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The Old Lieutenant

and his Son.

BY

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THE OLD LIEUTENANT

AND HIS SON.

CHAPTER I.

TEN YEARS.

THE kind reader—that is, the reader who entertains kind feelings towards the Old Lieutenant and his Son, must suppose several years, shall we say ten? or thereabouts, to have passed away since he last met those heroes so unknown to the great and busy world. Ten years! What changes does even this short period mark in the outer and inner history of every man! What a passing away of old things, and what a coming in of new! But I will not moralize in my story unless when it must be done by an inevitable 'moral necessity,' as the phrase goes. For, in truth, I suspect that the most indulgent reader who ever opened these pages, is sure to let slip such moralizing paragraphs, in order to seize the thread of the narrative wherever he can pick it up. Let me say nothing, therefore, to refresh the memory of any one of my readers about honeymoons that may have come and gone during any ten years he may fix upon; nor of the morning stars which have succeeded those honeymoons, and have grown into smart boys, with satchels, or into chubby girls, with music lessons — such morning stars giving considerable anxiety, and costing considerable money to enable them to shine—bless them, nevertheless! nor of the lads and lasses who have passed out of their teens, to the great comfort of their relations;—nor of people who were 'nowhere' when the ten years began, and are now 'everywhere;'—nor of the 'everybody-knows-their-people' who have, during this period, sunk into the 'what's-become-of-them?' Ten years! why, it is a period long enough to change everything, within and without, in each man's individual history! Ten years ago, ay, and ten years hence! I can smile no more as I solemnly think of all that we or others were, or must become within ten years!

Ten years have altered the old burgh in many respects. The school has been emptied of all its old scholars, and Ned's name has perished from the playground, its only memorial being the initials on the big tree, with their once fresh lines, now swollen and deformed with the ten years' growth of the bark.

Some of the old scholars have gone to their graves, and some to the ends of the earth. The old schoolmaster, Mr. Mair, has also passed away, and the cross-coat is seen no more, though there is a tradition that it remained for several years after his death, as a scarecrow and terror to young birds in his successor's garden.

Mr. Mair was succeeded by a good-looking, smirking, thin, little man, with black hair, which rose erect, like stubble, from his forehead. Mr. Crosby 'developed,' as he said, 'the commercial, and sunk the classical departments.' He was full of theories on education—gave lectures, in the town-hall, on its methods, in an ambitious English accent—was great in elocution, and in showing off his pupils on examination-days as tragic actors, who could, without the book, take each their part in 'sensation' extracts from the poets. The parents of the pupils, especially the mothers, were thus charmed by the dramatic exhibitions of their children. This was a thing they could understand—which made its merits doubtful—and they wondered how they could have put up so long with the dry teaching and hard exercises of old Mr. Mair. These ten years produced, therefore, a crop of young lads who were assumed to be far in advance of the old stock. Young Bunkum wrote beautiful essays, and sometimes poems on such subjects as 'Liberty,' 'The Death of Wallace,' the

'Grave,' etc. Bunkum rejoiced in debating societies, had a decided opinion on every subject under the sun; was superior to his father, wiser than his mother, despised all that was past, and cared only for what was present. Bunkum has at last become rich; reigns in the town-hall; is sublime in local committees; awful in reforms, and whirls about as the wheel within a wheel, moving always fast and in a small circle. Some are ignorant enough to maintain that Bunkum would not have been the worse of the tawse — which never of course was in *his* school—as that long leathery-fingered instrument was once administered by the arm of flesh which inhabited, with singular vivacity, the right sleeve of the old cross-coat.

The Reform Bill has also inaugurated several changes in the old town as elsewhere. It elevated men into importance who were formerly unknown to the aristocratic portion of society in the burgh. When the Colonel and the Factor actually heard a draper and shoemaker make speeches, and presume to take part in public affairs, giving forth their opinions in the town-hall, as to what King, Lords, and Commons might have done, or ought to have done, with reference to our foreign or domestic policy, and when, at the election of an M.P., or part of one, they discovered that the old leaders of opinion and men of power were now in an insignificant minority,—then did those two worthies resolve to retire from public life, and weep together over the grave of their dead country. This they did generally over their walnuts and port-wine, before joining the ladies in the drawing-room.

'The fact is,' the Colonel would say, with a growly voice, 'Radicals may argue as they please, but there must be a governing class who are born to govern, educated to govern, and who have in them by nature the blood, the peculiar blood, sir, to govern. We who have been in India know that. Bless you, sir, caste is founded in nature! It is the greatest mistake to suppose that it is a religion, or a sort of thing which a man can put on or take off as he pleases. No, sir, it is birth and blood, and therefore talent and power. Your Pariah fellows, whether at home or abroad, your impudent shoemakers, smirking haberdashers, sugar-scented grocers, or white-faced bakers, can no more get it, than a jack-ass can become a blood-horse. Why do we white faces govern India?—because we are the higher caste, that's all, sir, that's all!' And the Colonel would spread out his arms from the elbows, open his eyes and elevate his eyebrows, as his grandfather, who, by the way, was of the tailor caste, would have done when criticizing the fit of a new coat.

'I quite agree with you, Colonel,' the Factor would reply, taking a large snuff, and spreading out his brown silk handkerchief on his knee, while his gallant host helped him to another glass of high-caste port;—'as his Lordship remarked to me one day lately, when I was dining with him at the Castle (though I can assure you, Colonel, he could not produce wine with a finer bouquet than this), "Scott," said he, "no man knows the country better than you do, and mark my words, mark them well, before ten years are over, Scott, we shall have a revolution, and these lands of mine will be,"'—here the Factor snapped his fingers like his Lordship.

'Of course,' said the Colonel, 'there's not a doubt of it—not a doubt of it—none whatever, sir, none.'

'"When beggars get on horseback, we know where they will ride to, Scott." He often said that to me, did his Lordship.'

But long before ten years had passed, his Lordship's eldest son stood for the liberal interest in the burgh, and submitted to be cross-questioned upon his political views by little M'Kim, the shoemaker, and gave pledges to Patterson, the baker, promising to reform everything in the nation—leaving the price of leather and the price of wheat as open questions—and the Colonel and Factor supported the young liberal, protesting, however, that they did so only 'for the sake of his worthy father.' What changes do ten years produce in man and beast!

Surely it is not ten years since we last met the old Captain and his wife, for they both look as fresh as ever? Yet, on careful examination, the Captain's under lip is not so well set up as it used to be; and there is a greater bend in his shoulders, and a slight shuffle in his gait, though Freeman maintains that he sees no change whatever either in him or in Mrs. Fleming. Babby has been rolling about the kitchen in her old way throughout the whole of this decade. She is contented with everything, except with the new minister who has succeeded her friend, the good old Dr. Yule, who had 'fallen asleep.' '*Him* like Dr. Yule!' she exclaims with indignation, to any one who presumes to put the two ministers on a par; 'he's nae mair like the auld Doctor than a black singed sheep's head is like the Captain's bonny white ane! Dr. Yule was a braw man, a real genteel man, weel born, and weel brocht up among the Yules o' Craigie-law. He aye wore bonnie white sarks, and was clean and trig like a new preen, and had a ceevil word for ilka bodie, for man or woman, bairn or dog. I have even seen him stan' and crack, and laugh wi' the Catholic priest himsel'! When he met me it was aye "Babby"—that's what he ca'd me, wi' his familiarity way, ye ken—"Babby lass," he would say wi' a smile, "hoo's a' wi' you and yours?" Then on Sabbath, wi' his goold specs on, he gie'd out what he had to say, sae kindly, that the verra sough o' his voice has made me dirl and greet.

He coaxed poor waik craturs like me to be gude, just as I used to coax Ned—that's the young captain—when he was at the schule, wi' a bit o' shortbread, or peppermint draps, to do what was richt, when he was thrawn or proud; and I have seen me mony a time, after hearing the Doctor, just mad at mysel' that I wasna a better woman. But this chield Dalrymple that's come amang us! Hech, sirs! what a round black crappit head he has, like a bulldog's, and a body round and fat like a black pudding; and the cratur gangs strutting aboot wi' his umbrella under his oxter, crawin' like a midden cock, wha but him, keep us a'! and pittin' his neb into every ane's brose, wi' his impudence. And syne he rages and rampages in the pulpit, wi' the gowk's spittle in his mouth, flytin' on folk, and abusin' them for a' that's bad till my nerves rise, and I could jist cry oot, if it wasna for shame, "Haud yer tongue, ye spitefu' cratur!" The Captain canna thole him—nae wunner; for the very first day he cam to visit here, did he no abuse him for takin' his bit sober daunder on the Sabbath afternoon, as if the gude auld man had been a wild Hielandman! But a' the young leddies are daft about Dalrymple—they ken best for what; and some of the auld anes, that dinna ken for what. But no me! He never lets on when he sees me—he's ouer prood and ta'en up wi' himsel' for that. *Him* like Dr. Yule! Gae awa, gae awa, dinna tell me. I ken better.'

Cairney has weathered these ten years manfully, like a brig lying to. As he stood with his blue coat and large buttons, like twinkling stars, beneath the portico of the Greenock Custom-House, watching one of his heavy-laden vessels, with loosened sails, returning from her voyage, and about to cast anchor, he seemed like a statue erected there to an old generation of honourable, wealthy, though a somewhat rough guild of shipowners, who were passing rapidly away.

Duncan Ardmore has long ago obtained a commission in the army—served abroad, and is daily expecting his company. Old Martin Shillabeer has been dead several years; but his niece Floxy, carefully educated by Miss Duncombe, and also trained by her as a waiting-maid, is acting in that capacity with Mrs. and Miss Macdougall at Ardmore. Finally, little Curly has become Dr. Morris, and occupies the second flat of a house in the main street of the old burgh, the lower flat of which is distinguished by a large window that gleams with two huge bottles of green and pink water.

But it is necessary to enter a little more into detail regarding two at least of those persons about whom I have been speaking in a general way, and whom the busy hands of ten years have been moulding until they have well-nigh assumed the form which they will probably maintain for life.

Ned has made several voyages to different parts of the world since we last parted with him; and has been for some time in command of a fine new ship of Cairney's, called the 'William Pitt,' in honour of the great pilot who had weathered the storm.

Never did a truer man pace the deck, although that field of his fame belonged to a merchant-ship only; yet it is the hero who makes the field illustrious, and not the field the hero. In his outward appearance he was what the old writers would have described as 'a pretty man,' which expressed whatever was comely as well as manly. 'Jack' never attempted to picture him in words, but every man on board of the 'William Pitt' was proud of the skipper. He had little of the Jack Tar in his dress, or in his appearance (beyond the sunburnt face and hands), and still less in his manners. Those habits of study, and literary tastes which he had acquired in the old Grammar School, were of immense importance to him, even in his rough sea-life. He devoted every spare hour to reading, and his constant ambition was to become thoroughly accomplished in his profession, as a scientific seaman. The merchant-navy, thanks to improved legislation, as well as to improved civilisation, has now very many officers of the same stamp. At that time they were more rare. His only amusement was the key-bugle, which was taught him by the black cook, who had been once in a regimental band, but who from dissipated habits was forced to adopt an artistic profession of another kind in the caboose of the 'William Pitt.'

The manner in which Ned discharged his duties as the Captain of the 'William Pitt' was, unknown to him, described to old Cairney by Jack Musters, his boatswain, an Englishman whom he had picked up and appointed to this post of honour. Cairney was what is called 'a knowing old hand,' and, afraid of being deceived by those whom he employed, was in the habit of questioning the sailors, when he had a quiet opportunity of doing so, about their officers. This he did in an apparently easy off-hand, 'by-the-way' style, as if he had no interest whatever in any information he might elicit, but was talking merely for talking's sake. Yet all the while he would greedily drink in every word; and no witness on a trial for murder was listened to by a jury with more eager attention than were those sailors by Cairney, when anxious to learn what sort of men had charge of his ships. Accordingly, when Musters came one day to his office, on some business or other, Cairney, with an apparently artless, careless air, and while filling up some printed form on his desk, asked—

'Well, how do you like the Captain?'

'First-rate,' said Jack; 'true blue!'

'Good seaman?' continued Cairney, looking at

Musters, who leant upon the sort of counter in the office, which fenced off from the passage the inner sanctum that contained the Owner's desk and stool.

'Seaman?' replied Jack, 'I should like to know! It would do your heart good, sir, just to come a voyage to see how he handles his ship. He's a navigator, sir, no mistake. Fair or foul, he works with them instruments of his most amazing, taking lunars, or taking stars; for your moon or stars are all the same to him; and he'll tell you to the length of a marline-spike where the ship is any hour, day or night, or at what bells he'll make the lights or the land. He's wonderful, I do assure you, sir,—he really is wonderful!'

Cairney chuckled inwardly, but continued his examination.

'Keep you in good order—eh?'

'We don't need it,' said Musters, with a smile; 'we likes to please him; and mind you,' remarked the boatswain, leaning forward and talking in a confidential tone of voice, 'he never speaks an oath nor abuses one—ain't it queer?'

'Never swears?' asked Cairney, dropping his pen and looking over his spectacles at Musters with the look of a man that begins to think he is humbugged. But Jack's face betrayed no feeling save open honesty.

'Never heard an oath from his lips,' said Musters, 'I do assure your honour.'

'Go on,' said Cairney, shaking his head as if he had heard of a miracle on shipboard.

'Ay, continued Musters, 'and he gives the men liberty to read, and has books for them too, and talks to them friendly like; and every Sunday, I do assure your honour, he is like a parson—he is indeed—a reading the Scriptures and explaining them—the men tell me, and I am of the same mind myself, that they would rather hear the few words of our Captain than most of them long-winded parsons who have been rigged out in dock. Anyhow, we all likes him, for no mistake he likes us, and it's a pleasure to sail with him; and the ship is like what a ship should be, and not, as I have seen it, begging your honour's pardon, like a hell upon earth.'

'I am afraid, boatswain, he is a soft-hearted, easy, lubberly chap, who will give you all your own way,' said Cairney.

'That's a good un! Excuse me, sir, for using such freedom with you, but I wish you only saw our skipper in a gale of wind! I wish you saw him in the great gale you knows about, of last October, when we nearly foundered! Lubberly!' Musters chewed his tobacco with great vehemence, looking up to the roof. 'And as for soft,' he continued, again directing his conversation to Cairney, 'I'd like to see the man who would dare come to close quarters with Captain Fleming! Let them but see his eye—it shines; I will maintain it does—it shines at night, your honour. I've seen it; and as for his hand, why, it's iron! I think he would shake the life out of every man on board, except, mayhap, big Ben. Lubberly! soft! No, no, Captain Cairney. He is like his ship, well built with heart of oak; well found from junk to biscuit; well rigged and all taut from keel to truck; beautiful and quiet in harbour, but strong and glorious in a gale of wind; a craft fit for all seas and all weather!'

Cairney opened his eyes and ears, and only said, 'All right! Here's half-a-crown to drink success.'

As in the case of many others whose position in the arbitrary social scale was not high, because not elevated by riches or rank, Ned's cultivation of mind, refined tastes, and inward appreciation of all that was beautiful and good in man and woman, made him feel more solitary and utterly hopeless of ever finding one who would satisfy the secret longings of his heart. This was to him no small trial. For strong men with strong wills, and with strong passions, it is not easy, though it is life and peace, to yield meekly to God's will as our Almighty provider; to hold fast our confidence in Him as a Father who knows the things we stand in need of, who remembers every fibre of our frame which He has made, and who in His Son has witnessed for His oneness with us as human beings, and believing this, to tell God our every care, and then to wait on Him in patience. 'Why was I made for love, and love denied to me?' is a question which many have answered for themselves in the flush and strength of youth, by losing all faith in God, and departing from Him with the portion of their goods, to waste them in riotous living. Then comes the great famine of the soul, when it feeds on husks, and grovels with swine! Why that spring-time 'when a young man's fancy lightly falls on thoughts of love,' should be the subject of so much comedy, I know not; for to most it is a solemn crisis, and to many it is a tragedy, acted within the soul on a midnight stage, with no lights and no spectators, but where wounds are nevertheless given which, if they do not kill the heart, may yet leave scars on it for life. In no moment in our history is the reality of faith in a loving God and Father demanded more than when the heart is yearning for a creature affection to fill up its void, or when the bright hope dawns that the lamb is found which God has provided for the great and blessed sacrifice of devoted love!

But how shall I describe Kate Cairney?—I frankly confess my inability to hold out from me, to look at, and to criticise those whom I admire, so as to perceive their faults. I suppose Kate had her faults. Outwardly she had none; *that* I will boldly maintain, should any conceited critic or envious rival dare to suggest their existence. Look at her graceful figure, with its graceful movements, and notice the waving gleams in her hair; study the head that wears it, and see how it is poised on her lovely neck; gaze on that face, at morn or even, in laughter or in tearful sadness; and, after having been attracted by each beautiful feature, when you can at last see nothing but those eyes that pierce you through and through, as sunlight pierces through the clouds, falling on the dull earth,—do you not feel that they are the out-looks from an inner depth of purity, love and beauty, greater even than all the beauty you behold? Do you not feel assured that truth and goodness are within, and look through them from a most genuine soul;—and not the less genuine but the more, because of its keen sense of the ludicrous, which can make her laugh with such thorough enjoyment, or of its keener sense of wrong, which often casts a shadow on her brow? Could we see her inner life as she herself, no doubt, perceives it, many a spot would be discovered on the bright disk of her sun. A large spot of pride; another of self-will; another of impatience when crossed, and of fretfulness at evil-doers; another dark spot of strange fears and despondency; but in spite of all, a light shines there 'that never was on sea or land.' If Kate had no faults she could not have been a daughter of her mother—I don't mean Eve, but Mrs. Campbell.

The mother admired her daughter as *her* daughter, and used her as daily food wherewith to nourish her own ambitious hopes. Her manners, and pronunciation, and music, Mrs. Campbell frankly admitted, did great credit to Miss Duncombe. But Miss Duncombe had conferred benefits on Kate which her mother could not estimate, and were greater than she herself understood. By the wisdom of her teaching; above all, by the serene beauty and consistency of her character, she had awakened in Kate the idea of a truer and higher life than she could have received from the ordinary society in which she mingled. To what extent she yielded her own spirit to the higher Teacher, from whom alone all real life comes, it might be difficult to determine, without further acquaintance. All admitted that she was 'a good girl,' 'most attentive to her studies,' so 'kind and unselfish,' so 'cheerful and unaffected;' but was all this, and even more than this, but a growth from impulsive and instinctive promptings of the old nature, adjusted to a self-made outward rule of conduct, or was it the product of a new and a living sap derived from another tree into which she was grafted? Oh! how impossible it is to apply justly to the state of others those Christian tests of character which, with scrupulous honesty, we must apply to ourselves! For the manner in which souls are led out of darkness into light, and are educated for immortality, is almost as various, in the manifold wisdom of God, as their individual temperament and outward circumstances. Some, like the jailer of Philippi, seem to pass with wondrous and conscious rapidity from death to life, from slavery to freedom. In others it is a discipline of years, as in the case of most of the apostles—truth dawning on the soul, and strength gradually imparted as they follow Christ as obedient yet ignorant and wondering children from day to day. Some appear to have lived in light before they could recognise the source from whence it flowed. Some advance like stormy waves beneath a driving storm,—now receding, and again rolling farther on the beach; while others advance as a calm and steadily flowing tide. Some, like trees, send forth at one time their leaves, and then hang with fruit, but anon have their winters in which they appear dead, with bended heads and loud moanings among their branches, yet even then becoming more hardy and strong from within. Let us, in judging of others, exercise towards them the love that 'hopeth all things,' and cover all with a mantle of charity—except ourselves. And if in our perplexity we ask in vain respecting another's state, 'what shall this man do?' let us meekly hear the voice of love and wisdom which whispers to us, 'What is that to thee? follow thou me.'

How often in human life do we see great storms assail a character, which, if real, becomes more strong by the trial, but if unreal falls into ruins to rise no more, unless rebuilt on a new foundation. Will our friends Kate and Ned be thus assailed? And if so, how will they stand the ordeal?

But why do I unite those two names together? Is it because they were cousins? A most prosaic genealogical reason verily. Is it because Ned loved Kate, or Kate Ned? I never said so. No doubt long ago Kate thought her cousin Neddy the nicest of laddies. But what of that? She and he were then in the chrysalis state, or if out of it, were only butterflies taking their first excursion among flowers. Kate never denied at a later period even that she was very fond of him—as a cousin only—he was so manly, so intelligent, so unaffected, so winning, so agreeable, and—yes—so very good-looking, and the best captain her father confessed he ever had or expected to have. But was there necessarily real love on her part? I never alleged that there was. And did Ned love Kate? Nonsense! Was he a fool, and had he no common sense? Would he make an ass of himself, and insult her and her family by entertaining such an idea? To say that he never had seen such a girl—that from the day on which he had first met her until now, she had been his ideal of all that was beautiful and fascinating—all this was true as a matter of course. But what of that? Nothing! It is possible that when disposed to be very confidential, on some moonlight night, when the rippling waters of a tropical sea had bewitched his brain, he might have confessed to the binnacle or compass that Kate was a presence to him, a very star that ever shone far ahead, as if guiding him, and lighting up his path across the waste of waters ; and that her voice, her form, her words, all exercised a marvellous undying power over him ;—but all this was nothing more than the decision of cool justice. Did she not deserve it? Ned had heard, besides, that a certain M'Dougal of Ardmore was her destined bridegroom — a cousin too by another family branch — (why did not some winter gale break it?)—and little fussy Miss Ramage had expressed her surprise to him at a tea-party in Greenock that he had never heard of this 'match.' Often did Ned conjecture what sort of fellow M'Dougal was, and many imaginary scenes were enacted by him, in which he repeated all Kate and M'Dougal might say to him in certain given circumstances, with all he could or would say to them, until a crisis came in the performance of this drama, when, his face getting red, he would stamp with his foot, and declare himself fit for Bedlam. Such dreams, half tragic half comic, were generally ended by a rush from the cabin to the deck, with the snatch of a song or effort at whistling ; and, as he then paced about, he sometimes thought that the stars twinkled sadly, and that there was in the heaving sea a dread irresistible power, like an unfathomed destiny, that bore him on, with its wild waves and surging tides. But brain and heart became more calm, and settled into their usual state of rest, as he seized his key-bugle, and after lingering softly for a moment on 'the banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,' burst forth in triumph with the immortal strain of 'A man's a man for a' that.' But, again I ask, what did all this prove? Ah! it proved more than Ned would dare to confess even to himself. Yet why should he not have been deeply thankful for such a mercy? For next to the highest of all influences, the presence in the thoughts of a pure and loving woman is the most refining and elevating which visits the heart of man.

CHAPTER II.

THE HOUSE OF THE M'DOUGALS.

ARDMORE HOUSE had originally been constructed after a type of architecture which required no genius for its production unless the genius of ugliness; for does not perfect ugliness, or perfect anything, require genius to produce it? The said habitation was not the legitimate successor of the old Highland home of 'gentlemen tenants,' men who were often nearly related by blood to the Laird, and to the best in the land by education and manners; for that Highland home of the olden time, with its roofing of straw or heather, fitted into the landscape like a grey boulder crowned with tufted heath or waving bracken, which this house of Ardmore never did. Nor was this habitation the ancestor of the railway station-house style of architecture, which, in every variety of peaked gable-ends and bow-windows, obtrudes itself on the margin of our western lochs. The dwelling-place of the M'Dougals was a house of two storeys, with slated roof, and a chimney at each end, three small windows above, and one on each side of a square porch, which, like a large nose, protruded from between those small, square eyes. The building sprung out of the green grass, alone and solitary, like a mushroom, and without ornament of any kind from shrub or flower. Its only accompaniments were a black peat-stack, which supplied the fuel; and at a little distance 'the square' of houses required for horses and cattle, pigs and poultry, which reposed there at night, though, during the day, they were free to gather their food up to the walls of the mansion-house. The only object of interest in its immediate neighbourhood was the beautiful sea-beach of Ardmore Bay, flanked on each side by wooded promontories, interspersed with grey rock and natural copse. On one of those low headlands was the remains of an old feudal keep, that towered above a row of scattered cottages, with patches of green fields between them and the sea. In the distance, behind Ardmore, rose a range of hills, whose dark moorlands mingled at their base with green pasture lands, and fed a full-flooded stream that swept past the house to join the sea.

This was the Ardmore of John M'Dougal, the father of the late laird. The said John was an active, industrious man, who, from the manufacture of kelp and the successful breeding of Highland cattle, guided by enormous greed, and an easy conscience in buying and selling, was enabled to add considerably to the original property by purchasing several farms, with such euphonious names as Drumnacladich and Corriemehanach.

John's son, Duncan, who inherited his father's character as well as property, with the addition of a love for ardent spirits, especially when smuggled, married the daughter of a neighbouring proprietor, and by her received two or three thousand pounds, which was considered rather a handsome 'tocher' in the district. Mrs. M'Dougal had been induced to read *Waverley* when published, and this gave her an impression, which afterwards became to her a settled truth, that a Highland proprietor was the true type of mediæval chivalry, and his house, with bagpipe, kilts, and barges, the abode of the arts and of romance. It was she, accordingly, who resolved that Ardmore should be changed into an abode worthy of an old family; although a very small rill from the fountain of chieftainship flowed in Duncan's veins. She accordingly began to dress up the old prosaic dwelling-place into one more consistent with picturesque antiquity and modern pretensions. It was quite marvellous how the original walls were concealed or ennobled by alliances with high gables, pepper-box turrets, clusters of chimneys, and other additions, until it looked quite baronial—in a small way. She also carved out a winding avenue, ending with a porter's lodge, which served to accommodate the gardener, and also a family in the rear, paying rent. A new garden was laid out, and beneath the drawing-room window appeared a flower-plot, out of which, however, she never managed to banish the hens and turkeys, who burrowed under the rose-trees, and left their feathers on the fuchsias. Larch plantations also grew up, like green beards bristling on every round chin of waste land near the house. Then came a gig instead of the old cart, a new 'barge' instead of the old boat; above all, a tawdry awkward lad, called the footman, in place of the *sonsie* lass who was wont to open the door; until at last Mrs. M'Dougal felt herself in circumstances which entitled her to change the house of Ardmore into the more dignified title of 'Ardmore House,' and to engrave the M'Dougal arms on some new silver-plate, as well as to have them painted on the backs of two stiff chairs which stood in the lobby, beneath two deers' heads with branching antlers, flanked by some swords and guns brought by her brother from India, and an old Highland shield, bought in the Saltmarket of Glasgow. When at last she entered her new drawing-room, innocent as yet of peat-reek, gazed on her gilt paper and handsome window-curtains, arranged the newly-bound books on the centre table, with some bits of china on each side of the new clock upon the table in the recess, and when she finally sat down upon the sofa, contemplating all through her spectacles, she seemed a little, dumpy, self-satisfied, asthmatic female Nebuchadnezzar, who said, 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the throne of my glory?'

Her husband died leaving her with a son and daughter—Duncan and Jane. The widow did all justice to the memory of the dear deceased; for, as a Highlander once remarked of his wife's death, 'It was a great loss, nae doot, and also a heap o' expenses.' The funeral left an inheritance of cold meat, which it required immense perseverance and self-sacrifice for several days on the part of the mourning domestics, and numerous adherents of the family to consume. The whisky gurgled from casks and jars during all hours to supply commemorative services. Mrs. M'Dougal spared no expense in sorrowful garments; her handsome jointure demanding this handsome funeral pile. Then came the condolences from all her neighbours, and their most liberal contributions of tears for the dead Duncan,—the more remarkable considering their sentiments about him while alive. The most acute sufferer, perhaps, was old M'Donald, the minister, who felt bound to write a new sermon, or a new tail to an old head, so as to make the character of Duncan harmonize with his text on the blessedness of the righteous dead. But the tragedy soon passed away—the curtain fell—the lights were extinguished, and soon it rose again with the same actors in a drama of marriage, of which more anon.

Mrs. M'Dougal was what is called an active managing woman. She superintended the farm herself, although she professed, for 'gentility's' sake, to leave it to an old confidential servant of the family, who occupied the situation of 'ground officer,' as an inferior kind of land-steward is called in the Highlands. Her talent consisted chiefly in a sort of cunning prudence, by which she never lost sight of, but steadfastly pursued her own interests, though with great blandness of manner, and the exercise of a liberal hospitality. Her daughter Jane, our old acquaintance, was a comely girl, now quite restored to robust health. She was full of animal spirits, had beautiful white teeth and skin, and a frank manner without any reserve. But she had no force or depth of character; had always one flirtation at least, on hand, and was seldom if ever absent from regatta and county balls. Her marriage with some one or other was assumed to be a question of time, much more than of affection. Not that Jane would ever marry a man whom she did not profess to love; but if he was 'a suitable match' in other respects, she could very easily get up that amount of liking which was proper and becoming, and which she herself, perhaps, would, for decency's sake, call love; and when on her marriage tour, she would be sure to write her mother, telling her how happy she was in having 'such a considerate, attentive husband, who spared no expense,' etc., and 'how unworthy she was,' etc. Nor was she one who was likely to break her heart in any case. Give her only a *respectable* marriage, and her old flirtations and gleams of more tender attachments would all be absorbed, like meteors in the sun of an 'excellent connexion.'

Duncan, the laird, with whom we have most to do, had, in his youth, all the disadvantages arising from the teaching of a mother who gave him his own way, and of a tutor, afterwards his minister, Mr. M'Donald, who dozed over a few lessons with him, but felt it unnecessary, almost rude, to trouble a laird of £1000 a year with education. So Duncan, in his youth, galloped about on a red pony with large white eyes and shaggy mane; and educated half a dozen terriers with such care, as, if expended on himself, would have made him equally obedient, brave, and interesting. He fished, of course, and that to perfection, and never knew, as a boy, what a headache was, except when extra company in the house secured to him extra sweets. He was bold, imperious, and selfish. In due time a commission, as we have already said, was obtained for him in the army. His mother recognised this as the gentlemanly thing for him; and Duncan himself, as he grew up and mingled with other young men, longed for so good an opportunity of enjoying independence, and 'getting quit of his mother's leading strings,' as he expressed it. He was known in his regiment as being the 'fastest' of those who boasted of running along the broad road. Some laughed at his vanity; others pitied his folly; while the more thoughtful and higher bred officers avoided him as much as possible as 'a bad style of man,' or 'a vulgar snob.' But Duncan was saved from many a scrape by that prudent cunning which he had inherited from his mother, and which checked him ere he reached the brink of any precipice. When, after some years of experience, he returned home, he had acquired a certain manner that was considered very 'gentlemanly' by the circle in which he moved. He dressed well, spoke a strange mixture of Highland Scotch and high English, assumed the airs of a man of the world, and kept his old companions in roars of laughter at the recital of his peculiar adventures.

One of his boon companions was Peter M'Donald. Peter, or 'Red Peter' as he was called, was short, round, strong, like a Highland bull. Yellow hair crisped in short bleached curls under his Glengarry bonnet, spread as down over his freckled face, and covered the portion of his enormous limbs displayed beneath his red kilt. A row of short white teeth, small piercing eyes, and broad nose with expanded nostrils, completed his face. I hardly know what was Peter's trade or profession. He had been farmer, distiller, land-agent, and whisky agent in turn. But how he lived in his later years no one could very well tell. Yet Peter never seemed to want what was necessary to keep him in kilts and comfort. He attended every district fair, and was considered an excellent judge of the merits of black cattle. He was a ready boxer after twelve at night. Few marriages, from the blacksmith's daughter's to the laird's son's, but included Peter as one of the guests, and then his dancing powers seemed as inexhaustible as his songs, stories, and thirst. He was famous in all athletic sports, played the bagpipe, and danced Gielle-callum. He attended church, as he did every public place, and his face was a mark in the front gallery, which constantly attracted the notice of the preacher. It was like a centre point of red paint in the building. Funerals alone were eschewed by Peter, his wardrobe being defective in ceremonial suits of mourning. M'Dougal had known him from his youth, and indeed had in early life been taught his first lessons by him as a man of the world. The Laird found his old ally a patient listener to all his stories, an accommodating assistant in all his undertakings of doubtful morality, a subtle flatterer of all his weaknesses, and one who at all times was ready to kill time or game with him from morning till night, or from night till morning.

The only other personage in Ardmore who has any special interest to us was Floxy, Miss M'Dougal's waiting-maid. Ever since the interview with her at Torquay, Miss Duncombe, as I have already noticed, had taken a special interest in the girl, and when her old uncle, Martin Shillabeer, died, she had brought her to live at the boarding-school. While teaching her domestic work, Miss Duncombe had bestowed great pains otherwise on her education, as she had formed the highest opinion of her talent. Floxy retained the same cast of figure and countenance which she possessed as a girl; the same dark, handsome, keen gipsy features, with eyes of singular brilliancy, that seemed to search those whom she addressed, as if she was dealing with their inner thoughts. Her manners and appearance were those of one accustomed to command rather than obey. She possessed a nature that seemed ever struggling to break through the impediments of the circumstances of her position, which demanded a submissive reserve. Like some animals that have been taken from their wild state in early years, she never seemed thoroughly domesticated, but to have her real life elsewhere in the wide world and beneath the open sky. Her figure was singularly handsome, and there was a lithe, pliable elegance, as well as strength and activity in her gait, which at once arrested attention. Floxy did not dislike her mistress—far from it ; but yet she looked upon her somewhat as a grown-up child, and felt no real liking for any point in her character except her thorough good-nature, which, however, she was inclined sometimes to despise, as evidencing want of power rather than the possession of principle. But she doated on Kate, and the object nearest her heart was to live with her or near her.

Peter had once—and only once—tried to pick up a sort of free-and-easy acquaintance with Floxy. But one look—one word from her—had made even him shrink back into respectful distance, and assume the expression which, as his greatest effort and masterpiece of propriety, he habitually wore on Sunday in the front gallery of the church.

The only person near Ardmore whom Floxy made her friend was Morag, the daughter of Rorie the fisherman, whose cottage was situated about a mile off, beyond 'the point' where the Atlantic waves rolled in all their glory. And glorious indeed was it to watch the great sea waves, so deep and strong and unchecked by the land, pouring in green cataracts over the outer boulders, and rushing through them in white foam, wave chasing wave, then meeting in conflict behind them, and sending their snowy spray upwards into the air, and onwards to the land, through innumerable channels, seething and boiling to the strip of the higher sand. A channel, which formed an avenue from the hut to the sea, was cleared through them for Rorie's fishing-boat. The hut was adorned not with roses, but with rods, nets, and lines. Ah ! it was memories of old Martin, and of early days of poverty but freedom, which made Floxy delight to walk to that cottage, to bring tobacco to old Rorie, to sit on the rocks and talk to him about fishing, which she knew so well, and to tell him how the folk fished in other places far away, and how they had hardships elsewhere as well as in the Highlands. And Rorie's daughter seemed to be herself grown younger again. Morag was a bonnie lassie, about seventeen, and 'just come frae her mammy ;' quiet, and pure, and innocent as a sea-tern with fairy wing and graceful form. And Floxy doated on the girl with almost a passionate attachment, making her half-toy, half-companion, a thing at least to admire, to pet, to lavish her heart on, and then to teach in the best way she could. It was her delight to bring Morag to the house, and to smooth her head of dark hair until it shone like the long tangle on the sea rocks ; and then to dress it up in some tasteful fashion, with red rowan berries, or ivy-leaves ; when pointing her out to Jane she would say with pride, 'Did you ever see such a sea-nymph ! There is not a merman of taste in the wild ocean but must fall in love with her! I declare she must take care or she will vanish some day, and be seen in a car drawn by sea-horses, with Old Rorie trying in vain to over take her in his boat!' and then Floxy would burst into a fit of laughing, in which the girl would join her, looking more beautiful from her awkward blushes when dragged by Floxy to see herself reflected in the mirror.

It was Floxy's delight to spend an idle hour in teaching her English; and when at last Morag could translate some of her Gaelic thoughts, she would say, in reply to the sharp question 'Now, Morag, what *are* you saying to me?' 'I was just saying that you are the calf of my heart, and so you are, my love!' Floxy seemed to have bewitched Morag; while Morag was to Floxy an ideal being of simplicity and love, like an Undine born of the deep sea, and in comparison with whom Miss M'Dougal was as a wax figure or an actor on the stage.

Yet Jane was not far wrong when, partly from truth, and partly from mere jealousy of attention, as even ladies are capable of with reference to their waiting-women, she used to say—

'Floxy, you will utterly spoil Morag, and make her unfit to gather peats, dig potatoes, or be useful in any way.'

'Morag cannot be spoilt, Miss M'Dougal! She is born a lady.'

'Don't talk stuff, Floxy! That romantic nonsense of yours will bring you into trouble some day. Morag is a fisherman's daughter—that is all.'

'And what more am I? yet I can read, write, enjoy life such as it is, having received education, through your kindness and good Miss Duncombe's. I can be happy with rocks, and heather, and birch trees, and can make them my friends; why should not she? Besides, I feel strong for life's battle, and able to defend myself in the world, but she, little tender thing, when she wanders through the wood, singing after the calves, is as easily struck down by some hawk as a robin redbreast or linnet. I *will* teach her, and make of her, and love her.'

'Floxy, attend to my hair, and give me that pin, and don't be a fool.'

I said that Peter had presumed to pay attention to Floxy; yet she did not dislike Peter, but passed him by as she would one of the red cattle on the moor, with indifference or contempt. But she loathed M'Dougal. His smiles, his looks, and courteous manners, and that whole bearing by which he was wont, with low voice, affected, mincing accent, and inane, flattering remarks, to make himself agreeable, even to her, excited in her an aversion which was akin to what some people experience towards certain animals or insects.

'Where *did* you pick up that splendid-looking girl?'

he asked his sister one day, as he sat beside her on a seat in the garden, while he smoked his cigar, and drew figures in the gravel with his stick. 'She is a regular beauty, I do assure you. I'm quite taken with her; I really am.'

'She is a poor fisherman's daughter, in England,' replied Jane, 'in whom I have a great interest.'

'Our own fisherman's daughter, by the way, Rorie's, I mean,' interrupted M'Dougal, 'that girl, Morag, is another angel! But let me hear about Floxy, or Miss Shillabeer, as I always call her.'

Jane told him the outlines of her story.

'Most romantic, on my honour!' said Duncan; 'it only increases my interest in her.'

'Tuts!' said Jane, impatiently, 'say no more about her. Did my mother tell you that we expect Kate Cairney here?'

'Of course she did. Why, she has bored me to death about her; and has given me mysterious hints, as if she wanted her to be my wife.'

'Your wife, forsooth! Pray, how do you know she will take you? You fancy, I suppose, that you have only to ask anybody, and that whoever it be she is to be so honoured as to accept at once. I don't believe Kate would look at you.'

'So you would'nt like the match, Miss Jane?'

'I did not say that, quite; but she is not so easily caught as you imagine.'

'I am told she has become quite a *belle* since I saw her—the beauty of Greenock, in fact.'

'She is a lovely girl, a clever girl, a good girl, a—'

'Any tin?'

'Any what? Money, do you mean?—there again comes in the horrid selfishness of men!'

'Oh, it's very fine talking, my lady; but do you imagine that if beauty was all a fellow needed, that I could not have married a hundred times? Why, there was not a ball in Halifax, in the Bermudas, or anywhere, in fact, in which the regiment was quartered, that we did not meet lots of pretty girls, beautiful girls, who would have snapped at the red-coats. But what of that? would not pay, Jane!—would not pay, my girl. That sort of romance is all very well when one is young, but when we know the world it is a very different affair, very.'

Jane, who had set her heart on the match, and who admired Kate most sincerely, saw that she had gone too far, and said—

'As for money, they say old Cairney is very rich, and that she will have quite a fortune.'

'Then I'm at her command—if the humour seizes me,' said Duncan, lighting another cigar, 'and I'm much mistaken if she won't be mine. Anyhow, we can amuse the time by a good flirtation. It would be famous fun to make the Greenock lads jealous!'

'Oh, you vain one!' said Jane, quite pleased at the promising appearance of things.

'I believe, after all,' continued Duncan, 'marriage is the best thing for a fellow who wishes to settle down, and cheaper in the long run, though it is a bore at times. However, we shall give our fair Greenock coz a trial. When does our beauty come, did you say?'

'Next month. And do, Duncan, now do be attentive to her for my sake.'

'Fear not, my excellent sister; she and I have met here before, in the days when we were young. I remember yet a box in the ear she gave me for teasing her, and I shall as soon as possible repay it with a kiss of charity.'

'No impudence, Master Duncan; so let us away to dinner.'

'In the meantime, Jane, I wish you would tell old M'Donald to prepare the marriage ceremony; for he will require some months to "mandate," as he calls it, so important a service; and give a hint to Red Peter to keep himself sober, and to be in readiness to act as best man, should I fail in the regiment, or in the whole county, to get one, but not till then. My mother, also, would require timeous warning for the marriage dinner, to get livery for the gardener, and, I suppose, for old Rorie, the fisherman; and to purchase in Edinburgh a new embroidered handkerchief to put to her eyes at the right time. You had better arrange also with Colin Duncaple to fix the same day. Eh?'

'I'm off!' said Jane, laughing, as she left Duncan to finish his cigar.

But when she left him, Duncan threw the cigar down, knit his brows, rolled his arms, and seemed sunk in thought. 'Not a bad "spec" after all,' he said, as he rose; 'but I have other plans in hand,' he added, with a grim smile, 'before that one can be finished. May fortune favour me as of yore!' And, humming a tune, he followed his sister to the house, smiling to himself like sunshine that falls on the surface of a black, deep, mountain tarn.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE HIGHLANDS.

In due time Kate visited her friends at Ardmore. I shall not chronicle the commonplace every-day life of the visit, yet I must do the M'Dougals the justice to acknowledge that they tried to make it as agreeable as possible to their fair guest, each in his or her own way, and all probably for the same object. The days were varied by drives and calls to the Stewarts on this side, the M'Lauchlans on that, and to the Campbells on all sides. There were several successful pic-nics to a glen, a hill-top or island, with the usual productions of cold meat, discussed in the usual uncomfortable positions. There were dinner-parties, also, dotted round the circle of their acquaintances; with the addition of staying all night in some cases, and one day more in others, until all the songs of the ladies and gentlemen, and the whole current talk of the day seemed well nigh exhausted. Kate went through all this with a fair amount of enjoyment. She interpreted all the kindness shown to her with the boundless charity of her own heart, and never thought of subjecting it to any curious analysis.

But her great delight was in the scenery of that West Highland country. Italy has its gorgeous beauty, and is a magnificent volume of poetry, history, and art, superb within and without, read by the light of golden sunsets. Switzerland is the most perfect combination of beauty and grandeur; from its uplands—with grass more green and closely shaven than an English park; umbrageous with orchards; musical with rivulets; tinkling with the bells of wandering cattle, and flocks of goats; social with picturesque villages gathered round the chapel-spires—up to the bare rocks and mighty cataracts of ice; until the eye rests on the peaks of alabaster snow, clear and sharp in the intense blue of the cloudless sky, which crown the whole marvellous picture with awful grandeur! Norway, too, has its peculiar glory of fiords worming their way like black water-snakes among gigantic mountains, lofty precipices, or primeval forests. But the scenery of the Western Highlands has a distinctive character of its own. It is not beauty, in spite of its knolls of birch and oak-copse that fringe the mountain lochs and the innumerable bights and bays of pearly sand. Nor is it grandeur, although there is a wonderful vastness in its far-stretching landscapes of ocean meeting the horizon, or of hills beyond hills, in endless ridges, mingling afar with the upper sky. But in the sombre colouring of its mountains; in the silence of its untrodden valleys; in the extent of its bleak and undulating moors; in the sweep of its rocky corries; in the shifting mists and clouds that hang over its dark precipices; in all this kind of scenery, along with the wild traditions which, ghost-like, float around its ancient keeps, and live in the tales of its inhabitants, there is a glory and a sadness, most affecting to the imagination, and suggestive of a period of romance and song, of clanships and of feudal attachments, which, banished from the rest of Europe, took refuge, and lingered long in those rocky fastnesses, before they 'passed away for ever on their dun wings from Morven.'

It was Kate's delight to wander by the narrow sheep-walks until she reached the breezy heather, and to sit among the ruins of old *shielings* in an oasis of emerald-green grass, created long ago by the cultivation of human beings, but now encroached upon by a glowing border of crimson heath. Near at hand was a clear, cold spring that sung on its way as it did when the shielings were blythe with other songs of herd lads and milkmaids, who make the echoes of the grey rocks ring, ere the sheep took possession of the hills, and drove the cattle with their attendants to the lower valleys.

'You sit there like a statue,' said Jane to Kate one day when they met on such a spot as I have described; 'all my news about the ball seems thrown away upon you. What *are* you looking at?'

Kate started as from a reverie, and said,—

'I beg your pardon, Jane. I was not looking at anything in particular; but everything seems looking at me, and taking possession of me, like some mysterious presence, which one feels, rather than sees, in a dream. What a glorious landscape! Yet so sad; is it not?'

'Sad? How so? Are you unhappy, Kate? Do tell me, dear,' asked Jane, with some curiosity.

'Unhappy?' replied Kate, 'the very reverse! The sadness that comes from such a scene as this is not unhappiness, but pure and blessed enjoyment. But tell me what you were going to say when I interrupted you.'

'Oh, I was going to tell you about the ball we had at Inverary the week before you came; but it is really of no consequence. Besides, *you* never cared about balls; and I suppose the good people of Greenock think them very sinful.'

'As to balls,' replied Kate, 'they are, I think, like a thousand other things in this world, evil or innocent according as people use them. For myself, I like a family dance with a few friends well enough. I fancy it is natural to every one to dance, and that in the lives of most people "there *is* a time to dance."

But what are called balls were always to me a dreadful weariness of flesh and spirit, and, in spite of the music and motion, the very essence of twaddle and drawl. So far, they are a sin to *me*. But, Jane, do look at the colouring on those hills, such blues and purples! and watch that flush of bronze or gold on Benmore! and see the silver gleam on yonder sea! I wish for nothing to make all perfect but a piper to play to me on that rock.'

'A piper!' exclaimed Jane, laughing heartily; 'a piper, of all beings, and of all things! Do you mean that you would like a reel to dance to?'

'Oh, shocking! *you* a Highlander? I don't believe it! The bagpipe is fit only for the grand old pibroch, just as an organ is fit only for sacred music; and when well played it is the only music that harmonizes with this scenery, and with its wild music of winds, waves, and streams. I never will forget when I first heard a lament well played, that is, with power, and feeling, and execution. It was on a stormy autumn evening in the hall of —— Castle, with no other accompaniment than the thud of the great ocean waves on the beach heard at intervals mingling with the storm that roared overhead. I felt how thoroughly national it was. To the English it is merely a loud hurdy-gurdy. I declare I could cry when I hear it! It is to me unutterably sad; like a wail, an agony for the dead, a lament for the olden time, and for the old people who have passed, or are passing away. But it seems almost profane to speak in the presence of that glory of heaven and earth before us !'

'Well done, Kate !' exclaimed Jane ; 'most poetical and romantic, on my word ! I always told you how that sort of thing was your weakness. I had no idea you were so fond of the Highlands. But I love you the better for it. Now, Kate, tell me, just between ourselves,' continued Jane, in a very confidential voice. But her sentence and Kate's silent enjoyment were interrupted by a shrill dog-call, and the sudden appearance, round a neighbouring knoll, of M'Dougal with his gun and a couple of pointers. 'There is Duncan, I declare !' said Jane ; 'I wish he would leave us alone. But, after all, we must not deny him, poor young man, the happiness of being with us,' she added, laughing. Duncan soon joined the ladies, and, sending his gun and dogs home with the keeper, sat down beside them, glad to have this unexpected opportunity of walking home with Kate. Ever since she had come to Ardmore, his attentions were marked, his manner most guarded and respectful towards her, and every art which he possessed of making himself agreeable was put in practice. With the perfect self-possession of a man not loving, but admiring to the utmost of his nature, anxious to be loved, or rather to be admired, at all events to possess, he arranged and carried out his little plans of conquest with remarkable skill. He watched Kate's disposition, perceived her tastes, and did everything to gratify both. Kate, judging of him by her own true and honest nature, and having heard his praises for years from Jane, was, to some small extent, impressed by him. She recognised him at first as a young man, with an agreeable person and manners, above the ordinary run of people whom she met, and one whom, if she did not love, she would try in the meantime to like. Yet the more she penetrated into his inner spirit, revealed in moments when the most prudent are off their guard, and when those who act a part are at a loss to know what part to act, the less she felt in sympathy with him. He knocked only at the outer gate of her spirit.

When he joined the ladies, on the day I speak of, Jane, as if taking up the thread of her conversation with Kate, said—'I had no idea, Duncan, that Kate was such a Highlander. I wish you had only heard her grand speech a few minutes ago about scenery and bagpipes.'

'Nonsense, Jane!' said Kate, with slight irritation. 'Why allude to my trumpery? It was only meant for ourselves.'

'Let me just light this cigar, ladies,' said Duncan, 'I won't come too near you; and then I shall be able, with satisfaction and repose, to hear Miss Campbell's speech, especially if it is in praise of the Highlands.'

'The Highlands,' said Kate, 'require no speech from any one, far less from me; they speak for themselves.'

'After all,' exclaimed the Laird, rising and looking round him, 'it *is* a noble thing to be a Highland proprietor! Just look at this same property of mine. It begins at yonder point of Ard, goes along the coast, on and on to that bold headland, and away far up Glenconnan, until it meets the wood which you see in the distance, beyond that grey rock. I have a right to be proud! Eh?' he inquired, with a smile, turning to Kate, as if in fun; but his lairdship had a purpose in his geography.

'Do you know,' remarked Kate, 'I never felt how small our Scotch lairds were—pardon me for saying so—until I went across the border. I was amazed, when travelling with Miss Duncombe through the south of England, to see what princely houses, and parks, and fortunes, were possessed by persons of whom we never hear, but any one of whom could buy up our small properties by the sackful. The English possess a wonderful and great aristocracy in their landed gentry.'

'And yet, Miss Campbell, when I go to London, and sport my Highland dress,' said Duncan, 'and allow myself to be recognised as a chief,—I don't allege the fact, of course, but don't contradict it—too knowing by a half for that!—you would be amazed how I cut out those rich big-wigs in the estimation of some of the romantic old dowagers and young ladies. They look on me as a sort of Rob Roy, or Prince Charlie, a Walter Scott, or Highland novel sort of fellow, Ha! ha! ha! I do assure you, the Londoners are so easily humbugged that I laugh in my sleeve, and tell such romantic stories of family traditions and second sight, and battles of the clans, that you would scream at the absurdity if you heard me, and then heard the ladies say, "How interesting!" Of course our incomes as lairds are small; that's the mischief, since those commercial rascals swindled us out of our kelp. But emigration will cure that in time, and free us of the people; and sheep farming, with large rents from south-country farmers, will make up for our losses.'

'You don't mean to say that you could turn away those people?' asked Kate, with astonishment.

'What people do you mean?' inquired M'Dougal.

'I mean such people as I have met in Glenconnan—your small tenants there!'

'Every man Jack of them! A set of lazy wretches! Why should I be bored and troubled with gathering rent from thirty or forty tenants, if I can get as much rent from one man, and perhaps a great deal more?'

'But you will thereby lose the privilege, Captain M'Dougal, the noble talent given you of making thirty or forty families happy instead of one. In my life I never met such people! Yes! I will say such real gentlemen and ladies; so sensible and polite; so much at their ease, yet so modest; so hospitable, and yet so poor!'

'And so lazy!' said Duncan; 'whereas in the colonies, where I have seen them, they get on splendidly, and make first-rate settlers.'

'How does it happen that their laziness vanishes there?' asked Kate.

'Because in the colonies they can always better their condition by industry.'

'But why not help them to better their condition at home? Why not encourage them, and give them a stimulus to labour?'

'Because, Miss Campbell, it would be a confounded bore, and after all it would not pay,' replied M'Dougal, lazily puffing his cigar, and evidently more interested in Kate's face, all beaming with feeling and sweetness, than he was in the discussion of the question which she had started.

'But surely, surely,' she continued, 'money is not the chief end of man. What is it worth except for what it brings to us; and can money ever get for us anything more valuable than the power of increasing the happiness of our fellow-beings, and through them of our own? Is there any property equal to human hearts?'

'Your humble servant, Miss Campbell!' said Duncan, bowing and smiling. 'But what on earth, fair lady, has that argument of yours to do with rent? You know, it is the first maxim in human nature, "Every man for himself." It would be unreasonable, therefore, to suppose that I should sacrifice an increased rent to increase the happiness of Tom, Dick, or Harry, or, to be more correct, of Donald, Dugald, or Duncan; and, therefore, go they must for their own sakes fully more than for mine.'

'I can't argue,' said Kate, 'but my whole soul tells me that this system of sacrificing everything to the god, Money, is an idolatry that must perish; that the only way for a man truly to help himself is to help his brother. If I were old M'Donald, I would preach a sermon against the lairds and in favour of the people.'

'Might I ask your text, fair preacher?' inquired Duncan, with an admiring smile.

'Why,' said Kate, 'the text is the only thing about it I am certain would be good; and the one I would choose rings in my ears when I hear of the overturning of houses, the emptying of glens, and the banishing of families who have inhabited them for generations, and to whom every rock and stream is a part of their very selves.'

'But the text, the text, my lady!'

'My text would be,' said Kate, '"Is not a man better than a sheep?"'

'Bravo!' said M'Dougal, 'though, by the way, I don't think, *entre nous*, it is in the Bible. But, be that as it may, the day you ascend the pulpit I shall promise you such an attentive audience as M'Donald never had. I myself will go to church to patronize you, and I'll wager Red Peter won't snore, for once in his life!'

'But,' chimed in Jane, 'those people you admire so much are *so* filthy—Faugh!'

'Come, come, Miss Jane,' said Kate, smiling, 'don't you join the laird against me.'

'Aha!' said Jane, 'I think I have put my finger on the black spot.'

'Oh, it is very easy for you, with Floxy to attend you; to mend your clothes, and put them on; to dress your hair, and deck you every day; to be always at your call to bring you this, and to fold you that, so that you never know what care or trouble is,—it is easy, I say, for you or me to call these people filthy! There is Mrs. M'Callum, for instance, whom we visited the other day, a comely, respectable Christian woman, with sense and feeling, but with six children, her cottage a miserable hut without grate or chimney, peat reek within, rain without, and a wet undrained soil around; her husband, as you heard her say, never being able to earn more than ten or twelve shillings weekly; yet you expect her, forsooth, to be *so* neat, *so* tidy, *so* orderly—to feed and clothe herself, her husband, and family, and without help from any one but little Mary;—how *can* she do all this or the tenth part of it? I declare my brain would get crazed in such a position!'

'Well then, my fair coz, I say turn them off, therefore, and send them elsewhere.'

'Well then, Captain,—rather, I say, build better houses for them, such as you give your highly respectable pigs; get tiles and drain their land; help to educate their children, the girls especially, so as to fit them for service, and I'll back Mrs. M'Callum for doing her part, and then she will turn out boys and girls, more beautiful and precious than all the sheep that ever grazed from the days of Nabal till now! But why should I be tempted,' said Kate, laughing, 'into this long argument about your duties, when I ought to attend to my own?'

''Pon my honour, you should go to Parliament!' said Duncan, with his white teeth shining; 'you would carry any vote against the Tories — for of course you are a Radical—especially if you tossed your beautiful curls in that way. Splendid, I say! But, nevertheless, all your fine theories, fair lady, have the old objection to them, that they won't *pay*.'

'You are just as bad as Floxy, Kate,' said Jane, 'with her raving about Morag.'

'Ah, the little beauty!' said Duncan, 'I won't turn *her* off, depend upon it. She is the greatest ornament of the place, even the proud and stately Miss Shillabeer not excepted. Have you made Morag's acquaintance, lady Catherine?' inquired Duncan.

'Of course I have; Floxy introduced me to her the second day after I arrived here,' replied Kate; 'and Morag is just a specimen of what those poor huts can produce—a sweet, fascinating creature, and with a nature most gentle and loveable, modest and refined. Old Rorie himself is also to me a perfect poem in his patriarchal simplicity.'

'If Morag was in London,' remarked Duncan, thoughtfully, 'she would sell for any price—I mean,' he said, recovering himself, and evidently confused by expressing his thoughts in such language; 'that if she was educated, many a rich man would be proud to marry her. It is seldom one sees such a beauty. But it is time to be home,' he said, looking at his watch; 'but, fair coz, I thank you for your lecture, it has quite interested me.'

'No quizzing, please, Captain; it was all your own fault,' said Kate, 'you provoked me to it.'

'Depend upon it, I will provoke you as soon as possible to give another, and I will sit at your feet like a Highland child; and to show you that I have already learned one lesson, like a good boy, I promise not to turn your friends off without consulting you; therefore let the argument rest for the present.'

'I wish you would forget your purse, and open your heart, and then any further consultation would be unnecessary,' said Kate; 'and depend upon it, that which is right is always in the long run that which is profitable in the truest sense of the word. You recollect, Jane, Miss Duncombe's lesson on the gain of our life from losing it?'

But this was a lesson which Jane had forgotten, and Duncan had never learned; so Kate, pondering it in her heart, took a last look of the landscape, and descended with her friends to dinner.

Her last day at Ardmore soon came. She went alone to visit her friends among the cottars in Glenconnan, with peculiar interest. On her return she skirted the higher pasture lands of the glen, until she found a quiet nook among the rocks. It was early in the day, for she had resolved to have some quiet hours of enjoyment by herself among the hills, ere returning to the Greenock streets for the winter. It was seldom she took a book with her at such times; for Nature afforded her more readings than she could exhaust. But on this occasion she had a volume which she devoured with deepest interest, for it was to her as a prophet interpreting the language addressed to her spirit by the outer world of sense; and the volume, moreover, had sundry pleasant associations connected with it, as it had been sent to her by Ned. It was Wordsworth's 'Excursion,' which Curly had given his friend on the shore of the sounding sea.

CHAPTER IV.

PAVING THE WAY FOR DUNCAN.

Some time after Kate's return to Greenock, her mother one forenoon tapped at her bed-room door, and immediately entered. Kate was writing in a window recess. Her mother had a letter in her hand, and a peculiar smile on her face, neither circumstance, however, attracting Kate's attention. But she was fully roused to the fact that something more than usual had occurred, when her mother kissed her cheek, and placing her hand fondly on her shoulder, looked into her face.

Now Mrs. Campbell never had been in the habit of *fondling* her daughter. She had governed her, corrected her, advised her, guarded her, and did her 'all manner of justice,' and was always kind, with an every-day transparent, crystallized kindness, but none of the freedom and openness of hearty, confiding love existed between them. Kate would have been horrified if any one, even her own heart, had hinted that she did not love her mother. But in truth she had never experienced that blessed fellowship, in which love and reverence become one, when the mother is lost in the beloved friend, and the friend exalted in the beloved mother.

Accordingly, when Mrs. Campbell manifested this unusual manner, Kate looked up, and asked with wonder, 'What in the world is it, mother?'

'Guess if you can!' said Mrs. Campbell, with the same benign smile.

'How can I?' said Kate; 'has the "William Pitt" arrived?'

'The "William Pitt," child! what a stupid idea! Something has happened which concerns yourself—something that will delight you, and make you proud and happy, as I hope—listen'—and the mother put her eager lips to Kate's listening ear, and said, in low but marked accents, 'A proposal from Duncan Ardmore!' and kissing Kate again, she thrust the letter into her hand, and hurriedly left the room.

There is not a moment in a woman's life more solemnly affecting to her than that in which she receives her first proposal of marriage. Whether she accepts of it or not, it is a great event in her life. She feels that another's happiness as well as her own may be at stake, and apart from every other circumstance, the mere fact that there exists another person who proposes to share his whole future with her while life lasts, in the closest of all human relation-ships, is itself a most memorable event in her history —awakening new and strangely contending thoughts, and demanding a decision which makes her realize the importance of her existence as she never did before. Kate's first impulse was to laugh heartily, then to cry as heartily; but she thought it best in the meanwhile to do neither, but to open and read the letter. It was an immense relief to her to find that it was addressed by Mrs. M'Dougal to her mother, and was intended merely as a feeler of feelings, and to pave the way for a proposed visit by Duncan, when it was quite convenient to receive him at the Glen. It was meant, in short, to ascertain if possible how far Kate encouraged his suit. It declared, moreover, that many circumstances—Mrs. M'Dougal knew not how urgent some of these were! —made it desirable for him to sell out, now that he had got his company, and that henceforth he would live at Ardmore. Nothing could have been gone about in a more orderly manner, or with more immaculate propriety, than the whole affair was by the acute Mrs. M'Dougal. She even hinted that money, were it at Kate's disposal (well did she know, what Kate knew not, how good her prospects were!) was no consideration to her, etc. Kate breathed more freely as she finished the letter.

Then came various speculations, which in such circumstances were surely natural and excusable. Oh, yes, Kate, think about it! You could be happy from home; your father would miss you, indeed, when the time came for reading the newspapers, and when a party had to be entertained; so would your mother at many times; but they would nevertheless rejoice in the marriage, and be sadly disappointed if it did not take place; and Ardmore was a comfortable house in a lovely land; and you would do so much good, Kate, to those tenants, would you not? and then this constant bother about being married would be over; and Duncan is in your opinion an unexceptionable man in character, is he not? quite—with more than ordinary cultivation when compared to most whom you have met? yes—and if he were your husband—Here Kate's speculations came to a dead stand-still, as if she had reached a deep chasm, which she was unable to cross. She then followed a bye-path that led her to the sea-shore—and then she saw a ship! and crossing the sea she entered it, and a sun-burnt face all smiles and love welcomed her, and said—

'Kate, dear, may I come in now?' asked Mrs. Campbell, as she slowly opened the door. Kate's dream and speculations vanished as she replied, 'Surely, mother!'

'Well, my dear,' said Mrs. Campbell, rubbing her hands, as she glided into the room, after closing the door and putting in the bolt—the Achanabeg brooch seeming twice its usual size—'well, my dear?' and she sat down nearly opposite Kate.

'This is not a proposal,' replied Kate, smiling, and slightly flushed, 'and it can keep cold.'

Mrs. Campbell was silent for a moment, her simmering enthusiasm somewhat chilled by the idea of keeping such a document cold. 'It comes of course, Kate, to the same thing as a proposal; and you know I must say something in reply to Mrs. M'Dougal. It would be unpolite, rude, not to do so, and that immediately.'

'Had you not better simply tell her that you had handed the letter to me, and that when you received a reply it would be communicated?'

'But surely, Kate, you can give a satisfactory reply now? so far, at least, as to encourage Duncan? As you *must* say something, you may surely say *that?*'

'Why, mother, if I *must* say something now, I must say, No.'

'Kate, dear, don't be foolish. Why *do* you speak so? I am aware that it is a very serious matter for you, and not less so for myself and for your dear father, for I'm sure we'—(here Mrs. Campbell took out her pocket-handkerchief and blew her nose, wiping both her eyes)—'I am sure we have your happiness at heart—your happiness only. Now, you never, never, had such an offer as this, and are not likely to receive such an offer again.' And then Mrs. Campbell went on at a steady pace expatiating on the Ardmores, telling how long this offer had been the subject of her thoughts and of her prayers (a phrase, Mrs. Campbell, not a fact!)—and how she and her husband had set their hearts on it—and what a wonderful Providence it was (being agreeable to Mrs. Campbell!)—and hints were thrown out of how lonely Kate would be if her parents were to die! —(tears moistening her words). But an idea here suddenly flashed on Mrs. Campbell which made her pause in her discourse—was it possible that Kate entertained any other object of affection? And then a series of Greenock aristocrats, men right well-to-do in life—albeit wanting in the pure chieftain blood which trickled through M'Dougal's veins—passed in procession before her thoughts, with sundry things, once forgotten, but now recalled, which kind friends had told her in confidence, regarding the admiration of Mr. A. or Mr. B. for Kate. But Kate satisfied her mother that these stories were all nonsense, pure inventions. Mrs. Campbell was relieved, and soon ended her discourse with the practical question with which she had commenced it—'What, then, shall we say to Mrs. M'Dougal?'

'What *can* I say but what I have already said, dear mother? I like Duncan well enough, very much, perhaps, in a way, but that is not love? And if I do not love him, nor see any hope at present of loving him, how can I encourage him?'

'Love,' remarked Mrs. Campbell, with a slight cough, and looking out of the window, 'is no doubt desirable, if one could always have it when required, but it is not essential to happiness. I have been young like yourself, Kate, and of course I have known all those feelings (she never did!), and they are all very well and natural when young; but they pass away, however, and are forgotten, while a sensible, judicious husband and domestic comforts remain. Love is mere girl's talk.'

'It is to me, mother, a woman's reality. I have no fear of being what is called an old maid; I don't covet money; I could work for my bread; I could live in a garret; so long as I did my duty and respected myself, I could live in peace anywhere; but to marry a man I did not love, soberly, calmly, decidedly, so as to peril my life on him, that to me would be *impossible!* I should sooner die!'

'What then *am* I to say to Mrs. M'Dougal?' continued Mrs. Campbell. 'Really, Kate, it is too bad of you to put me in this awkward position!'

'My dear mother, again I ask you, what *can* I say? I tell you I *don't* love Duncan M'Dougal at present—*that* I can say, and therefore will not marry him; and as I am not at all sure that I shall ever love him, how can I encourage him? If his mother sends him here, and he comes here, and you receive him as a relation, I can of course have no objection to that. I shall be to him as I have ever been. I can be no more, and will be no more to him unless I love him. I cannot force love. If it comes, it comes!'

Mrs. Campbell, bitterly disappointed, and whirling a key in her hand, said nothing; yet not wishing to pull her thread too strongly, lest it should break, she remarked, 'Well, Kate, I will give him an invitation, and tell him that we shall *all* be glad to see him. I suppose you have no objection to that?'

'None, mother,' said Kate. 'He deserves this, at least, for his kindness to me.'

Kate buried her face in her hands as her mother left the room, and had her first vision of confused and troubled life. She saw a family storm gathering—and she thought, and thought with flushed face and tearful eye, until her head throbbed with a racking, nervous headache. But after walking up and down the room she remained some minutes in silence, and then, with a calm countenance, resumed the letter she had been writing to Miss Duncombe. A longer postscript was added than she at first intended.

Cairney duly received from his wife as much information as she deemed it prudent to impart regarding his daughter's prospects; for Mrs. Campbell was the head of the house, even as he was head of the business. The campaign which promised to end at last so prosperously in the conquest of Duncan, had been hitherto conducted solely by Mrs. Campbell. She assumed that it belonged to her department, like sewing or cooking. But the time had come when it was both necessary and expedient to reveal to Cairney the general results of her scheming. He would be surprised—such was the substance of her communication to him when alone—to hear the news, and glad, no doubt; though she confessed that the thought of this alliance had more than once crossed her own mind; but she would do nothing, of course, without consulting him; (Oh, Mrs. Campbell!) Kate, poor thing, felt very deeply; but this was natural, and by and by all would go on smoothly. It was a mere question of time, etc. Cairney was standing before the fire, basking himself, like a turkey-cock with outspread tail in the sun's rays; and he gobbled out his satisfaction in his own peculiar way. He cordially admitted that it was a highly honourable connexion; he did not, indeed, know much about the young man, but his father he knew well, and a most worthy man, both prudent and saving was he, and a better mother than Mrs. M'Dougal could not be.

'But, Ann,' said Cairney in conclusion, 'don't bother the lassie. Young women are often queer and thrawn. Kate is like her neighbours in that respect, and prouder than most; so ca' canny, woman, ca' canny—very canny, I tell you, or the thread will snap in your hand, ay, even in yours, my dear; and then — whew! away goes Kate, or Duncan! so ca' canny! It's a kind of discreet fishing.'

CHAPTER V.

NED TAKING SOUNDINGS.

But what has become of Ned? Alas! is it not hard that he should be pacing the quarter-deck, or holding on to the weather rigging, with a thick dreadnought jacket buttoned up to his throat, and dripping with rain and spray, his sou'-wester tied under his chin, and his voice hoarse issuing commands, as the 'William Pitt' ploughs under close-reefed top-sails, through briny seas, onward to port — is this not in truth a hardship, while M'Dougal has all the talk with Kate to himself, on the hill-side or round the fireside of Ardmore? But does Ned never think of Kate? Ask rather if she does not lie deep, deep down in his heart, night and day, like a pearl beneath the waves. Do not, however, trouble the manly skipper by inquiring to whom he alludes, when he sometimes says to himself, as his vessel bowls along before a quarter-wind, 'Cheer up, messmate! the lassie is at the end of the tow-rope. I have seen worse ships than myself come to land. Bah! you never did, you fool! So don't flatter yourself. Give up looking out for holding-ground in that harbour.'

Need I say that while his passionate attachment to his father and mother made him devote almost all the time at his disposal between each voyage to visiting them, yet that, nevertheless, some time was necessarily given to the fair one at the Glen? Oh, what a flutter of heart—what longing—what anxiety—what confusion did he experience at such time?—But why should I tell how a man in love feels when going to see his sweetheart?

After each returning voyage he called at the Glen—'half daft,' as we say in Scotland; and he chatted, read, and sang with Kate, and took supper with the family—for supper was the meal to which Cairney attached most importance. But while his heart was always rolling about his throat, he looked so calm and quiet, that Mrs. Campbell never suspected his real feelings. Dare I say *never?* For dark thoughts did occasionally cross her mind of the possibility of *this* cousinship ending in something more serious. Yet, after all, she thought the idea, if seriously entertained, was as absurd as it would be to suspect Cairney of a robbery, or Mrs. M'Dougal, Ardmore, of going on the stage. Did Kate herself ever discover, or suspect, Ned's feeling towards her? Away with all hypocrisy! She did; she felt that he loved her. She saw it in his eye, in his voice, in his words, in his songs, in his whole manner, even as the electricity in the atmosphere is perceived in a thousand subtile forms by those who are at the moment susceptible of such influence. Never was her love to him brought home as a reality, until she read Mrs. M'Dougal's letter. And the more she saw the military captain drawing near to her as her intended husband, the more she saw with sorrow Ned departing from her as one who could not—(Oh, father and mother! Oh, selfish pride! Oh, society thou tyrant!)—*dared* not occupy that position. And so she felt often as in a night-mare, in which a power that seemed irresistible compelled her to be the wife of M'Dougal, while an opposite power separated her more and more from Ned, to whom she could not speak out, nor he to her, yet with whom she felt as if bound up for life; or, alas! for death.

The only time in which Ned ever approached to any revelation of his feelings, was one evening—a time of day always more dangerous for lovers than morning!—when chatting together alone in the window of the drawing-room at the Glen.

'How *do* you, Captain Ned, employ your time now at sea? I mean your idle time?' inquired Kate, as she sewed some worsted work, and looked occasionally into Ned's face. And, by the way, Miss Kate, I am not prepared to say that there was not much more feeling in those looks of thine, taking thy mouth into account, than the occasion necessarily demanded.

'How can you, fair lady Kate, suppose it possible that I should have any *idle* time? To tell the truth, between looking after the men—'

'Now, pardon my interruption in asking you whether any good seems to come from your attempts to make those poor, rough, salt-water fellows better? Do they attend to what you say? Do they *feel*, in short, and are they humanized? You know what I mean.'

'I understand you perfectly,' replied Ned. 'As to what I have done for the men, it is, without any humbug, very little. But I really cannot help doing it. I like the fellows. Besides, it is my duty. But you have asked me a question, to reply to which fully would look so like cant, and mouthing about one's own doings, as if they were anything uncommon, that I really feel ashamed to attempt it. Yet it *does* help me not a little to find any one, especially you—ah! you may smile sceptically, but it is truth I speak—I say it encourages me far more than you can comprehend, when I think *you* really care about those poor fellows, wild, rough, thoughtless, impulsive, uneducated, but yet human beings, with hearts and souls like you and me, and much more easily impressed than people imagine. As for their gratitude! it has pained me often to receive it in return for such common, every-day kindness. But you know it is a right good thing for one's-self to have some persons to take care of; and, ever since I was a child, my dear old dad inspired me with a love of the sea and of sailors.'

'Of all gifts bestowed on us from above,' said Kate, putting down her work, and speaking as if to herself, 'I should say that helping human beings to become better and happier is the greatest.'

'How it rejoices my heart, Kate, to hear you speak so! for on shipboard one does feel so lonely, with no person to talk to about what most interests them, until at last they begin to doubt whether any other being thinks or believes as they do themselves. There is a strange loneliness in the sea-life which land-people cannot understand.'

'But you have books, and poetry too? Oh, by the way, I forgot to return you that delicious volume of Wordsworth. I shall get it now,' said Kate.

'Please, not now!' replied Ned, hurriedly, as if afraid that the interview would break up. 'Have you had time to read it?'

'I read it in the most favourable circumstances, when at Ardmore—which is so lovely, and has such nooks among the hills, as if created for reading those quiet, human, thoughtful poems.'

The mention of Ardmore was not agreeable to Ned.

'I had forgot that visit,' he remarked, 'as I don't know the people. Was it pleasant to you?'

'Extremely so. Mrs. M'Dougal was most kind; my old school-companion, Jane, equally so, and her only brother, the Captain, all attention to us both, so that the time passed most pleasantly. And Floxy! how odd that I never mentioned her, and she so handsome, and really a singularly attractive creature. She always speaks of you as if you were a relation, from your connexion with her uncle.'

'Poor Tom!' said Ned, 'what a strange dream that story seems now! and how wonderful, too, that his niece should yet link him and me together.'

'Talking of poetry,' she said, 'what has become of your old friend Curly?—the lad who gave you Wordsworth?'

'I heard from him yesterday. He is an enthusiastic physician with no practice, who lives in a garret, greedily gathering up, day and night, such knowledge upon all subjects, especially those connected with his profession, as few provincial practitioners possess. The result is that he has become sceptical about all drugs, and, indeed, about everything, I fear, in Church and State. But he is too truthful, dear old Curly, to believe in anything false.'

'Does he still dabble in poetry?' asked Kate.

'Devours it,' said Ned. 'I have been charmed with a volume which he sent me lately by a Mr. Coleridge, which contains a translation from a German play called Wallenstein, with some other poems that have quite turned my head—especially the "Ancient Mariner" and "Geneviève." Oh, such poems! Here is the volume,' added Ned, taking it out of his pocket and handing it to Kate.

'I must do my work, Captain, so please let me hear your favourite passage.'

Oh, Ned, thou cunning man, yet without cunning! was it for this thou didst bring the book? Thy trembling voice betrays thee—take heed—keep the volume between thine eyes and hers;—there now—read.

And so Ned read aloud the well-known scene between Max and Octavio, in the first Act of 'The death of Wallenstein,' ending with the words—

> 'There's nothing here, there's nothing in all this
> To satisfy the heart, the gasping heart!
> Mere bustling nothingness, where the soul is not.
> This cannot be the sole felicity,
> These cannot be man's best and only pleasures.'

When he finished the passage, he feared to look at Kate, as if he had expressed his own wants and longings too palpably.

'Take this volume,' he said to Kate, 'and please read "Geneviève" yourself, for I cannot do it justice.' Then, changing the subject, he remarked that Curly, *alias* Dr. Morris, was to be in Greenock in a few days, on his way to visit one of the towns where cholera had broken out, and that he would, if permitted, introduce his old friend to his fair cousin.

'I shall be delighted,' replied Kate, 'to make his acquaintance. But why should he endanger his life by going amidst that awful cholera! It makes me shudder to think of the mysterious scourge.'

'Curly goes because he ought to learn how to save life. Every man, of course, is bound to risk his own life continually in the discharge of duty; and, after all, what great gain ever came without some previous loss? But as to cholera, I believe fear kills half of those who are seized, or fancy they are seized. I have seen much of it in the East Indies, and have helped to cure several.'

'By what means, pray?'

'My good lady, let us not enter on the question. God grant it may never come here. If it does, be assured a good conscience and cheerful mind are among the best preservatives against it. But I must bid good-night at present, as I have some business to transact.' And so they parted, to meet soon again in very different circumstances.

CHAPTER VI.

MORAG.

It was early in spring. Duncan M'Dougal had left Ardmore for Greenock to pay his addresses in person to Kate. The death of his old uncle, the retired East Indian physician, who lived at Cheltenham, did not retard his suit by any sorrow, but made it more promising by his succession to a fortune of several thousand pounds. 'Wasn't it lucky,' he remarked to his sister Jane, 'this happening at such a moment? He was a good old fellow, my uncle, but he must have died some time; and to have died just at the nick of time, when I require every iron to be put in the fire, in order to gain the beauty! —now, Jane, isn't it jolly! or very providential, as the parsons say.' Thus full of hope in his heart, and full of money in his purse, the Captain packed up his things, and whistling, 'Duncan Gray cam' here to woo,' started for Greenock.

Accounts were in due time received of his safe arrival, with a most satisfactory report of his gracious reception by the family. Kate, he said, was a perfect Venus, her old mother his stanch friend, and her father as clay in his hands. He had met (was added in a P.S.) a Captain Fleming at supper, who inquired kindly for Floxy. Was he the common sailor, he asked, about whom Jane had told him some story in which a brother or friend of Floxy's was involved? He had only a confused remembrance of the thing; but he, however, congratulated Miss Shillabeer on having such a smart admirer, and wished her further success in her conquest.

One evening, after the receipt of this letter, Floxy was occupied in making a dress for Jane, which she intended soon to wear at a party where her devoted admirer, Colin Duncaple, was to be present. Jane being at the time full of matrimonial plans, and her heart soft from matrimonial hopes, thought it only kind to inform Floxy confidentially about the object of her brother Duncan's visit to Greenock. She expected Floxy to give way to a burst of obedient and sympathizing enthusiasm, becoming to her as a dependant of the family, and expressive of the gratitude which she owed her mistress; and she was therefore greatly surprised and annoyed by the steady manner in which the maid threaded her needle, remarking quietly, 'So I supposed.'

'Supposed! 'Pon my word, Shillabeer, you are cool! How could you *suppose* anything of the kind?'

'By no second sight, I assure you, Miss M'Dougal, but just as one supposes that a shepherd's dog when he barks in the hill is in pursuit of sheep, or that a hawk, when it is seen fluttering over a field, is in pursuit of mice or small birds.'

'So you suppose Duncan to be a dog or a hawk?' said Jane, more piqued than ever.

'I never said so, Miss M'Dougal, but only that one may suppose many things without being actually informed about them.'

'Then I am at liberty to *suppose*,' continued Jane, harping peevishly on the word, 'that you do not share the family satisfaction about the match; I thought you liked Kate.'

'I love her as my own soul,' replied Floxy.

'Oh, then, perhaps you don't think my brother a good enough match for her?'

'Really, Miss M'Dougal, you are too severe, pressing me with such questions. I can only say that whatever can affect your happiness, or Miss Campbell's, cannot be indifferent to me. In the meantime, please, ma'am, try this dress, and I will be much disappointed,' she added, smiling, 'if it does not make its wearer more attractive than ever to one I could name; but I dare not *suppose* anything more, in case I get into your bad graces,' and thus Jane was led into another current of thought, much more agreeable to herself, and to Floxy, who by degrees soothed her into momentary forgetfulness of every one but herself and young Duncaple.

How ignorant are we of what is passing in another's heart! There are times when we can no more discover its inner history by any visible sign, than we can the history of a family from the light we see burning at midnight in a window of their home!

Floxy was most unhappy. Everything seemed an oppression to her heart. People, in spite of their smiles and kind words, moved as automatons around her. The air seemed dead; the winds sang dreary among the leafless trees. The sea waves beat heavily and sullenly on the shore. The world appeared a churchyard with persons like ghosts gliding through it. What ailed her? It was Morag. The girl had been for months estranged from her; and when they met, she was not the same Morag, but cast down, heartless, and unhappy. When she visited her, the cottage door was more than once kept shut, and that too when there was no doubt of Morag being within. Yet there was no one to whom she could speak freely about the girl. Her inquiries would have been misunderstood; and everything of which she could complain was so indefinite, that complaint seemed unreasonable. Floxy thus felt like one who had been gazing on a rural landscape that had gradually become dim and indistinct from cloud and mist.

She mourned the loss of the beautiful vision in silence, but earnestly hoped that sunshine might soon again visit it. In the meantime all was clouded in their friendship. The lessons she had been wont to teach Morag had long ago been given up, from this or that excuse by her pupil for non-attendance. Rebukes were coldly or pettishly received. The old fondling child-like expressions of love had vanished. To make this alienation still more perplexing, Morag had been absent for some weeks, and old Rorie could give no further explanation of her absence than that his daughter had gone 'to visit her granny at Craigdhu.' Floxy started at her own suspicions, as if she had seen a murderer.

But one night Floxy was surprised by a message conveyed to her with great secrecy by one of the female servants, to the effect that Morag had come home very ill the night before; that the Doctor pronounced her case to be hopeless; and that she particularly wished to see Miss Shillabeer immediately, but no one else was to know about it: 'You understan', you understan',' said the girl, nodding her head mysteriously.

'I understand nothing, Nelly,' said Floxy, 'but feel only something that wrings my heart. What *do* you mean? Oh, tell me! Dying? Morag *dying*, did you say?' But Nelly only again shook her head, and nodding slowly, as she looked over her shoulder, passed through the nearest door to the kitchen.

Floxy, left to herself, lost not a moment in putting on her bonnet with trembling hands and with sick heart, then rushed out of the house to pursue the well-known path to the old fisherman's hut. The night was in harmony with her spirits. The full moon was speeding fast in the stormy chase; now hurrying across a field of blue, again gleaming through a misty veil, and then plunging into sombre shadow. A low mournful wind sang through the trees, and the moan of the distant waves heralded a coming storm. Floxy passed across the lawn, through the fir-wood, over the low hill, with its scattered boulders, down into the birchwood along the shore, until she emerged on the green spot near the sea on which the fisherman's cottage stood, and which at that moment was gleaming white in the moonlight. With beating heart she approached the door, and passing the little window, saw at a glance that there were several persons within. The well-known horse of the Doctor was cropping the grass, with the bridle fastened to the stirrup. Floxy's tap was responded to by a woman from one of the hamlets, who no sooner recognised the visitor than she retreated to the apartment, saying, 'The English leddy frae the big house.' Floxy followed her, but was met in the narrow passage by the kind-hearted Doctor—

the most constant, self-sacrificing, and least rewarded philanthropist in the parish. With him she returned to the outside of the cottage.

'What is wrong, Doctor? Oh, tell me, is there danger?' she eagerly inquired.

The Doctor whispered a few words in her ear.

'Gracious heavens!' exclaimed Floxy, staggering back with a feeling of faintness at her heart, and covering her face with her hands, 'My horrible dream, then, is a reality?' After a little time she asked, 'Is there any hope, Doctor? a ray even?'

'There is no hope as far as I can see—none; and my heart is sore for the poor ignorant lassie; and she so bonnie! And then her lonely old father, one of the best men in the parish, who has seen six coffins go out at that door since I remember. Heigho! Miss Shillabeer, this is a sad world!'

Floxy heard his words as in a dream. She made no further remark, but entering the cottage, went at once to the bed, where she discerned a figure beneath the blankets, with the face in shadow and a white arm exposed. Kneeling down, she seized the hot clammy hand, clasping it with her own, and pressing it to her cheek as she buried her face in the bed-clothes. Morag lifted her head from the pillow; bending forward, she passed her other hand over Floxy's face, and whispered, 'My darling, are you come?'

After a great effort at self-command, but without daring to lift her face, Floxy replied, 'Yes, my darling, I am come.'

No one else spoke.

A single feeble light and flickering fire hardly penetrated the shadowy darkness of the dwelling. Yet one form was revealed to those who could look around, and that was old Rorie, sitting on a low stool near the peat-fire that glowed on the floor, with his face buried in his hands, and motionless as a stone on the shore covered with weeping sea-weed.

'Miss Floxy,' said Morag, in a whisper, bringing her head nearer the spot where the hands were that held her own, until her bright eyes—now brighter than ever, and shining with a feverish lustre—met the weeping eyes of her friend. 'Miss Floxy, I'm going away to-night—and—and—oh, dear, I canna speak! but I love you; and don't be angry with me, for I canna help loving you, my dear, dear, though you canna love *me* now.'

'Morag, my own Morag,' said Floxy, 'I love you with all my heart. God be with you! God pity you! God bless you! I cannot help you or I would, with my life's-blood. But no human being can do it.'

'Pity me, dear, I have no peace,' and her chest heaved at every sentence. 'I have prayed; I have prayed in the woods and on the shore. I have cried;

I have cried; my heart can greet no more. For oh, me! Ochone! Ochone! O my God!' and she turned away her face, while her hand grasped Floxy's with convulsive energy.

'My own Morag, remember what I told you so often about Jesus Christ. He can save the worst,—you and me and all, if we go to him; and he is beside you. Think of the good Shepherd who died for his sheep, who went to seek the *lost* sheep, and was glad when he found it. He is mighty to save my Morag.'

'But not me—not me. I'm too bad—too bad; but I know *He's* good—the best. And, Floxy, do you think I'm too sinful to expect that—?'

She paused, as if struggling with her thoughts and defective language.

'To expect what, dear?' asked Floxy gently.

'To expect that He'll not send me where—where—the bad folk would be cursing him, for I could not bear that; it would break my heart.'

'Oh! Morag, speak to your Saviour; tell him everything, and confess everything; excuse nothing, and ask his forgiveness, and he will give it, dear, and save you from all sin, and bring you to himself.'

'God be thanked!' said Morag; 'for should he not forgive *me* he may forgive *him* for all he has done, and that's some comfort.'

'Forgive who, Morag?'

The girl hid her face.

'Never mind just now. I canna name him.' 'O my God!' she said, after a short silence, and looking up—'Help! help!'

'Who are you praying for, my own Morag?'

'For my father, yonder,' she replied. 'I'm feared he'll never get ower this. I have killed him too.'

The old man caught his name, though it was mentioned but in a whisper, and suddenly rising from his seat, he approached the bed, and said, '*Mhorag a cheist*, is there anything you would like that I can give you? I wish you would just try and eat something; it would do you good, my lamb. I have got some fine fresh fish. You used to like them. I'll get some ready.'

She looked at him with a smile of love, and he at her. Then the old man sat down in a recess, and took up a fish in his hand, to prepare it, as he had often done since his wife died, for himself and his only daughter, the pride of his heart. He moved and spoke like a man bewildered. But as he saw opposite to him a small body covered by a white cloth on a table in a dark corner, the fish dropped from his trembling hands, and they who dared to look at the old man would have seen him wiping his eyes with the sleeve of his ragged fisherman's jacket, though every sound of grief was suppressed that could reach the ear of the dying girl.

The silence was again broken by Morag whispering in a voice still more tremulous and weak, 'Miss Floxy, my dear, thanks to God you came to see me. I have more comfort. Jesus died for sinners—for me :' and after a pause she added, 'For *him*.' Then looking long and fondly at Floxy, she said, 'I gathered some nuts for you at the end of the year, but did not like to give them. Will you take them with you? It is all I can give you, my dear darling, before I go away.' And her damp hands again squeezed those of Floxy, who could not utter a word. Yet fearing lest she might be selfishly indulging her own feelings at the expense of the poor sufferer, she rose, and bending over Morag, whispered, 'Have you anything more to say?'

'O yes, yes; but—I canna say it—but mind I forgive *him*, and I hope God will; but tell—tell him to repent, as he shall answer to God when we meet again.'

A few choking half articulate words of mutual blessing, and Floxy tore herself away, and sat near the old fisherman, who seized her hand. She thought she was once more a child, sitting beside her uncle Martin in the old cottage at Torquay.

A venerable-looking man had in the meantime noiselessly entered the small room. It was Sandy Cameron, schoolmaster and catechist, one of those men who are often selected, for their piety and knowledge of the Scriptures, by the ministers of large

Highland parishes, to instruct the peasantry, from house to house, and also to visit the sick and pray with them. Sandy sat down, and knowing the power of Christian song, he selected the 130th Psalm, and reading out two verses in Gaelic, sang them. The doctor sat beside the bed; while the old fisherman, with reverential calm, put on his spectacles, and tried to follow the psalm in his book; but he was obliged to close it, and sit with bent head, closed eyes, and clasped hands. The low solemn melody arose from voices trembling with sorrow. Then a short Gaelic prayer was offered up by old Sandy. When he ended all was silent again for a few minutes; then a sudden movement was made by the doctor, and a few hurried words spoken; then a gathering of the people round the bed—and then a cry from Rorie, which no one who heard it could ever forget, as the old man fell prostrate with outstretched arms over his dead daughter.

CHAPTER VII.

'AN OLD SCENE UNDER NEW CIRCUMSTANCES.'

Ned was spending a few days of sweet domestic peace in the old cottage, before commencing another outward-bound voyage in the 'William Pitt.' These evenings when, as of yore, Freeman formed one of the small party round the fire; and Mrs. Fleming knit apparently the same identical stocking through which her wires had glanced, with Ned at her knee, twenty years ago; and the Captain talked over the evergreen stories of the old wars; and Babby brought in the shining brass kettle, and put it on the hob of the grate, staring, with her large eyes full of delight at Ned as she entered and retired,—these evenings, I say, were as calm, sheltered, blessed harbours of refuge, in which Ned would willingly have anchored for life. There was in them a domestic simplicity, and a sunshine of purity, truth, and love which were to him as a holy religion of the heart. He was the more touched by such a vision of unchanged quiet, from his own thoughts being now stirred as they had never been. Kate possessed him. She was a constant under-song in his heart, yet one that sounded more like a farewell lament than a glad welcome. An emotion which in a less degree would have been a happiness, had become a pain from its intensity.

There was one person only in the burgh whom Ned could call his companion and friend, and that was Dr. Morris, the Curly of schoolboy memory. He saw him daily; strolled with him through their old haunts; sat up many hours with him after the inmates of the cottage were asleep, and every day each advanced further and further, by a series of affectionate zig-zags, into the citadel of the other's secret being.

Immediately before Ned's departure they both visited the sea-shore, to sit down and talk again, on the spot where they had parted so long before. Everything was changed but nature. Yet what is nature, what is her life, her beauty, her pathos, her joy, or glory, without the moulding and creating spirit of man? And so she too seemed changed to them. The sounding sea; the sunbeams that played upon it from behind the canopy of clouds; the distant sail;—all spoke a different language from what they did in other days when the future was everything, and the past nothing.

They both sat down beside the rock, and on the very spot where Curly had promised to pray for Ned. Each by the instinct of sympathy interpreted the other's feelings.

'Ah, Ned,' said Curly, with a sigh, 'I never forgot that day, nor my promise, so long as I remained here. Would God one could only keep alive those fresh feelings, and unclouded, unhesitating beliefs of early youth! But the toil, the tear and wear of commonplace existence, fill the sunshine with so much dust that it gets dark.'

'Nor did I forget that day, Curly. But you cannot know what strength it gave me, and how it kept my heart up in my rough life, which would have been all dark except for the early sunshine of the past. But you are a sadder man, Curly, than I then thought you would ever be. How is that?'

'It is difficult to explain that fact to any one, even to myself. From bad health, want of money, want of relations, I found myself rather a solitary mortal. I took to study, and dissected many books; but, next to those subjects more strictly bearing on my own profession, metaphysics became a passion. Then came what Wordsworth calls "obstinate questionings," which I could not answer. Dalrymple and Co. did not help me. I became bitterly disappointed with the teaching I heard from the pulpit; my old ideal of life was dethroned by the sort of people I met; there was a narrowness, a self-satisfied pride, a want of truthfulness, of common sympathy, and of humanity, about them, which made me recoil upon myself, until, can you believe it, I became sceptical? Don't think me proud or conceited, as some call me, when I speak thus to you, openly, frankly, but with a sad heart. For if you only heard that man with his hard, dry, logical reasoning, leading on, step by step—not one of which I can dispute—to conclusions from which my whole heart and conscience recoil! If you only heard him last Sunday, for example, on what *he* called the love of God, how he raged, and abused people for not seeing it in the way in which he was pleased to present it. And then, Ned, some of the pious ladies! how they double me up, and make me feel like a heathen!'

'You are sceptical of what, Curly? Not surely of the Bible?'

'Well, dear Ned, I fear to say so aloud, or even to my own heart. It was possibly more in regard to men whom I could not trust, and to myself whom I could trust least of all. But, strange to say, my whole scepticism left me the moment I read the Bible, for it never seemed to be the Bible I heard preached; for the Bible teaches me what seems to me to be the light on every page, the light of the world, the only light in my heart, and the only light in the universe, and that is our "Father;" and there is another word like it, Jesus, the "Son," our brother.

But for such words, with the worlds they illumine, I would have perished.'

'I was never tempted by scepticism,' replied Ned, after a moment's silence; 'my life was perhaps too practical and full of danger for that; and, to tell the truth, I cannot understand the feeling. For if I did not believe what Paul or John said, not to speak of the blessed Saviour, I would neither believe myself nor any one else, and I cannot come to *that* yet! Fancy me not believing the word of even my old father! And although, Curly, you know I feel it very difficult to *speak* about those holy things, as I fear too much talk is apt to become mere talk only; yet, I must confess that, as far as my personal experience goes, I have always found the Bible true. I never steered by that compass without finding the course come right.'

'Is that the case, old fellow? God bless you, Ned! It does me more good than a thousand sermons to find any man like you without cant or humbug, who truly believes. How little did your father or mother think that they were my most convincing preachers on the evidences of Christianity when I was most troubled!'

'How was that? You don't mean to say that the old couple argued with you?'

'I am thankful to say that they did not, or perhaps they would not have convinced me as they did. But *their* Christianity, their pure, loving, truthful, God-fearing lives which I constantly saw, as their friend—thanks to you—the reality of their love to God and man—*that* was a proof of Christianity I never could, and never wish to disprove.'

'But, Curly,' said Ned, 'you don't mean to say that you doubt Jesus Christ?'

'I won't lie against my soul by daring to say so!' said Curly, rising and speaking with rather an excited voice. 'No, Ned, I do believe Him, and, in spite of all, I hope by his long-suffering goodness, that I believe *in* him. Yes! I believe all he said, and all his apostles said. Yes! I'll peril my soul on his truth. I bless God that one person on earth has perfectly loved and served God, and that He lived and died, and lives for evermore to fill us like Himself with love to God and one another! That is heaven surely; and my only doubts often arise from thinking that the news is too good to be true.'

'If that boat of the gospel sinks,' remarked Ned, 'there's no other I know of can float.'

'I believe you, Ned. No philosophy will weather the storm in which the old Bible sinks. But confound men and women!—pardon the words—yet I say again, confound men who profess to represent truly His word, his teaching, and his life, but yet who live, and act in such a way that a man is tempted to think of them as being one with the

Enemy of Christianity, and so get soured and to nauseate the whole thing! But give me your honest, hard fist, old fellow. On my word, it brings more life to me than all the metaphysics I ever read; for there's life in it. I wish I were a sailor, or rather I wish I were you; or, to be sober, I wish I were always with you, just to feel that there is one whom I can trust out and out,' and he grasped his friend's hand and added, with a bitter smile,—'Hang scepticism! It has flattered my head, although it does not suit my heart. Yet you see it has not taken a great hold of either. But what made me pour out all this nonsense to trouble you?'

'You should marry, Curly,' said Ned; 'that would help to give rest to your head and heart.'

'Of course I should; so should everybody.'

'Why then don't you?'

'Pray, Captain, why don't *you*?'

'There you have me, Dr. Morris.'

Then rose a something to Ned's heart! What was it? Picking a stone up, he chucked it into the sea, and said, 'Curly, I'm in love.'

'I wish you were,' replied Curly. 'But I don't believe you.'

'Well, you *are* a sceptic, to be sure! How am I to convince you?'

'By showing me your sweetheart, with yourself, in her society. Then I shall judge for myself.'

'I am ready to give you the required proof.'

'Where and when?'

'When you go with me to Greenock on Wednesday.'

'Now, *are* you serious, Ned?'

'Intensely so—miserably so—out and out so!—Yea, drowned in love a hundred fathoms deep without a buoy; and to no living person have I said what I now say.'

'Then I shall joke no more about it,' remarked Curly; 'for of all serious and solemn things to a man, next to religion, I hold being in love is the most serious.'

Fleming told him the outline of his love-story.

'Any hope, old chap?'

'None, Curly! as far as I can see. I understand that she is engaged; and I go to meet any doom.'

'You don't! you know you don't; the thought would kill your love.'

'Passion it might kill, but not love.'

'Oh, stuff! I'll wager she is not engaged. Don't tell me; the hope keeps alive your love. You hope in spite of you. Depend upon it, your doom is not to be an ancient mariner—

> "Long and lank and brown,
> As is the ribbed sea-sand,"

looking out, like that mysterious hero, for marriage-guests to tell your story to, with your old sweetheart, like an albatross, round your neck! Ha! ha! excuse my hilarity, but I cannot help it. Cheer up old sea-captain ! you and she will both be snug in port yet. But again I must be serious. Tell me what do you mean to do ?'

'Curly, I will tell you, that as far as I know myself, I mean, if possible, at such a crisis, to steer the course which my dear old father and mother gave me long ago, and which never yet led me wrong—I mean, come what may, to trust in God, and to do the right.'

'Then as sure as there is a right, it will come right.'

'But not, perhaps, as I would wish it to come ; yet, come it must, as I *ought* to wish it to do.'

'It is not easy to act on such a principle, so trying to flesh and blood.'

'Yet, Curly, it is, after all, the simplest. For we sailors know, that if we have a good chart, it is safer steering by it in darkness, in spite of all appearances, than trusting to one's own eyes.'

'From my heart—from my whole heart—I wish you success ! Would that I had such hopes as yours, dark though they seem to be ! Oh for a true woman to love and by her to be loved ! But I shan't get into the heroics again. Yet let me say to you, Ned, that most of the girls here are such a simpering, idle, empty, dancing, flirting, chattering, gew-gaw set of creatures, that I would as soon marry a humming-bird or paroquet, with beak and claws, as any of them.'

'Too hard, Curly! But why are you such an abusive sceptic?'

'I am a truthful critic, I do assure you. And I maintain that our girls in the burgh give one the impression that they consider all thought, all literature, all solid education and sober sense, to be stupid and unattractive; and that balls, parties, and chitter-chatter, were all that was required to make them good wives and good companions. If your girl, Ned'—

'*My* girl, you villain, like one of those! You shall see her on Wednesday; then speak thus, if you dare! In the meantime, let us up anchor and run for it to port, or my old father will polish his big gold watch to nothing looking at the hour, and wondering what has kept us. But, of course, not a word, Curly, about what I have been saying. Remember, I have no hope, but I wished to get some peace by telling you everything.'

'Do you remember the ship I pointed out to you when we last met here?'

'I do perfectly.'

'Then,' said Curly, 'look yonder; there are two ships sailing in sunshine!'

'Yes; they represent Kate and Captain ——. I cannot mention the fellow's name!' said Ned.

'I can,' replied Curly; 'it is Captain Fleming.'

'Don't torture me, Curly! March! Home!'

CHAPTER VIII.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

While Ned and Curly prolonged their conversation in the cottage beyond midnight; and Floxy was returning through the woods with hurried steps and a heart wrung with anguish; and the Captain was smoking and drinking brandy and water with Peter M'Donald in the Tontine Hotel of Greenock,—Kate was perusing a letter received from Miss Duncombe, in reply to the one which she had written when interrupted on a memorable occasion by her mother.

After some preliminary matter, Miss Duncombe came at last to the consideration of Kate's P.S., which, as is alleged of most letters written by ladies, contained the most important intelligence. She thus wrote—

'Though you do not ask my advice, yet, dear Kate, I am disposed to take the liberty of an old friend and offer it unasked — a course in general very hazardous. But in such cases how difficult it is, after all, to see things as others see them, so as to judge justly and advise wisely! My idea is, that where common sense and sound principle are possessed — as they are, I think, without flattery (which you know I hate) possessed by you—these, with higher aid, direct, as by an instinct, along a path sufficiently clear and safe for all practical purposes. But if these are wanting, what can advice do? It is like putting a pair of spectacles on a blind eye! I have myself seen very absurd, yet still very serious, illustrations of this want of sense among my old pupils. One of these, whom I shall call Jemima—for I won't mention real names—was captivated by the mere good looks and fascinating manners of a young man I shall name Noodles. She thought that an ardent admiration for his person was love to himself. They married. Now Noodles had nothing but his looks to commend him, and so Jemima, and her little nursery, of Noodledom, have become a heavy burden, from their poverty, upon her family, who thus suffer for her tastes. Another of my old pupils, as if to avoid the evil of poverty, married a coarse-minded vulgar rich man; and she possesses, accordingly, the wealth which was courted; but she possesses nothing more. Two other girls accepted husbands, the one, a young clergyman, the other a young barrister, because they had excellent characters; but the clergyman cannot preach or get a living, and the lawyer cannot speak or get a brief, and the characters don't support the family! What mere rules could suffice to guide the selection of such ladies? Yet I must confess that I have often wondered how contented many are who *ought*, judging from my own feelings, to be unhappy. They don't seem, as far as one can discover, to have the capacity of being very happy or very unhappy. They jog along; some satisfied if they can only feed their children with bread and butter; and others, if they can feed their vanity with silks and satins. I presume each person, unless when grossly deceived or consciously deceiving, really gets what he or she seeks, and is consequently more contented than *we* should have anticipated. But I am discoursing about marriage in general, and forgetting you, my love. Well, dear, this affair is a trial, a severe one to you, and requires God's grace, as well as common sense, to enable you to act rightly;—for, after all, to know the right and follow it is the only difficulty, and not anticipated consequences. I notice what you say about the strong wishes of your father and mother. A solemn thought verily! Yet we must follow Christ *always*, not father nor mother, and in following what is *right* we follow him. But, oh! let us have a care lest we mistake our own shadow for the Saviour, or our own self-will for self-sacrifice. This advice I do give:—never marry a man whom you do not thoroughly respect, and therefore do not truly love. Money, or the means of support, is of course a most important consideration, which none but fools will despise. But I fancy no man whom you could respect would be so selfish as to induce you to share your deepest affections with him first, knowing that you must share *penury* with him afterwards. Yet it is a great struggle to sacrifice one's feelings to principle! Were I by your side, I might possibly convince you that I am not writing to you as one who, though *an old maid*, has been ignorant of such struggles. But dare I whisper one little suspicion? If I am wrong, don't scold me. *I don't think you are in love!* There, now! If my suspicion is well founded, my long letter is unnecessary, and if not, perhaps my letter is in vain!'

Miss Duncombe added a postscript, of course, to her letter. 'You told me nothing about Floxy?' I had a letter from her, rather mysterious, but expressing great unhappiness about some rustic beauty, for whom she has contracted an enthusiastic affection, but who had disappeared for a time. I often tremble for Floxy's wild impetuous nature. But she has noble elements of character, if these were only more under control. My dear old mother used to apply to her the tinker's proverb, saying that she would either "make a spoon or spoil a horn." I regret now that I was tempted by her great cleverness to *teach* her so much and to *educate* her so little. I ought to have given her fewer books, or, at all events, I should have *trained* and disciplined her more to occupy the humble sphere for which she is apparently destined by her circumstances. She seems determined to leave Ardmore, come what may, and wishes to come to me or you. But I don't know why; tell me about her. Why is she so unhappy?'

Shortly after Kate received this letter a dinner-party had been summoned to meet at the Glen, in honour of Captain M'Dougal. Few provincial towns could assemble better society round a dinner-table than the busy little merchant-town of Greenock; and the *élite* of its shipowners and West India merchants were to be present on this occasion.

There was a tacit understanding among the guests as to the position held by the Captain in Cairney's family. He was recognised as Kate's 'intended;' and Mrs. Campbell accordingly received, with serene satisfaction, the confidential congratulations of the old ladies, who smiled and nodded, and whispered and smiled again, as they sipped their tea beside her on the sofa, in the drawing-room after dinner. No one, somehow, presumed to congratulate Kate, who had a singular power of being retired and dignified, without being in the least degree haughty or rude.

The Captain acted his part with marvellous propriety and tact. Never did his clothes fit him more perfectly; never did his teeth shine with greater whiteness; never did a more constant smile of quiet power and self-satisfaction rest on his features. He hung over Kate at the piano, turning the leaves of her music while she played or sang, and ever and anon looked into her face with some approving or admiring sentiment, such as no lady could be displeased with. 'Young Ardmore' was at once cordially accepted into the very bosom of all the connexions and friends of the family.

But any one at that party, who possessed the power of discernment, would have failed to discover, in spite of Kate's frank manner and kindness to the Captain, that indescribable *something* which pervades the look and the whole manner of one in love, and which the most watchful self-consciousness cannot conceal.

Now that same night was destined, according to Mrs. Campbell's plans, to see her daughter's fate sealed for life. Her complicated arrangements had been, day after day, slowly but surely driving her daughter and Ardmore into a corner, where they must meet alone, face to face, and 'yes' or 'no' be uttered by Kate. Either word is speedily uttered, but its consequences are not so speedily ended!

Kate had made every attempt to escape from this position. She had craved delay; and, indeed, was under the impression that delay had been granted, and that Duncan was to return home for the present just as he was, with hope or no hope as he himself pleased to indulge in either emotion. But her mother, fearing the effects of such cold procrastination, anxious to bring matters to a close, and believing that the presence of favourable circumstances was all that was necessary to secure a satisfactory result, had at last taken upon her to inform the Captain that after the party was broken up she would manage to give him and Kate a quiet and undisturbed interview in the drawing-room.

As the time drew near, and carriage after carriage drove off, Duncan, full of excitement, resolved to take a quiet walk in the shrubbery, and thus afford Mrs. Campbell an opportunity of spreading her nets and completing her plans. Old Cairney had to be consulted, in order to get him quietly to bed with his rum punch, and this necessarily took up some time.

As the Captain paced alone at a little distance from the house, under the shade of the laurels, where his cigar, glowing like a fire-fly, marked the spot he occupied, he saw the figure of a woman with hurried step advance to the door and ring the bell, and after a minute or so pass within. The said woman had asked if Miss Campbell was disengaged. The servant, lifting up the light, and seeing the face and dress of one whom she never doubted to be a lady, replied,—

'Yes, Miss Campbell is disengaged, but'—

'I know it is an untimely hour. I have most important business, however, with her. Tell her—but it is all your place is worth, my girl, if you tell any one else!—tell her that Miss Floxy wishes to see her *immediately*.'

'Miss who?'

'Floxy.'

But this conversation did not reach the ears of the meditative Captain, although it had more to do with him than he suspected.

The servant disappeared, but quickly returned, requesting her unknown and mysterious caller to 'come up.' As Floxy ascended the staircase, Mrs. Campbell was coming down. They both stopped, and gazed into each other's faces. Mrs. Campbell, with an expression of mingled fear, wonder, and curiosity, at the unexpected apparition, asked, 'Who is this? It cannot be!'

'Shillabeer from Ardmore,' said Floxy.

'Shillabeer!' exclaimed Mrs. Campbell, stretching out her hand to welcome her, 'in the name of wonder, what puts you here at this time of night?'

'Important business,' said Floxy drily.

'Any one ill? Any one dead? Come up stairs. What, what is it?' continued Mrs. Campbell, as she returned towards the drawing-room.

Kate was at her bedroom door, and running to Floxy, warmly greeted her, asking similar questions.

'Miss Campbell,' she replied, in a suppressed tone of voice, 'as I have met your mother, I shall speak to her alone; but don't be alarmed; Miss M'Dougal and her mother are both quite well. You will know why I am here before I leave to-night.'

Mrs. Campbell led Floxy into the drawing-room, shut the door, sat down on the sofa, motioned Floxy to be seated opposite to her on a chair, and asked, 'What *can* it be?'

'Mrs. Campbell,' said Floxy, after composing herself, yet speaking with a trembling voice, 'I owe all I possess, and all I am, to your daughter, and Miss Duncombe. I wish to return some portion of the debt of gratitude which I owe to Miss Campbell. Nothing but an overwhelming sense of duty could bring me here to-night.'

'In heaven's name, what is it? Out with it!' said Mrs. Campbell impatiently.

'I understand, ma'am,' continued Floxy, 'that you intend giving your daughter in marriage to Captain M'Dougal.'

A pause.

'Go on; go on, pray,' said Mrs. Campbell, waving her hand impatiently.

'Presuming it to be so,' continued Floxy, 'I have come to say that he is a wicked wretch.'

Mrs. Campbell looked at Floxy as on one insane, and quietly asked, 'What *do* you mean, woman? Have a care what you say!'

'I mean what I say. Listen only to my sad errand, and you will not be astonished at my having used such language to describe that man.' And Floxy, with an awful impressiveness, told the story of Morag, more fully than it is recorded in these pages. As she proceeded, Mrs. Campbell, to her amazement, became more and more composed; and when Floxy ended with a vehement burst, saying, '*That* is the man to whom, ma'am, in your ignorance, but in your ignorance only, you would have consigned for life the happiness of your beautiful and noble girl!'

Mrs. Campbell, loosing her cap-strings, and throwing them over her shoulder with nervous energy, replied, with suppressed wrath, ''Pon my word! really, Shillabeer, you have taken a great deal upon you to come here on such an errand! *You*, forsooth! I wonder what servant girls will come to! This is a high farce, indeed! Pray what right have *you* to know what gentlemen do? What right have you, indeed, to meddle with any business that does not belong to you? Not but that I may regret, as far as that girl—what's her name?—who died is concerned'—

'For heaven's sake,' said Floxy, her face flushed and her eyes flashing, 'don't disgust me, Mrs. Campbell!'

'*You!* disgust *you!* Are you mad? *I* disgust *you!*'

'Not *me*, but rather that woman's nature, Mrs. Campbell, common to us both,' said Floxy, unmoved. 'Heavens! would you bury your daughter—that sweet, dear girl—in such a sepulchre of rottenness and dead men's bones? *You*, a woman! a lady! a Christian wife and mother! You cannot; I know you cannot! Let your heart speak, and you *dare* not!'

'Go out of the house instantly!' said Mrs. Campbell, rising, in wrath, and ringing the bell violently.

But at that moment Kate entered the room in evident confusion and perplexity.

'I can stand this mystery and noise of words no longer,' she said; 'what *is* it, Floxy? I command you to tell me!'

Poor Floxy rushed across the room, and, throwing herself upon her, burst into convulsive sobbing. 'Oh, dear friend,' she cried, 'best of friends—noble, good soul, pity me; forgive me; I cannot help it; it was laid on me.'

'Be calm, Floxy; what—what is it?'

'Ask your mother,' replied Floxy; then she added in a calmer and even stern voice: 'But before the Pure and Holy One who made us, I conjure you, whom I love as my own soul, never marry that man M'Dougal! He is vile!' she added, as if grinding her teeth; 'he is vile; and by his lies, his arts, his devilry, he has murdered Morag!' And Floxy rushing past Kate, hurried down stairs, meeting the servant who was hurrying up, and departed, shutting the door behind her.

She immediately encountered M'Dougal. Her first inclination was to fly anywhere, if only to escape out of his sight. But they met: and as she stood before him her feet did not seem to touch the earth on which they trod.

'Hollo!' he shouted, coming close up to her, 'who the doose are you?'

'Floxy,' was the only reply. She immediately added, 'Captain M'Dougal, Morag is dead!'

'Morag is dead? Well, Miss Shillabeer, is that all you have to say? What under heaven puts you here just now, and at this hour of the night? Is there anything wrong at Ardmore?'

'Morag is dead!' she repeated in a hollow voice, as if something was choking her.

'Now look here, my fine woman,' said M'Dougal, speaking low but fierce. 'I see what *you* are after; I have long suspected you as a vile spy. You think yourself mighty clever, but perhaps you have got your match in me. You insolent, proud jade! how dare you come here with all your infernal gossip? Little would make me'—

'Back, sir!' said Floxy, 'you know how heartily I have ever despised you; and how *I* understand your character. You know full well how I unravelled and defeated all your cunning and cursed plots against myself; and how I always abhorred you. But never did I abhor you as I do now!' And she seemed, as she spoke, to tower up before M'Dougal's eye in the dim light. 'You are a villain and a murderer! The curse of the childless is on you! and though I could not save one victim from your fangs, I hope I have saved another from your foul embrace. Yonder girl,' she added, pointing to the upper window, 'shall never be thine, as sure as a God of justice and love reigns!'

M'Dougal, hoarse with passion, again attempted to interrupt her with a wild oath.

'Silence!' she said, 'you *shall* hear me! With her last breath the murdered girl forgave you; with her last breath she prayed for you; and with her last breath she commanded you to repent, and to prepare to meet her before the judgment seat of God! I leave with you her only legacy!'

Before M'Dougal could reply, and while the front door was opened, and his name called, almost shouted, from the drawing-room window by Mrs. Campbell, Floxy had vanished out of the little gate into the public road, and from the echo of her steps she seemed to run from the house.

That midnight the cry was heard in many a dwelling throughout the town, and next morning it was reported, with under breath, and anxious look, from home to home—*the cholera has come!*

CHAPTER IX.

CHOLERA.

The news which Ned and his friend Dr. Morris heard, when they reached the Greenock quay, was all about the cholera. Those only who remember the first outbreak of that disease in this country can understand the mysterious awe and terror it so generally inspired. No small degree of moral courage was required to maintain a peaceful spirit amidst the general excitement produced by the daily intelligence of those who in the morning were in good health, and in the evening were dead. There was among all a sense of insecurity arising from utter ignorance, both as to the laws which regulated the transmission and the cure of the disease, which powerfully affected the imagination. The most exaggerated reports increased the fear, which often swelled into a panic. But never was there more devotion displayed by all classes in the discharge of their duties. I may here add that the ministers of religion were not behind the physicians in activity, putting to silence in every parish the false and ungenerous opinions, sometimes entertained by vulgar minds, of their unwillingness to visit cases of dangerous sickness. Wherever their services could avail, they were present with words of cheer and with labours of love.

M'Dougal, on his return from the Glen on the night, or rather morning, after his interview first with Floxy, and subsequently with Kate and her mother, had sat up drinking and smoking with Red Peter M'Donald until several of what Burns calls 'the sma' hours,' were numbered.

Peter had accompanied his friend from the Highlands, to fill up his vacant hours, to cater to his minor wants, and, as a confidential ally, to share his coarse dissipations.

As they sat alone in M'Dougal's lodgings, Peter's face became more fierce and red, when, with each additional glass of brandy, he heard from the Laird additional comments upon the exciting scene through which he had passed; and listened to his vows of vengeance, and curses loud and deep, heaped upon Floxy, mingled with contemptuous expressions regarding Kate, and bitter annoyance at the prospect of losing her person and her fortune.

'Leave that strapping wench Floxy to me; just leave her to me! I'll revenge you—that I will; take my word for it!' said Red Peter, with an inane laugh, which he intended to be very knowing ; and with a shake of his huge fist (a smoked ham it appeared), which he intended to be very threatening. But Peter had no defined plan or purpose of any kind in regard to Floxy, though capable of any vice short of punishable crime. He wished only on the present occasion to say something agreeable to his patron, preparatory to another glass. 'And as for the young lady—that is Miss Camill—she's yours, she's yours yet,' Peter went on to say, as he grasped his friend's hand, and proposed Kate's health about three in the morning. The proposal was received by the Captain with only a grave and bitter smile. 'But if not—hang her and her pride ! who cares ?' added Peter, as he assumed an attitude intended for dignity. 'I would think Ardmore may get the best in the market for the axing. There are, you know, as good fish in the sea as ever came oot of it.'

Ere the symposium broke up, Peter had reached a degree of boldness and affectionate confidence towards his superior, which enabled him to communicate a suspicion to the Captain which he had kept in his breast ever since it had been suggested to him by a Greenock shipmaster during a quiet gossip over a forenoon glass the previous day.

'By the by,' remarked Peter, as if he suddenly remembered some trifle too worthless almost to mention 'I heard a curious story yesterday from my friend

M'Kellar, who knows well what is going on in Greenock. He says that sailor fellow, I forget his name, one of Cairney's captains, him that we thocht was coorting the jade Floxy'—

'Fleming?' suggested M'Dougal.

'Ay, that's the name; M'Kellar says—he! he! he!—that he was casting his eye, in his impudence, on Miss Camill; and that he is far ben wi' the family—that's a good joke, isn't it?'

M'Dougal knit his brows; and if one might judge from his expression, he did not view this gossip of Peter's as a joke. He rose suddenly from his chair, and as suddenly fell back into it, and striking the table with his clenched hand, said,—

'I know the fellow! I remember him. Courting Kate: it is impossible! and yet—whew!'—and the Captain tried to perform a long whistle—'I smell a rat!' After a moment's silence, in which he blew a series of slow whiffs with his cigar, and emptied his tumbler, he bent over towards Peter, whose face, red as a glowing furnace, shone on M'Dougal's, dark as night. 'I have it, Peter! I would not wonder but the low-bred beggar, the vulgar snob, has some such intention, and that he has hired the waiting-maid for money; or,' he added with a leer, 'because she is his slave and fears him, d'ye see? he has terrified her or coaxed her to interfere with me. What say you to that, Peter?'

Peter thought more justice would be done to his opinion if he appeared to think before uttering it. Throwing himself back in his seat, he tried to assume a thoughtful expression, like a pig courting repose, and looking as steadily as possible at M'Dougal, said—'We shall challenge the blackguard and shoot him! That's my game.'

'Come to me early to-morrow morning—to-morrow morning early! you understand, Peter!' said M'Dougal, vowing vengeance, as he rose, shook hands with his friend, and wishing him a hurried good-night, staggered off to his bed.

Next morning new circumstances altered their plans. Peter was off by the steamer at ten o'clock, and M'Dougal was writhing in cholera.

But we must return to Ned and Curly.

No sooner had they entered Mrs. M'Kelvie's lodgings, where Ned always 'put up,' than the landlady, after expressing her delight in having him again in the house, especially when accompanied by a doctor, said, 'Miss Camill, that's auld Cairney's dochter, has been twice asking for you this very day, and has left a note.'

Ned eagerly seized it, and read these few lines —'Captain M'Dougal, Ardmore, has been seized with that fearful cholera. I send you his address. I hope Dr. Morris is with you, but whether he is or not, I beseech you to go and see him.

You told me that you had some experience of this dreadful disease, and I know *you* have no fear. For his sake, *for my sake*, go and help him without delay! He had a friend with him, a Mr. M'Donald, who left this morning under pretence of bringing Mrs. M'Dougal here, but I believe from cowardly fear. Go; and come, and tell me, as soon as possible, how he is. Your ship does not sail, papa tells me, till the day after to-morrow.—Yours ever, C. C.'

Ned put the note carefully into his pocket-book, and joining Morris in the little parlour, said to him, 'Curly, I have just received a note from *her*, and she tells me that M'Dougal, about whom I spoke to you, is ill with cholera, and asks you and me to visit him and help him. Come along then, old shipmate, and let us, by God's help, try what we can do to save *him* who, I believe, is dear to *her*.'

Morris looked at his friend for a moment with a most loving expression, as he replied, 'Let us go; I possess no cure, nor do I believe in any; but we shall help nature to battle with the enemy, and, if possible, to overcome it. It is much if we can only make him trust us, and believe that we can be of service to him. So speak hopefully to him. The mind has more to do with killing or curing, than is dreamt of in our philosophy.'

As they thus discussed what was indeed the question of the day, Mrs. M'Kelvie, after knocking at the door, entered and quietly said, 'Gentlemen, ye'll no tak offence, but this is a time when suddent death maks a' folk equal; and as yer young men, and I a widow woman, wi' my world's life in the grave, I jist wish to gie ye a word o' advice and comfort.'

They both rose, and insisted that their worthy landlady should take a seat and freely speak to them. 'Aweel,' she said, 'I have little to say, but that little is mickle. Haud a gude grip o' yer Faither's hand, for in thae times, and indeed at a' times, ye'll need it. Wi' thae twa han's I streekit my bonnie man John and my three bonnie bairns wi' fever in ae month, and was left wi'oot a friend or bawbee on yirth, but wi' a friend that sticks closer—tak my word for't, that's true—sticks closer than a brither; and here am I this day, that has never wanted meat in my house or music in my heart sin' syne. I can never mair suffer frae warldly loss as I hae dune, for ance a big hole is made in the heart, a' things pass through 't wi'oot tearing the puir flesh. But I ken noo, as I never used to do, that my Redeemer liveth; and my John and the bairns ken that too, and friendship wi' Him is better than life and gear wi'oot Him. I humbly ax yer pardon, gentlemen,' she said, rising and wiping a tear from her eye; 'but in the midst o' death we can be mair free than at other times, and I couldna but gie you the comfort our Faither in heaven has gi'en to mysel'. May He be wi' ye baith, and wi' us a' this nicht.'

They looked at each other, but, though they spoke not, yet they felt that they had received strength from her words.

Mrs. M'Kelvie, finding that her lodgers not only heard her with patience, but cordially assented to all she said, entered into general conversation with them, expressing, among other things, the hope that none of the family at the Glen were ill. Hearing that it was only an acquaintance of the family, a Captain M'Dougal—

'Eh! pity me!' exclaimed Mrs. M'Kelvie, 'that's him that is to be married to Miss Camill! Keep me, but that's awfu'—nae wunner the young leddy cam hersel' wi' the note! Little did I ken—wae's me!'

'Married to Miss Campbell?' said Morris, for Fleming moved not—'is that the case?'

'There's nae doot it's the case. It's the clash o' the hale toon; and a lass I'm weel acquant wi'—it's ane Jessie Macdonald, that's serving wi' Miss Shaw, the dressmaker—telt me that Mrs. Camill—that's Miss Camill's mither—no twa days syne, telt Miss Shaw a' aboot it; and that he was baith a braw Hielandman and a rich laird. And him ill wi' cholera! That beats a'. Puir chiel, to be the companion o' worms in the kirkyaird instead o' Miss Catherine Camill at the Glen! But gang awa, lads, and do your best to save him.'

These last words roused up Fleming from the strange dream with which her announcement had wrapt him. Yet tidings more or less authentic had been wafted to him from various quarters to the same effect. He had not met Floxy, though he found that a person answering her description had been inquiring for him. In the meantime his duty was clear, which was to help and succour Kate's intended—the poor sufferer from cholera.

The first thing Curly did was to see M'Dougal's medical attendant, and to offer his friendly services to him. These, after a few explanations, were cordially accepted.

'The case,' said Dr. Steven, 'is a very critical one. He is in great agony of body, and seems to be distressed in mind—I don't know why. But his expressions are sometimes dreadful. I greatly fear the reaction which is to follow—that horrid coma. But I leave him with confidence in your hands. After all, Morris, what can man do with the mysterious disease!' and Dr. Steven shrugged his shoulders and sighed.

This interview took place in a small parlour near M'Dougal's room. Dr. Steven said he would first introduce Dr. Morris as his friend, and then Fleming could be brought in when needed.

Poor M'Dougal was suffering too much pain to object to anything. But his face lighted up with a peculiar expression, full of wonder and alarm, as Ned was in due time introduced.

Ned stood beside his bed, and, taking hold of his trembling and clammy hand, said, in the kindest voice, 'I have come here at the earnest request of one whom you know and value, and who is in deep anxiety about you—Miss Campbell.' The Captain's chest heaved; as by an effort he opened his eyes wide, and dropped Fleming's hand. 'Having heard,' continued Ned, 'that I had seen much of this disease in India, she begged of me, for your sake, and for her own'—Fleming uttered these last words with marked emphasis—'to do everything which would help to restore you to health and to your friends; and we shall do it, and, by God's help, make you as well as ever;' and gently squeezing M'Dougal's hand, and arranging the pillow under his head, he sat down beside him. The few words which Ned spoke were intended to give strength to the sufferer, by reminding him, as delicately as possible, that his life was precious to another as well as to himself. His words seemed to have a soothing effect, for the sick man shut his eyes, and was quiet and silent for a few minutes, as if more peaceful. In so far as he could think of anything beyond his present sufferings, M'Dougal could not help feeling that he had misunderstood Fleming, and perhaps Kate. He was willing, however, to accept of the services so kindly offered, and to clutch at any additional straw which seemed to add to his chances of recovery.

It is unnecessary to narrate the history of that long night; how the sufferer snatched hope,—half his cure,—from their looks and words; how Ned with his powerful arms, and Morris with his ingenious contrivances, laboured all night; and how they cheered him amidst his agony of body and also of mind, for he thought his last hour was come, and, from half-uttered confessions, seemed to be in great fear.

Ned dropped a comforting note to Kate, assuring her that though it was a very bad case, there was no cause for despair, as Captain M'Dougal had a good constitution, etc. On the afternoon of the next day he had the satisfaction of pronouncing him to all appearance out of danger; but he promised that, agreeably to her request, he would see her in the evening, and report personally. That hour soon came when he must bid her farewell, and leave her her under another's care.

CHAPTER X.

AN UNEXPECTED TURN.

It is difficult to realize the feelings with which Ned anticipated his approaching interview with Kate. The 'William Pitt' was ready for sea. In a few hours he should again be pursuing his course across the waste of waters ; but the light which had so long shone upon him was then to be extinguished for ever, and the ideal being who had been with him, day and night, for years, was now to become the wife of a Highland laird. He had often resolved at all times to trust God, but a great crisis in his life had come, and could he trust Him now? Could he, as a child, resign himself into his Father's hands, and say, 'Be it as thou wilt?'

Such were the questions which, in a confused yet sufficiently practical form, suggested themselves to him. He had no desire to avoid them. But never was he so conscious of his weakness. Faith, he began to think, had been hitherto more a fancy than a reality to him, and in his inmost soul he felt that he could *not* submit to the loss of Kate,—that without her he would become heartless and reckless. Yet this feeling, in its turn, brought a sense of shame — of ingratitude — of moral turpitude, to his soul. Perplexed, pained, almost agonized, he left his lodgings without being able to impart his thoughts to Curly even, and wandered along the quays.

It was a lovely evening, deepening into night. Gleams of glory, and golden touches from the departed sun, lingered in the clouds that stretched in bars across the sombre Argyleshire hills. Soon the moon rose, and every mast and rope of the shipping stood out in relief against the clear sky. The sea beat with gentle ripple upon the pier. Voices and cries came from boats and ships in the harbour. The long past —his home, his parents, his early teaching, his schoolboy days, the 'John,' Jamaica, Tom Revel,—all, all came before him; yet how long had *she* mingled with all! His eye at last rested on the pole-star as on an old friend. It scintillated there as fixedly and calmly as when he had watched it during many an anxious and inquiring hour of his sea-life. Its very silence and unchangeableness amidst all the changes and noises in the weary life of man, came to him as a revelation of a living One beyond the stars. Why should he not trust Him who maintained the heavens in order and beauty, who was his Father, and who had been hitherto so bountiful to him? Why not let Him choose his portion? Was He not wiser and more loving than all? Was he not safe in His hands? Might not His kindness be shown in withholding as well as in giving? 'I shall trust Him!' cried Ned. 'Come what may, I will! Give or take, my God, as seemeth good to thee! But help me only to do that which *is right!*' Then fell a great weight off his heart, and a sense of strength and freedom possessed his soul. 'Now,' he said, 'Iam prepared for this moment of my life; if not, I feel assured that *He* will prepare me.'

He then proceeded to the Glen. 'Can Miss Campbell see Captain Fleming?' he asked the servant, and was informed that she was ordered by Miss Campbell to show him up immediately, giving time only to her father and mother to get out of the way, as they were terrified lest they should come into personal contact with one who had been attending cholera. Kate had no such fears.

The absence of the old people was an immense relief to Ned. How to see Kate alone had been a problem which was thus unexpectedly and satisfactorily solved. He was shown into the drawing-room, where he was soon joined by Kate, who, with peculiar cordiality, and with sundry ardent expressions of gratitude, received him, and heard from him a full account of M'Dougal's illness.

The candles were lighted, but the blinds were not yet permitted to conceal the lovely picture which was visible from the drawing-room window. The full moon lighted up a pathway of golden glory across the harbour, away towards the northern hills. Stately ships ever and anon slowly crossed the line of glittering splendour, as they were beginning their voyage to distant climes, or were returning from afar. The dark hills around Loch Long reared their outline, fantastic and wondrous, as if cut out by forked lightning in the cloudless sky, while a few bright stars, like watch-fires, burned along their summits. The whole scene was fitted to excite the fancy, and to intensify every tender emotion.

'I am so glad, so thankful,' said Kate, 'for his own sake, and for his mother and sister's sake, that the poor Captain has been spared. How much we all owe to you, Captain Ned, and to Dr. Morris!'

'No thanks, please,' replied Ned. 'He bore it, on the whole, wonderfully well. At first he was unhappy, but as his chances of recovery increased, so did his hopes rise. And now, for *your* sake, I rejoice to think he is out of danger.'

'Ned, *you* cannot know what good you have done by helping to preserve that life,' said Kate, with peculiar feeling.

What? Was Ned not aware that he was preserving the life of Kate's husband! He did not know that, forsooth!

After some further conversation on matters of less interest—for how often do we speak about trifles when the heart is full with what we cannot utter—the time came when he must leave. He had noticed an agitation of manner, a nervousness, a want of repose in Kate which he had never seen before. But poor M'Dougal's circumstances satisfactorily explained these unusual appearances.

But can Ned now say farewell for ever? He cannot yet. Give him a few minutes to compose himself. The internal struggle is not quite over. He more than once rose to depart; but sat down again.

'You sail to-morrow, Ned?' remarked Kate at last, with saddened voice.

'Yes, I do,' was the short reply.

Ned was still battling with some strong emotion, dreadful to him, though he was outwardly calm, and under firm self-control. At last he spoke without looking at Kate, but bent forward, and looking at the carpet, every figure and colour of which seemed to compel his attention.

'Kate,' he said, 'I am to sail to-morrow. We may never meet again.'

A pause.

'How well,' continued Ned, still studying the floor, while Kate sank back into a corner of the sofa, and covered the lower part of her face with her handkerchief, while she hardly breathed, 'how well I remember the first night I came to this house! I was entering life for the first time—a boy—inexperienced in the ways of the great world, never having loved before—I mean known,' stammered Ned, 'any one except my dear old father and mother. And you were so kind to me; I like to thank you for it, Kate; it made me happy; it did me good; I never could forget it.'

'We were indeed very happy then, Ned, but almost children,' remarked Kate; 'and I remember every hour of that time as if it were yesterday.'

'Do you really?' said Ned. 'I am glad you do. Here is a proof how well *I* remember it;' and with a blush on his face, and a hand that trembled, he produced an old red pocket-book (the same which contained the famous order of Nelson!) and out of one of its many recesses he exhumed what seemed to have been once a letter, written on white paper, but was now soiled and almost in tatters.

'Look at that!' said Ned, with a forced and awkward laugh. 'There is a note of yours.'

'A note of mine!' exclaimed Kate, as she received the dingy-looking document.

'A note of yours,' said Ned—and again he traced out the flowers of the Brussels carpet—'which I am sure you don't remember. Its contents will not interest *you* much, if, indeed, you can decipher them, for the note has been often handled during these long years. It is only an invitation to dinner, written by you at your father's request to me, *I* won't say how long ago, but it has been in my pocket ever since. Let that trifle prove to you what a clinging I have had in my rough sea-life to those early times of peace.'

Any one who had watched Kate at that moment, which Ned certainly did not, might have seen her bosom heave, and her eye glance as if she must say something very decided. But she only made one of those commonplace remarks which persons under strong feelings are, in certain circumstances, so apt to utter.

'How very odd!' was her most prosaic reply.

'To you, perhaps, it may seem very childish and absurd,' said Ned, without lifting up his eyes; 'but I could not help it.'

Then followed another pause, during which Ned rose and looked out over the sea, while Kate, motionless as a statue, covered her eyes with her handkerchief.

He thought he saw the 'William Pitt' among the distant shadows. In a few minutes he must leave this house, and in a few hours the harbour. He cared not, but for the sake of those who lived in the small cottage far away, if he never returned. A great weight lay on his heart. Come what may, will he now depart and say no more? What harm can a frank confession of his love do? It cannot grieve her to have been so loved, and it will be some comfort to himself for life to know that she knew it. Yet it seems unmanly, selfish, womanish. Bah! he will be calm and cool; laugh at all he has said; thank her civilly for her kindness; depart, and for life smother his passion. He has done his duty to M'Dougal, and proved his love. He can do no more now than make his bow and exit, and thus end the long drama which, during half his life, he has been playing in his own heart.

Some such thoughts as these were going hurry-scurry through Ned's mind during the brief seconds in which he was looking out on the sea, when suddenly he was recalled to the present by a soft voice coming to him from the sofa.

'Ned, dear, I hope I have not given you any pain?'

Ned started. Never had he heard Kate address him in more kind and familiar language. But he accepted it simply as an additional proof of her altered circumstances in relation to M'Dougal, which he supposed would enable her to speak more freely to him.

'Pain?' replied Ned, still gazing on the sea, 'you gave me the greatest happiness I have ever enjoyed in life.'

Another pause, during which Ned paced the darker portion of the room, as if uncertain whether to go or stay.

At last, rapidly turning towards Kate, and assuming mechanically his former attitude, he said, 'I hate this hypocrisy on my part. I must and shall say something to you, before we part, trusting to your good, kind heart for forgiveness, Kate. Never, never did I presume to tell you till now how for years I have loved you, or how I have locked you up in my heart from the first time I ever saw you. My love has been deep, sincere, respectful, devoted, as it is possible for any human being to love.'

'Kate,' he continued, with faltering voice, 'I beseech you, pardon my selfish intrusion. I only wished—. Oh! that I were a thousand miles away! Have I in my rude and rough ignorance insulted you? Pardon me, pity me, forgive me, and say farewell!' He rose and approached her. But she sat sobbing with her handkerchief pressed with both hands to her eyes.

'O Ned, dear, don't break my heart, I only am to blame.'

'You are not to blame in anything, Kate. I expected nothing, asked nothing, and hoped for nothing,' replied Ned; adding, 'this is cruel, unmanly of me, thus to pain you! yet I thank you for the comfort you have permitted me to have, in getting my heart out once and for ever. Give me your hand, Kate!' and he took hers, 'I know you won't forget me; and if you ever wish one friend on earth who will stand by you and yours, in fair or foul, through life and in death—. But I cannot trust myself to say more; your own heart must speak for me.'

'Now, farewell,' said Ned, with calm voice, although his heart was breaking. Farewell — once more, farewell! God bless you and *him!* May he prove worthy of you! Farewell, my first, my last, my only love.' And, kissing her hand with fervour, he turned away to leave the room.

'If you allude to Captain M'Dougal,' said Kate, still with covered eyes, 'I am not to be married to him, never!'

Ned stood motionless as a statue; astonished, and silent, from contending and overwhelming feelings. Not a word was spoken for a minute on either side.

'Oh, Ned dear,' said Kate, without moving, 'it has been a terrible time for me. I cannot speak to you about it. Floxy is in town, ask her. My heart is almost broken. But whatever you hear from others, you hear now from me — that never, never, shall I marry that man!'

Ned walked towards the sofa, and, kneeling down, seized Kate's hand with a strong grasp, while he hid his sunburnt face, now suffused with manly tears, in the folds of the shawl which hung from her shoulders. What he said I know not, but Kate bent towards him, threw her arms round his neck, murmured some words in his ear, and he knew that she was his for ever!

CHAPTER XI.

ENTERING HARBOUR IN A STORM.

'I am to understand, then,' says the reader, 'that, like all novels, the story now ends with the marriage of Kate and Ned, and that they lived long and happy, etc.' Good reader, you assume without any proof, as far as I know, that this is 'a novel;' and you further assume that it must have a certain end? Why so? If I presumed to write so ambitious, and, in the opinion of not a few, so doubtful a production as 'a novel,' the probability is, that I, who am utterly unfit for such an artistic work, would, if attempting mere fiction, depict human life on paper such as those who, like myself, walk along in the jog-trot of every-day life, never see it to be in fact.

I acknowledge that according to all the rules of novel-writing, Ned should now be married, as the Americans say, 'right off,' amidst music and sunshine. But the fact was otherwise. Nor need we be surprised at this.

For, to write seriously when the thoughts are serious, human life is an *education*, a training up from right beliefs to right habits, and from right habits to right beliefs, and that by discipline administered in manifold wisdom by a living Person, ever varied and readjusted by Him to meet the changing circumstances of men, both without and within. And therefore just in proportion to the conscious subjection of any person to this discipline, and his willingness to be taught, may the lesson given him be more trying to flesh and blood, more 'mysterious,' as the phrase is, than that which is given to another who 'sets at nought all the counsel,' and 'will have none of the reproof,' and who consequently is permitted most righteously to 'eat of his own ways, and to be filled with his own devices.' The fact, therefore, need not seem strange to us, that noble and beautiful characters, whose personal and family life are so harmonious with the good and true, should often be subjected to trials and sufferings from which the heartless and selfish are exempted. Teaching is vain where there is no disposition to be taught. Gold, not clay, is purified by fire. On the other hand, there are apparent losses which are real gains; painful amputations which secure health; and a more liberal bestowal of good in a higher form, by the taking away of a good in a lower form. Men crave for happiness from what 'happens;' but God promises peace, happen what may, and bestows it often through unhappiness, so that in the midst of sorrowing there is rejoicing. To be made possessors, moreover, of the passive virtues —of patience, meekness, faith, and the like—through the knowledge of a Father, is our most glorious possession, by whatever labour or suffering it can be obtained. Besides, trial becomes the means of making manifest our faith and love for the good of others, as well as of strengthening these graces to bless ourselves. And, therefore, I do not wonder that Ned and Kate were soon called to endure trial.

But I must tell the rest of my story as briefly as possible.

Ned sailed immediately after his engagement with Kate. Never had he such a peculiar voyage. The winds seemed to baffle his return to port, although his old logs recorded as many days of strong and adverse storms in other voyages. The weeks appeared longer than they used to do. He thought the 'William Pitt' had lost her sailing powers. Would she never reach Greenock? But in spite of all this he never was so happy; never did he and the crew get on better; never did they acknowledge more gratefully in the forecastle the kindness and consideration of the Captain. There was a life and heart in his meetings with them during divine service on board, which kept, as they said, 'all hands alive.' The boys were taught daily by him to read and write, and, from his patience towards them, they made rapid progress.

Masters had retired from the sea, and his new boatswain, our old friend Buckie,—who had lately joined the ship, after having been long sailing out of London in the East India trade,—seemed devoted to Captain Fleming, whom he boasted of having known since boyhood, and who was always declared by him to be 'the tip-topest, as a man and seaman, he had ever knowed.' Buckie, the old foe, had become long ago attached to Ned, who, having been the means of humanizing the boy, was now rewarded by having the man under his command, as a first-rate, steady, brave sailor, and a most reliable link between Captain and crew.

After Ned's return he was suddenly cast into greater depths of sorrow than he had ever before endured. He had not been as yet received at the Glen by Mrs. Campbell. Cairney had held out to him his parental hand with unreserved goodwill; and often told some of his old friends, in confidence, 'that Fleming was a gentleman born, a gentleman bred, the son of an officer of whom his country might be proud; that M'Dougal was too much of a puppy for his taste, though he never liked to say so; that he preferred an honest seaman to him; that the lassie, his daughter, liked him, and could judge for herself, but that Mrs. Campbell, who had her own feelings, was too proud to give in.' Cairney had written approving of the match to the old Captain, but Mrs. Campbell had never acknowledged the letter which, in her warm affection, Mrs. Fleming had written to her. In these uncomfortable circumstances it would be difficult for Ned to have frequent and easy intercourse with Kate. But when the 'William Pitt' entered harbour, Cairney, with a really loving wish to please his daughter, and with a less becoming wish perhaps to tease his wife, or to show his own independence, went one morning into Kate's room, saying, 'Look here, lassie,' and he winked to her, the wink accompanied by a smile, made up of affection and fun, 'if you are very good to your old dad, I will give you a treat to-day.'

'No bribe is required to make me good to you, dear father!' said Kate, fondling the old man, to whom she clung with almost a new affection from his kindness to her during her late isolation and domestic trials.

Cairney taking her pretty chin between his finger and thumb, and bringing his large face close to hers, like a full moon looking into a clear fountain, said, 'What think you, Kitty, of coming to my office to-day and shaking hands with an old friend of mine, the Captain of the "William Pitt?"'

Kate's face flushed into scarlet; the fountain was full of light, and her heart throbbed like water bubbling from it. Throwing her arms about her father's neck, and concealing her confusion, she murmured in his ear, 'Thank God for your goodness, and that you are not cold to me! Never, never, can I forget it!'

Cairney got soft about the eyes—an unusual event, which made him feel ashamed. So, with a short cough and chuckling laugh, he said, 'Come to the office at two o'clock, my bonnie bairn.'

What were Ned's thoughts and feelings when he met those two friends so unexpectedly in the office; and when Cairney left him and Kate alone to talk over whatever they pleased!

It was arranged by Cairney that they should visit the ship. They did so, and when Ned saw Kate in the cabin, the reality hardly seemed more a presence to him than the dream of past years.

When they both appeared on the quarter-deck, Kate was gazing up at the rigging, in which the men were busy making all fast. Strange to say, she had only been once before on board of a ship.

'I hope, Ned, that *you* never go up those dizzy masts, or out to the end of those yards in a storm,' remarked Kate with a playful smile.

Ned, laughing at her ignorance of sea life, replied, 'Of course I do. What! do you forget the scene with poor Tom Revel? The fact is that I must go up now, as I have to give some orders about a top-mast we sprung. I see they are bungling it, as the mate has gone on shore, and the boatswain is working in the hold.'

'I beseech you!' interposed Kate, more seriously, 'don't begin to climb in my presence—now Ned—I shall get sick and dizzy looking at you.'

'Ha! ha! ha! what would the "Pitt" come to if you were always on board! I must go, Kate, but pray keep your eye on the compass, on the shore, or on the deck, or on,' he whispered, 'your new ring, till I come in a few seconds, for I see I must go aloft.'

Kate accompanied him into the waist of the ship, where, getting confused with the bustle on board, she sat down until Ned could join her. In a few minutes, amidst a cry of alarm from the decks and from the sailors aloft, a body fell with terrible crash on the deck, rebounded, and rolled past her. A sailor, who was not killed however, had fallen from the yards. The conviction seized Kate's excited imagination that it was Ned, and with a loud scream she fell prostrate on the deck. In a moment Ned and her father, who both had witnessed the scene, were at her side, and lifted up her apparently lifeless form.

I shall not pain my readers by attempting to describe the occurrences of the weeks that followed—how she awoke from her swoon, but, oh, horrors! with a mind that seemed lost for ever; how the shock caused the delirium of a brain fever, and life and reason reeled, and for many a day, the horrible alternatives were presented of death, with all its desolation, or of life with lunacy.

I remember only one picture described by Curly, who, from love to Ned, had come to Greenock to attend Kate. 'Never,' he said, 'in my whole practice did I behold a spectacle more touching than on a stormy night when her danger had reached a climax, she seized Ned's rough hand, and prayed fervently for his return from sea! I shall never forget the sight of those two faces.'

Ned never shed a tear. From the first moment he raised her up, his calmness was terrible to look on, and singularly affecting from the tenderness of his manner. Not an expression of alarm or grief escaped his lips. His wound was too deep for that. Every thought seemed to be occupied about others. He only asked, in low and humble tones, to be permitted to sleep at the Glen, in order, as much as possible, to watch beside her whom he called his own. Some of the servants alleged that the bed in his own room was never disturbed, and that if he slept, it must have been in his chair or on the floor. The first time he gave way to tears was one night when in his room alone, and sitting beside the fire, Curly crept in, and embracing him, said, 'Dear old Ned, I have now, for the first time, great hopes, I am thankful to say, of ultimate, and, perhaps, of speedy recovery, thank God!'

Kate recovered slowly but surely, until, at last, on an evening ever remembered in the family, she was laid on the sofa in the drawing-room, and Ned sat beside her, as he once had done on another night memorable in their lives. And then, as weeks passed —for I need not say the 'William Pitt' found another commander for her next voyage—and the old hues of health returned, with strength and beauty, more than one person who had stood around that sick-bed, felt that the God of love and peace had been with them, imparting to them all, in His own marvellous way, lessons of love, forbearance, gentleness, and forgiveness,—lessons which could not have been taught by a milder discipline.

This affliction had been the means of producing a great change in Mrs. Campbell. She never had come before into close heart-contact with sorrow. But that sick-room by day and night; the looks and the sufferings of her daughter, with her own alternations of hope and fear, had drawn forth the best part of her nature, which, like some soil shaded by circumstances from sun and rain, had hitherto remained hard, dry, and unproductive. Affliction prepared it to receive seed that promised to spring up into life everlasting. As remarkable effects had been produced in her feelings towards others. Kate, in her delirium, had cried passionately for Floxy, and nothing but some such demand, coming from a daughter when at the gates of death, could have induced her mother to admit Floxy to her presence. The old lady's heart was softened and won when she saw the unwearied, unselfish devotion of the girl, how she accepted of every work laid upon her, and ministered so gently, so lovingly to her benefactress, and was ever so considerate, kind, and obedient to Mrs. Campbell, even expressing her deep regret, if in love to Kate, she had so far forgot herself as to have appeared disrespectful on a certain occasion. And Ned? The old Achnabeg blood proved to be in Mrs. Campbell's case 'thicker than water,' and began to warm her heart to her cousin. His sweet temper, his calm, deep grief, his pleading looks for her sympathy, all helped, in spite of her pride, to bind her to him. To these influences for good, we must add one which told in the same direction, but more from the bad side of her nature. Impertinent, almost abusive, letters were written, before Kate's accident, by the M'Dougals to herself and Kate, and even to old Cairney, while only one tolerably kind note had been received from Jane since it occurred, but without any apology for the past. Yet why should we be so unjust as to stereotype human character as if it could not be changed and improved? Why should we in our own vanity and pride assume that, though *we* can become better, other people must always remain the same? There is one to whom all souls are dear, whose love, in its patience, is incomprehensible, and who can soften and subdue the old as well as the young, and refresh with his dew the aged thorn as well as the blade of grass. So had it been through this sorrow with Mrs. Campbell. But whether Ardmore House had become less selfish I know not.

Other blessings were bestowed through that sick-bed. Cairney became a better and wiser man. He never thought, he said, so much before of practical Christianity. His opinions of its ministers, too, were raised since Mr. M'Kinlay had attended Kate. Cairney began to think that, after all, some of them at least believed what they preached, and that religion was not a mere respectability and propriety, nor a thing necessary chiefly to keep the masses in order. The gospel he discovered had to do with himself, and was full of direction, strength, comfort, peace, for him and his.

But to Kate and Ned themselves, who were more immediately visited by this sorrow, its effects were indeed twice blessed. Ned received his betrothed as from the grave, and as a gift again bestowed by God. He felt that he required this baptism of fire. His life on the whole had been hitherto one of great evenness. The highest summit of his ambition had, at last, been reached ; and the greatest treasure earth could give to him had been obtained. And now he acknowledged how good it was for him to have been afflicted ! If a cloud had covered his sun, it but enabled him the better to look up to the sky. He was taught the lesson of lessons more deeply, that 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,' whatever these things may be ; and that his 'life,' as a true and an eternal life, must necessarily be the knowledge and love of that eternal God of love, who was found to be all-sufficient in the hour of greatest need. His faith having thus been tried, had come forth as gold. But his love for Kate became only more deep and real, because more in harmony with the truth of things. They were both brought nearer to God, and therefore nearer to one another. For this sickness had also produced in Kate's inner life results, if possible, still more marked. It did not lessen her joy, but only changed its character. It cast a sober colouring over all things, and helped to produce a chastened, holy feeling, as if she had been out of the world, and returned after having seen heavenly realities. The old forms of thought became instinct with spiritual life ; old truths more full of truth ; while old duties grew into new privileges. She and Ned had also been made to appreciate more keenly than ever the love that shone in other human hearts, and of which they had received such touching proofs in many self-denying labours, when, during those weeks of intense anxiety, friends and acquaintances so tenderly carried their burden. Without this blessed experience their own mutual love might have ended in subtile selfishness. The wall which shut themselves in as sufficient for each other, might soon have shut their neighbours out. But as it happened, love overturned the wall of self, and never let it be built again ; and so during life their greatest riches were gathered by giving even as they had received.

CHAPTER XII.

THE END.

WHILE recording all these changes in Ned's history, not a word has been said about 'the old folks at home,' whose life was bound up in his. We must therefore go back a long way in our story to the day in which the first intelligence of Ned's engagement to Kate was received at the cottage.

On that same memorable day, the old Captain had been reading the newspapers, while his wife was sewing on the opposite side of the lamp. He had diligently perused every column in silence, for it was dangerous to interrupt him while engaged in mastering the weekly despatch. But at length the constant rustling and frequent turning of its large pages, with the coughs which accompanied the operation, intimated to Mrs. Fleming that every item of intelligence had been gleaned, down to the prices of sugars and molasses. It was therefore now safe for her to break the silence, with a hope of being heard.

'Poor Neddy,' she began—

These words, at this moment especially, had power to make the Captain lay down the newspaper on his knee, and look over his large spectacles at Mrs. Fleming.

'Poor Neddy,' said Mrs. Fleming, 'will have commenced his voyage by this time.'

'I have carefully considered that point,' replied the Captain, 'and since six o'clock, have come to the conclusion that, as the wind has been blowing pretty stiff, both yesterday and to-day, up channel, the probability, if not certainty, is, that the "William Pitt" has not yet left her anchorage at the tail of the bank.' Then taking out his large watch, like a sun-dial, and looking at it steadily, he added, 'If my conjecture is right, we shall have a letter from him by this night's steamer; the puffer should be in by this time, unless indeed she is blown up, which I wonder has not happened to the smoking apparatus long before now. By the way, I will just step down to the quay, and, if the boat does not arrive soon, I shall get Freeman to bring us the letter.'

'Oh, Edward, dear, take care of your throat. Hap it well,' advised Mrs. Fleming.

'I have always told you, Mary, that my throat was seasoned half a century ago. You might as well talk of a speaking-trumpet getting a sore throat. But to please you I shall wrap a cravat round it.' This was always done indeed, by Babby, and, on every occasion, the process gave rise to the same series of jokes, on the part of the Captain, about the necessity of Babby getting a ladder in order to reach up to his 'figure-head.'

When the Captain returned from the steamer with the expected letter, all the plans concocted with Freeman between the pier and the cottage, as to the most striking manner of communicating to Mrs. Fleming the unexpected intelligence of Ned's engagement, which it contained, utterly broke down. His excitement was too obvious, his gladness too manifest in his laugh and looks, to attempt further concealment of the good news; more especially as Freeman, who accompanied him home, had revealed the secret to Babby in the kitchen, and both were standing laughing outside of the parlour door, anxious to share Mrs. Fleming's surprise and joy. That joy was very real. She was not given to many words, but possessed of many thoughts, and these, when they deeply stirred her, rose more in silence upwards, than spread in much utterance around. The soft-hearted old man gently clapped the shoulders of his wife, who, though her head was bent down, while her seam lay on her knee, was quiet and serene as a May morning. Interpreting her feelings by his own, he said, 'Mary, my love, don't be agitated ; be quiet and composed. We have every reason to be thankful.'

His wife looked up in his face, remarking, 'I am overpowered only by a sense of that goodness which has now blessed our dear boy, and crowned his and our lives.'

When Babby and Freeman heard the talk thus assume such a grave tone, they quietly shut the parlour door, which was not opened until Ned's letter was read by father and mother alone.

After this three poached eggs were ordered, Freeman was invited to remain to supper, and one of the Captain's only two bottles of wine drawn, from a sense of what was due to the great occasion.

'Mem,' said Babby, that same night to her mistress, 'this beats a', in my humble opinion, that ever happened in our day! Dinna tell me that Ned's lass is no a' that's gude ; that maun be, in coorse. Yon laddie wadna put on an auld, bad-coloured sark—for he was unco prood, in his ain way, ye ken—nor ever put on his claes wi'oot fechtin wi' them till a' the stoor was oot o' them ; and d'ye think, Mem, that he wad marry a woman that wasna bonnie, trig, and decent? I'll answer for't, no him!'

'But it's Miss Campbell, Babby, whom he is to marry!'

'Camill or no Camill,' said Babby, as if the fact interfered with her inferences, 'I ken whaever she is that she'll be a gude, sponsible woman, and fit to manage a house. And him and her, depend on't, will no be like idle lambs that dae naething but sook and wag their tails a' day. Na, na; they'll be usefu' in their generation. She'll be a weel brought-up woman, nae doubt, and fit to guide and help our bairn. For I can tell you, Mem, that my laddie was nane o' yer starved, puir, thin-skinned craturs, that didna care what they ate, or how they got it, like ane o' Paddie Murphie's thin pigs that gang grumph, grumphin' ower their dinner in their trough, and dinna heed what's under their snoots. My word! he was ower genteel for that! He was unco particular that his meals were set doon respectable and nice-like, as ye aye directed. He couldna bide thin parritch! I'se wager, his wife will wear like a horse-shoe—aye the langer the clearer; I hope sae, for, ye ken, it's better to be half-hanged than ill married. And d'ye think that *he* wad marry a fusionless taupy, wi' naething but curls and flounces and falderals, skelpin a' day on ane o' thae—what d'ye ca' them?—pin-a-forty or fifty instruments, for onything I care, but no fit to gie directions aboot cookin' a wee bit het dinner? Na, na! It's a' richt, ye'll fin', wi' my bonnie bairn. I'm no a bit feared for him. But mind ye, Mem, I dinna intend to sleep the nicht, just wi' joy, thinking about him; and,' she added, coming close up to Mrs. Fleming, whispering as if telling a secret, 'and praying for him, in my ain auld-fashioned way.'

The course of events made it necessary that the marriage-day should be fixed. This could not be done without knowing when the old Captain and his wife could come to Greenock, for come they must to take part in the ceremony. The Captain begged Ned, in the letter replying to the invitation, that, as a particular favour, since the marriage was to take place in October, it might be upon the 21st of that month, at four in the afternoon. There were important reasons for this proposal, which the Captain assured his son would afterwards, if necessary, be satisfactorily explained. Circumstances made the day suggested by the Captain convenient for all parties in Greenock.

Ned, with the cordial consent of his friends at the Glen, sent a loving letter of invitation to Freeman to 'be present at the launch.' The old man was elated by the compliment, and not less so was the Captain. Freeman at first pretended, that though it was 'just like the dear boy,' as he always called Ned, 'to remember him,' yet that it was 'not in his way to accept the invitation,' he was 'not accustomed to that sort of navigation,' 'he was better in a gale of wind than rigged out with bunting;' and he did not give his consent until assured by the Captain, that if, for no other reason than to keep himself and Mrs. Fleming company in the vile steamer, he must be one of the party. Freeman, who loved Ned as if he were a child of his own, thus finding his modest objections removed, immediately ordered a 'new rig,' in which navy buttons shone like stars in a cloudless sky of blue.

They both of course made their appearance on the appointed day; the Captain in his somewhat decayed but yet honourable uniform.

I do not attempt to describe the marriage. The reader must picture to himself the usual routine of such ceremonies; the whirl of equipages to the Glen; the announcement of couple after couple in gay attire, and full of smiles, as they glided into the drawing-room; the flutter, followed by the solemn silence, as the lovely bride—truly most lovely—was led into the room by Cairney, until the bridegroom, backed by Dr. Morris as 'best man,' and the bride, with her encircling bridesmaids, stood before Mr. M'Kinlay. These details are all to be found by the curious in an old Greenock newspaper. An account is also there given of the wondrous number of flags which decked the ships in harbour; of the firing of cannon which, under the direction of Buckie, blazed from the 'William Pitt,' and of the grand banquet, given at Cairney's expense, to the crew, who cheered lustily one part of the day, and feasted sumptuously further on in the evening. But the fact must not be omitted that the crew in a body marched to the Glen, and to the astonishment of the old shipmasters, presented Ned with a present—the last that sailors might be supposed to select, of a large Bible and Psalm-book, and Kate with a gold ring, ornamented by a heart and anchor. Buckie's speech on the occasion was 'short and appropriate,' as the newspapers say.

'Captain Fleming,' he said, 'this here Bible is from all hands—ain't it, my lads?' A general murmur and suppressed cheer served as an 'Amen,' and served also to give Buckie time to breathe. Shifting his tobacco in his mouth for a last effort, and looking at the Bible, and then at Ned, he said, with a smile, full of the memory of the olden time, 'I knows better than most how your honour liked it in the "John," as well as in the "Pitt," and we all likes it now, thanks to your honour! Here's the book. Long life! Give three cheers, lads.'

'Mind your eye about the ring,' said the crew, checking Buckie as his hat was beginning to move round his head. Buckie, confused, took the ring out of his pocket.

'It was stowed away under hatches!' he exclaimed —a general titter—'But here it is, and—Now, Captain Fleming,' continued Buckie, handing it to Ned, as he stuck his speech, '*you* must pay out, for I'm hove short! Long life, anyhow, to you and her! May your log-lines run out threescore and ten knots afore the glass is finished! Now, lads, for it!' and most lustily did the crew respond to the invitation.

The marriage ceremony must not be considered by any reader as wanting in solemnity and dignity, because it took place, according to the custom of Scotland, in a private house. I profoundly respect all ecclesiastical usages, whatever their form may be, which, from a sense of Christian propriety, early teaching, or old associations, are fitted to express or deepen in those who practise them, a truer Christian feeling. But let no one who is a stranger to our religious customs, do us the injustice of supposing that there is any want of solemnity or of reverence in a marriage which takes place before the 'Church in the house' only, when none are present but relations and old friends, each and all of whom have a peculiar interest in the union thus solemnized. To the Scotch Presbyterian there is no more sacred edifice than the walls which circumscribe his 'home.'

The joy of Ned and Kate was great, but not less so because sobered by their journey to this earthly paradise through the valley and *shadow* of death. To these trials the minister touchingly alluded in his prayer.

A little episode took place in an anteroom, immediately after the marriage, and before the bride and bridegroom, according to custom, departed on their marriage trip. Ned took his father and mother aside, to say a few words before entering this new period of his life. What he said when trying to express his sense of all he owed to them, and what those two most loving parents said in return, I will not repeat in public. But ere they parted, Ned produced an old pocket-book, out of which he took a small bit of paper, and said to his father,—

'Have I dishonoured *that?*' It was the signal order, with Nelson's signature, which Ned had received the night before he left home for the first time. The old man took the paper from his son's hand, and putting on his spectacles, looked at it.

'My dear Ned,' he replied, 'you could not have done my old heart more good than by letting me see his signature at this moment.' Then grasping his son's hand, went on to say, 'And you *have*—you *have*—my boy, done your duty! And now I will tell you why I asked you to be married to-day. On this day, Ned,' and as he spoke he lowered his voice, and coming close to his son, put his hand fondly on his shoulder,—'on this day, Ned,' was fought the glorious battle of Trafalgar! Now, my boy, think of that! and about this very hour,' and the Captain looked at his watch, 'twenty minutes to five, the immortal Nelson died. But before dying, he said, as an admiral, what you may also say, by God's grace, as a man, "I have done my duty!"' The Captain turned his back as if to depart. After recovering himself a little, he once more addressed Ned. 'This was one of my great battle-days, and it has been respected, indeed, and nobly kept. What a victory we have won! Freeman is as proud as I am. I won't see you again before you go; but I need not ask you and yours to visit us at the old cottage. I think,' continued the Captain in a grave tone of voice, 'that Babby will expect it.'

'We have both, father,' replied Ned, 'arranged to visit you as soon as we return from our little tour.'

Ned was then left for a minute alone with his mother; and the love of years was expressed in a few words between them.

The scene between old Cairney, his wife and daughter, in another room, was no less full of peace. Fewer words were perhaps spoken; but much true love was shown. As Mrs. Campbell hung round

Kate's neck ere she bade farewell, she said little; but that little was life to her daughter. 'Kate beloved, forget and forgive all the past; but let us never forget the mercy of God, who is better than us all.'

'Bless you, bless you, my own dear lassie,' said Cairney, putting £100 into Kate's hand, 'that's for your journey! Oh, come back to us soon!'

There were two other persons at that marriage who had also a few parting words to deliver. The one was Dr. Morris. As he shook his old friend by the hand, he said, 'My prophecy is fulfilled! I see the two ships sailing in sunshine!'

The other person was Floxy, who did not separate herself from the group of servants near the door. But her hands had dressed Kate for the marriage, and after it for the journey; and as bride and bridegroom were passing through the crowd in the lobby to the carriage, she whispered to Ned, 'The niece of Tom Revel blesses you both!'

When the carriage drove off, under showers of old shoes and slippers, the acknowledged witnesses on such occasions of bachelor days for ever over, then amidst the loud voices that loudly cheered the departure, Freeman's voice was still the loudest, as of old, above the storm.

In a few weeks the inmates of the small cottage received with joy their old son and their new daughter. I pass without comment the history of their reception by the Captain and his wife. But what an era that night was in the life of Babby! 'There she is!' said Ned, as he introduced his wife to her, shortly after their arrival. Babby seemed awe-struck by her beauty, and gazed in silence on both her visitors with eyes that orbed themselves beyond even their extraordinary limits when under the influence of strong emotion. She was dressed out in her Sunday clothes; no circumstance in her previous history, except her old master's marriage, having ever created such a revolution in her ordinary week-day attire. One object of this demonstration may have been to exhibit the new gown and cap, presented by those now before her, full of smiles and happiness. Presuming, at last, to take each by the hand, she said, with a solemnity unusual to her, 'The God o' yer fathers keep you, my braw bairns! If an auld body's prayers will do you nae guid, they canna do you harm, and ye hae mine frae the heart! May ye be like yer forbears; and I canna wish ye to be better than the twa ben the house.'

Now that the ice was thawed, Babby was herself again. 'Eh! I *was* glad,' she exclaimed, 'that ye wer'na married by Darymple! He routs in the poopit like a bull, and when the body's crackin' wi' ye, he cheeps, cheeps, like a chirted puddock.'

'A what?' asked Kate, overcome by laughter.

'A squeezed tade!' replied Babby. 'D'ye no ken yer ain langage? And as for his sermons, they're jist like a dog's tail, the langer the sma'er! But I maun haud my auld tongue, for, as ye ken, corbies and ministers are kittle shot. It's a' richt noo, howsomever, wi' ye baith. But ye dinna ken, my young leddy, what a stirrin' laddie yer gudeman was! It's *me* that kens him! for him and me were jist uncommon thick. Did he tell you hoo he lost my cat on the island langsyne? And hoo the cat loupit to me, and kent me; for she was an auld-farrant cratur, by-ordinar'? Did he tell you what a job I had to get hame? And what a fricht the laddie gied us a' wi' his rowing and sailing; for, oh, I never could bide the sea! But, my certes, he has brought hame a braw cargo wi' him at last! And, eh! pity me, did he tell you about the nicht—ha! ha! ha!—sirs a day! when he purtended he was daft Jock? But I mauna pit *him* in mind o' his auld joking ways. He maun be douce noo. But I'm real prood he has gotten ane that will look after his sarks and claes; for he was a terrible cratur for reiving them at his play. But,' in a lower voice, 'there's the auld Captain crying for ye to gang ben! Gang awa fast, gang ben, and I'll pit off my braw gown, and get the tea ready. Oh, blessings on ye! blessings on ye! there's no sic a couple in the hale shire.'

With many kind words from Kate, and a few from Ned, that stirred up old memories, and threatened to call forth another speech from Babby, they retreated to the parlour; and that evening the cottage seemed crowned with joy and blessing. Never did fuller hearts than theirs bow together before a family altar! As Mrs. Fleming bade good-night to Ned, she whispered in his ear, 'We have lived to see the *end* of the Lord, that he is very pitiful and of tender mercy! *Blessed are all they who put their trust in Him.* That, my love, is the secret which explains your life.'

There remains for me but to record very briefly some of the events of later years.

Time passed and Cairney died, and was followed two years afterwards by his wife. The property, which was large both in money and in shipping, was inherited by his daughter and Ned, who retired from the sea, and became a partner in a large shipping-house in Liverpool, where he went to reside, and where his name became familiar as a modest, active, and generous friend of sailors, in whatever could advance their temporal or spiritual good.

Our readers will be prepared to hear that Jane and Colin have long reigned at Duncaple over a numerous household. Family distresses in the loss of two of her children by scarlet fever, opened up a correspondence with Kate, which restored their old friendship ; but they rarely met.

What became of Curly and Floxy? A full reply to this question would involve a long story. But the reader, if he wishes to know the end thereof, must inquire at a most comfortable mansion in a flourishing suburb of Liverpool, to which any one will direct him if he asks for the house of Dr. Morris. There is not a suffering family in the district who will not speak the praises of him and of his wife. Should an old bed-ridden sailor be among them, his eye will grow brighter as he mentions the name of Mrs. Morris.

From the day on which Floxy left Ardmore, no communication had taken place between her and its inhabitants. But when that episode in her life began to live in her memory like a dream, she received a letter from the Doctor, whom she had met at Morag's death-bed, and who was an old college friend of her husband's, enclosing a Scotch ballad, that came to her like thistle-down, wafted by the breeze from the Highland glen, vividly recalling the scene in which it had grown. The author of the ballad was a young Scotch shepherd, who had formed a passionate admiration for Morag, which, however, he never had an opportunity of expressing, until his hopes, and with them his health, had been destroyed by what had befallen her.

'I never knew a finer lad,' wrote the doctor, 'than Willie Scott. He was one of many tender souls who "never told their love," but kept it in their heart until it became a morbid possession. It seemed such a relief to him to speak to me in his last days about Morag. In his own simple language he said, "Oh, sir, I canna tell you what that lassie was to me. I saw her in the lambs; I saw her in the light amang the heather; I heard her step in the breeze, her voice in the lintie and laverock. She was never mine, but I was hers. I was clean daft aboot her, for I never saw her neebour in this world. But I hope to meet her in the next. That man—God forgie him!—has killed us baith." Scott gave me the song I send you, which he composed to the old Scotch air we all know so well, "Blythe, blythe, and merry was she." I believe "May" is the Scotch name for Morag or Marion. I thought you would like to have this memento of the past; and that my friend, Morris, who I know is a bit of a poet himself, might be pleased with the ballad. Poor Willie Scott! Alas! how many are the sad results of evil! It is easy to fire off the cannon-ball; but when it flies on its course who can arrest or recal it; and who can tell the numbers it may kill!'

The ballad was as follows:—

My little May was like a lintie
  Glintin' 'mang the flowers o' spring;
Like a lintie she was cantie,
  Like a lintie she could sing;—
Singing milking in the gloamin,
  Singing herding in the morn,
Singing 'mang the brackens roaming,
  Singing shearing yellow corn!
    O the bonnie dell and dingle,
      O the bonnie flow'ring glen,
    O the bonnie bleezin' ingle,
      O the bonnie but and ben!

Ilka body smiled that met her,
  Nane were glad that said fareweel;
Never was a blyther, better,
  Bonnier bairn, frae croon to heel?
    O the bonnie dell and dingle,
      O the bonnie flow'ring glen,
    O the bonnie bleezin' ingle,
      O the bonnie but and ben!

(*Slow.*) Blaw, wintry winds, blaw cauld and eerie,
  Drive the sleet and drift the snaw;
May is sleeping, she was weary,
  For her heart was broke in twa!
    O wae the dell and dingle,
      O wae the flow'ring glen;
    O wae aboot the ingle,
      Wae's me baith but and ben!

One word more, and I am done. For many years

—I will not say how long—Ned, with his wife and children, spent a great portion of every summer in a cottage close beside his early home. Little Edward and Mary Fleming, not to speak of John and Ann and 'Curly,' etc. etc., renewed the youth of grandfather and grandmother, and also kept Babby alive in the joy of making these young ones happy in her old age. Many a battle-day was again enjoyed; many a boat was again built after the model of the famous 'Nelson;' many a happy evening was spent in the garden with the children clustered like barnacles about old Freeman; many a thanksgiving ascended from that peaceful, contented cottage, ere the long night closed over it, to be followed by a newborn day that will have no ending, when all shall meet again and be 'for ever with the Lord.'

THE END.

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5. On Glaciers. The Second of Two Parts. By Principal Forbes. With Illustrations.
6. Houses and Homes. By Dr. W. T. Gairdner.
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8. Matthew Claudius, Homme de Lettres. By W. Fleming Stevenson.
9. Some Verses Written by a Working-Man for the Children to Sing at an Anniversary Meeting in Hertfordshire. Illustrated by J. D. Watson.
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The Man of War and the Parish School. By the Rev. W. G. Blaikie.
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Patent Medicines. By Thomas Herbert Jones.
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