Seralim's interest was aroused, and approaching the spot whence the voice came, he saw the spirit of a

young and beautiful girl chained to a rock, and the demons lying idly by. And Seralim said to the demons, "Doth the song lull ye thus to rest?"

And they answered. "Her care for another is bitterer than all our torments; therefore are we idle."

Then the angel approached the spirit, and said in a voice which stilled her cry—for in what state do we outlive sympathy? "Wherefore, oh daughter of earth, wherefore wailest thou with the same plaintive wail? and why doth the harp that soothes the most guilty of thy companions, fail in its melody with thee?"

"Oh, radiant stranger," answered the poor spirit, "thou speakest to one who on earth loved God's creature more than God; therefore is she thus justly sentenced. But I know that my poor Adenheim mourns ceaselessly for me, and the thought of his sorrow is more intolerable to me than all that the demons can inflict."

"And how knowest thou that he laments thee?" asked the angel.

"Because I know with what agony I should have mourned for *him*," replied the spirit, simply.

The Divine nature of the angel was touched; for love is the nature of the sons of heaven. "And how," said he, "can I minister to thy sorrow?"

A transport seemed to agitate the spirit, and she lifted up her mist-like and impalpable arms, and cried:—

"Give me—oh, give me to return to earth, but for one little hour, that I may visit my Adenheim; and that, con-

cealing from him my present sufferings, I may comfort him in his own."

"Alas!" said the angel, turning away his eyes, for angels may not weep in the sight of others, "I could, indeed, grant thee this boon, but thou knowest not the penalty. For the souls in Purgatory may return to Earth, but heavy is the sentence that awaits their return. In a word, for one hour on earth, thou must add a thousand years to the tortures of thy confinement here!"

"Is that all?" cried the spirit; "willingly, then, will I brave the doom. Ah, surely they love not in heaven, or thou wouldst know, oh Celestial Visitant, that one hour of consolation to the one we love is worth a thousand, thousand, ages of torture to ourselves! Let me comfort and convince my Adenheim; no matter what becomes of me."

Then the angel looked on high, and he saw in far-distant regions, which in that orb none else could discern, the rays that parted from the all-guarding Eye; and heard the VOICE of the Eternal One, bidding him act as his pity whispered. He looked on the spirit, and her shadowy arms stretched pleadingly towards him: he uttered the word that looses the bars of the gate of Purgatory; and lo, the spirit had re-entered the human world.

It was night in the halls of the Lord of Adenheim; and he sate at the head of his glittering board; loud and long was the laugh, and merry the jest that echoed round; and the laugh and the jest of the Lord of Adenheim were louder and merrier than all.

And by his right side sate a beautiful lady; and ever and anon he turned from others to whisper soft vows in her ear.

“And oh,” said the bright dame of Falkenberg, “thy words what ladye can believe; didst thou not utter the same oaths, and promise the same love to Ida, the fair daughter of Loden; and now but three little months have closed upon her grave?”

“By my halidom,” quoth the young Lord of Adenheim, “thou dost thy beauty marvellous injustice. Ida! Nay, thou mockest me; *I* love the daughter of Loden! why, how then should I be worthy thee? A few gay words, a few passing smiles—behold all the love Adenheim ever bore to Ida. Was it my fault if the poor fool misconstrued such common courtesy? Nay, dearest lady, this heart is virgin to thee.”

“And what!” said the lady of Falkenberg, as she suffered the arm of Adenheim to encircle her slender waist, “didst thou not grieve for her loss?”

“Why, verily, yes, for the first week; but in thy bright eyes I found ready consolation.”

At this moment, the Lord of Adenheim thought he heard a deep sigh behind him; he turned, but saw nothing, save a slight mist that gradually faded away, and vanished in the distance. Where was the necessity for Ida to reveal herself?

\* \* \* \* \*

"And thou didst not, then, do thine errand to thy lover?" said Seralim, as the spirit of the wronged Ida returned to Purgatory.

"Bid the demons recommence their torture," was poor Ida's answer.

"And was it for this that thou hast added a thousand years to thy doom?"

"Alas," answered Ida, "after the single hour I have endured on Earth, there seems to be but little terrible in a thousand fresh years of Purgatory\*!"

"What! is the story ended?" asked Gertrude.

"Yes."

"Nay, surely the thousand years were not added to poor Ida's doom; and Seralim bore her back with him to heaven?"

"The legend saith no more. The writer was contented to show us the perpetuity of woman's love;—"

"And its reward," added Vane.

"It was not *I* who drew that last conclusion, Albert," whispered Gertrude.

---

\* This story is principally borrowed from a foreign soil. It seemed to the author worthy of being transferred to an English one, although he fears that much of its singular beauty in the original has been lost by the way.