THE

DAWSONS OF GLENARA.

A Story of Scottish Life.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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J. M., Jr.

To you—wise, judicious, and sympathetic—I gratefully dedicate the following pages. The gift is, perhaps, a meagre one: it certainly fails to represent the full measure of my regard; but as on one memorable occasion two mites, sincerely given, were held to be a goodly offering, so I hope that, for similar reasons, you will be pleased to accept of this humble tribute.

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CHAPTER I.

A MIDNIGHT ADVENTURE.

THE last beams of the setting sun had disappeared behind the Priory Wood, the anvil had ceased to ring, and the Smithy fires were getting into the dreamy stages of the night in the usually quiet village of Glenara, as Willie Baird, shoemaker, and Robert Herbertson, nailer, crept stealthily out of the workshop of the latter, and held their way past the wall of the Manse and the premises of the Cartwright towards the river. They carried between them a light of ingenious framework iron,

a long lever, and several strong rods, pointed with spiral screws. The night was very dark, there was a strong breeze blowing, and dense clouds—reddened by the glare of distant furnaces—floated rapidly overhead, letting fall, ever and anon, a few premonitory drops of rain.

"Did he tell ye what the corp was worth?" inquired the Nailer, as they marched quietly along by the Castle wall.

"No, I didna speir that; but I think we're in decent hands. He seems to be anxious for't."

For a while they trudged on in silence, each busied with his own thoughts. As they reached the bridge, the brown water of the Ara was dashing furiously through the arches, foaming and circling and seething down into the distance, where its commotion and trouble were hidden by the shadow of the dense woods.

"It's an eerie nicht, Willie," remarked

the Nailer; "I'll be surprised if we havena a splash o' rain."

"A' the better for that, Robert. Folk'll hae less mind to go abroad in a nicht o' this kind, an' we're no needin' company. I hope Daniel has man'd the whisky."

"When did he go?"

"At ten o'clock."

"I think there's no muckle fear o' Daniel; he's a gleg chap. Is he able at his trade?"

"Uncommon; he can last and finish a pair o' boots, even to the ca'in' in o' the tackets, in twal hours. He's abler nor ony 'prentice ever I had, an' he has saxteen months to serve yet."

"I think, Robert, we'll better gang through the park," said the Nailer, laying down his load at a convenient part of the wall for getting over. "Hech, but that airn's heavy! Gie's a hand owre. That's the thing. Noo, Robert!"

The Shoemaker jumped, and they were both in the field, at the other side of which the churchyard was situated. To the left they could see the lights burning in the parlour at Blair Farm, and as they passed on they saw the manse in the shadow of its pleasant surroundings of poplar, elm, and chestnut trees. Under cover of the woods, they crept carefully up to the churchyard wall. The wind was rioting amongst the neighbouring trees, and large drops of rain had begun to fall. The clouds were becoming heavier and more sombre, and the red furnace-glare on the sky was waxing brighter as the night darkened. Observing great caution, they climbed the wall, which at this point was of moderate height, and at once ensconced themselves in the heart of some thick shrubbery in the immediate neighbourhood. In the centre of the enclosure was situated the Parish Church—a modern

structure but a few years old, built of red sandstone, a well-known product of the neighbourhood. The old Church still remained in a state of ruin, with its roof of curiously-shaped stones. Near the eastern corner of the churchyard were two majestic monuments erected to the Earl of Forfar and his son. Lowly amongst the grass many an antique epitaph recorded the virtues of humbler actors whose last earthly scene had long ago been played out.

Around the Church, there was almost perfect silence, save for the sighs of the wind among the shrubs, the drip of the rain on the graves, and the dull heavy swing of the pendulum in the steeple, with its monotonous "cluck-clack, cluck-clack." As the vestry was approached, the sound of human voices fell weirdly upon the ear, and a dim light flickered from the window. Suddenly the door opened; a head was

thrust into the darkness, but was as speedily withdrawn, and the door closed again with a bang. The apartment had a look of warmth and comfort about it. A large fire blazed in one corner; and on a heavy oaken table which stood in the middle of the floor, a lamp burned in the centre of various articles of a nature calculated to cheer the inward man, and improve the moral courage. These consisted of oaten cakes and cheese, a bottle of the real 'mountain dew' from Ben Nevis, and three loaded guns. The guard was composed of the Parish Beadle, the Groom from the Bird in the Hand Tavern, and the village Bellman. There was a fourth individual present in the person of Daniel M'Ilree, the shoemaker's apprentice. It was not an unusual thing for the youngsters in the village to while away an hour in the watchhouse between dusk and bed-time. There was generally much

talk of a character which, if not profitable, at least helped to lessen the tedium of a leisure hour.

"I'll tell you what it is," said the Bellman, in winding up a brief argument on national characteristics with the Groom, who was generally called Ballynahinch, in consequence of his having been born and brought up in that part of the North of Ireland, "there'll pe no dress in the worl' so handy as the kilt."

"It may be handy," replied Ballynahinch, with mock solemnity, "but do you know the rason why your countrymen got that dress?"

"No."

"Because they were too ignorant to button their own breeches."

In these rude encounters, the ability to turn the laugh against an opponent was infinitely more effective in settling disputed points than all the hammers of logic.

"I was tellin' Daniel here," said the Beadle, addressing himself to Ballynahinch, after the laugh had subsided, "that I didna think we'd have got the whisky frae you, even though ye had lost."

"But you shouldn't judge any man rashly," said the person addressed. "A wager's a wager, and a bottle of whisky is a bottle of whisky." With this clear and convincing refutation of the Beadle's insinuation, Ballynahinch helped himself, while M'Ilree generously encouraged the others to do the same.

"I'll give you a bit of advice, young man," said the last speaker, laying down his empty glass; "never wager again till you're sure you'll win."

"Eh, man! there wad be nae fun if everybody did that," said the Beadle, helping himself to a *farl* of cake and a substantial *whang* of cheese; "but the Minister says there should be nae wagerin' ava."

In the pause of the conversation the rain was heard dashing loudly against the window, while the wind, groaning hoarsely through the ventilators in the steeple overhead, intensified their feeling of comfort.

"It's easy for ministers to speak," resumed Ballynahinch.

"That's true," said the Beadle. "I have sometimes thocht, if I had the Minister's gown an' the Minister's steepend, I could wag a head owre the pu'pit mysel'. Of course, he has better legs nor me," he continued, remembering the infirmity in one of his nether limbs, "but ability doesna lie a'thegither in the legs."

"Speaking of legs," said Ballynahinch, "if I got my pick between a good head and a good pair of legs, I don't know but what I would take the legs. The head takes a man into many a hardship that the legs have to take him out of; and since Adam's time the head has done more harm

in the world than ever the legs have done."

There was another pause, during which the Irishman helped himself.

"Take up a piece of bread and cheese," continued the speaker, addressing himself to the Bellman; "see how the Beadle's eatin'. The Beadle's greatest weakness is his belly."

"Na, my leg whiles fashes me tae," retorted that functionary, with a spark of quiet humour in his eye.

"What apoot the dead ootside?" remarked the Bellman, who, after complying with the Irishman's request, was visited by a momentary sense of duty.

"We must look after the living inside first," said the ready Hibernian, with a vigorous wink at his Highland friend. "They'll maybe not be so particular about you after you have given your last cry and laid down the bell."

"Ay," said the Beadle, philosophically, helping himself as he spoke to another piece of bread and cheese, "I reckon a leevin' body is mair to be lookit tae nor a dead ane. While there's life there's hope, as the Minister says."

"Tak' up yer dram," said the Shoemaker's apprentice, addressing himself to the Bellman, who had been somewhat sulky since his altercation with Ballynahinch about the kilt; "it'll warm your mou'——"

"And help his courage," said the old antagonist, laughing. "A Highlandman is always in great spirits when he's in whisky."

"Will ye no let the Heelants a-pe, pe tam!" retorted the Bellman sharply, giving full rein to his pent-up wrath. "What for you'll aye speak apoot the Heelants?"

"Hoot, hoot! dinna fecht about yer nawtionalities," interrupted the Beadle,

hurriedly washing over a mouthful of bread and cheese. "A Heelanman's as guid as an Eerishman, an' an Eerishman's as guid as a Heelanman. It a' comes to the ane thing i' the end. If ye dinna disgrace yer country, it's no like your country will disgrace you. Hech! Daniel lad, that's a bit guid bread an' cheese, an' no bad drink, though it's a pity ye lost the wager. It'll tak' a wee while's heelin' and solein' to mak' up for't; but then, I suppose, Willie Baird never lets ye want for a guid jorum o' meat, an' that's the main thing." This actually was the main thing with the Beadle. It was said that there was not a bigger eater in the parish; and in his capacity as "Chamberlain o' the Lord's House," as he termed his beadleship, this weakness was well indulged. There were three terms in the year which ministered to the Beadle's infirmity; these were the two Sacraments and stipend time.

All leavings on the first two occasions were considered his by undisputed right, and it would have been considered a mark of disrespect, both to the Kirk and the man, had any Heritor, while the Beadle delivered the schedule for the Minister's stipend, turned him from his door without sacrificing some portion of his edible goods to the other's abdomenal god. In truth, nobody ever grudged this worthy his "bite," as these pickings were called; for though he had this weakness, it was perhaps the worst he had, and on the whole he was tolerably well liked in the parish.

"Hoot, mistress," he would say, as he sat in the farmer's kitchen munching his cake and cheese, "you've gi'en me owre muckle cheese for my cake; what'll I dae wi' that?" The only remedy was of course to add to the part that had the shortcoming. "Lod, mem, it's extraordinar'!" he would presently remark, with a puzzled

smile; "ye hae spoiled the thing on the ither side: my cake doesna exactly tally wi' my cheese." Speaking in a general way, he was a very good man for his post, and filled it to the satisfaction not only of the Session, but of the parishioners generally.

"That's a bit nice doggie," said the Beadle after a pause, addressing himself to the Bellman, whose terrier, roused to consciousness by the smell of the eatables, had placed himself on the loaded muskets, and watched with patient mathematical eye the rise and fall of the Beadle's hand to and from his mouth, doubtless with hopeful expectation at every movement. "He's no an ill-mannert bruit. Whare did ye get him?"

"He was pred in Skye, and I cot him for apoot two years."

"Puir mannie," continued the Beadle, as the animal came forward to be caressed.

"Puir fallow, then. Does he kill rattens?"

"Och yes."

"I suppose he can tak' the water, tae?"

"Ay, like a dog I once had," said Ballynahinch.

"Hoo was that? Man, ye hae aye something droll."

"He always took the water when there was *male* on it, but never unless."

For a little while there was a pause in the talk, during which M'Ilree got to his feet to go home.

"Are ye for awa', then, Daniel lad? What time is't? Eh! me, wha wad hae thocht it was sae far on? Half-past twelve o'clock already; man, the crack has been extraordinar'! What do ye say to a turn roon the yaird, men, while we let Daniel oot? A body maun aye keep up the form o' the thing," continued the Beadle, opening the door. "Eh, what a bonnie nicht;

the wind's fairly oot o' the steeple, and the wee starnies are keekin' frae the blue. This way, Daniel."

"By the L—d Harry, what's that?" ejaculated the Irishman suddenly;—"Whose grave is that?"

"Oh! the vagabons, the unmannerly cowarts! to gang an' violate a lone woman's grave. It's puir Girzy M'Intosh. I buried her yesterday in a parish coffin. See hoo they've smashed the lid o't!"

"What'll pe done?" cried the Bellman.

"I'll rin for the Minister," suggested the Beadle.

"Will you run in the face of disgrace?" inquired Ballynahinch firmly.

"What'll pe done then?" asked the Bellman impatiently.

"Done! Let us fire off our guns one after the other, and run intil the woods after the villains. We'll not catch them, to be shure; but never mind; we can give

them a good chase, you know, and make a fair story of it for the Session. Don't you see, man?—the unchristian blackguards disappear amongst some bushes in the wood just as we are about to lay hands on them."

"Eh, man! what a wunnerfu' capacity you Eerish hae for tellin' lees. It's no bad, ava, it's no bad, ava. But rin, ye twa, an' I'll come after ye as fast's I can. Ay, Daniel lad, gang hame like a man, but dinna tell ye were here. Min' that, noo, Daniel; keep yer thoom on that, lad, or we'll be a' disgraced. I'll no grudge to pay the whisky mysel'."

As Daniel closed the gate the three guns were discharged in rapid succession, and the excited voices of the men rang wildly out on the night air as they scampered across the fields in the direction of the Black Quarry Wood.

CHAPTER II.

GLENARA.

Glenara did not, in its principal features, differ much from the ordinary type of Scotch villages. It consisted mainly of a long winding street, which was one of the highways to London, and in which the principal buildings, such as the Parish Church, the Bird in the Hand Tavern, the Manse, the Smithy, and a few shops were situated. Some of the more pretentious buildings were roofed with red "pantiles;" but the majority of the houses were thatched, and presented a commonplace enough appearance. Its situation,

however, and the surrounding scenery distinguished it from the ordinary Scottish clachan. Nor was it without interesting historical associations. The Ara Bridge, well-known to the student of history, was once the scene of a sanguinary struggle between the Covenanters and the Royal troops, in which the former were routed with terrible slaughter. To the southward stands the great mailed gate, with superincumbent watch-tower, forming still, as it has done for several hundred years, the main entrance to Glenara Castle and grounds. Beyond this imposing portal a long brown avenue, flanked with stately beech and lime trees, leads the imagination into sylvan and historic mysteries. On either hand the eye rests on far-stretching lawns, variegated with daisy and golden buttercup, on which lambs play and feed, and kine browse. At the end of the avenue stands the Castle, haggard,

ivy-clad, and time-stricken, but strong in its ruins. Beneath flows the rapid Ara, pure and cool. On its sloping banks are to be found the first primrose in spring, the first violet in summer, and the last bluebell in autumn. Here the blackbird and linnet select their homes, without dread of disturbance, and make melody in the woods all day long. Here, too, comes the crow with the evening shadows, to find congenial society among the windy woods. The monotony of the rural silence is seldom broken by human voice, unless when, by the grace of the noble proprietor, a happy picnic party disports itself on the green lawns, or rambles with lightsome foot among the pleasant intricacies of the woods. Here you will find the meditative student of history wandering, like a melancholy ghost, through the dank passages and ill-lighted chambers of the ruin; and on

the opposite bank of the river, at all seasons, may be found an easel, a camp-stool, and an artist catching the lights and shades. Looking from the eminence on which the Castle stands, the scene is one of surpassing beauty. From the farther side of the river rises a huge precipitous wall of rock, on the broad summit of which stands the ruins of Chapel and Priory. The rock and the ruins are laced with ivy and holly, from which, in summer, rich clusters of honeysuckle throw themselves in pleasant relief. Halfway down the rock there is a cool recess filled with lichens and ferns, wearing the most delicate shades of green, into which fall incessant drippings of water from a spring in the rock above. Here the weary pedestrian delights to rest, and here he finds ample reward for his toils on the dusty road. Here, also, he can slake his thirst, and enjoy the beauty and repose of the land-

scape. On either hand the Ara is environed by thick woods, and in summer is deeply shaded by the sombre imagery of leaf and bough.

As we look from the primrose bank beneath the Castle we obtain a sight of the Miller's house and the pleasantly humming mill with its dusty gables. An outside stair runs up the front of the building, calling at a couple of doors on its way. A cart-frame is thrown carelessly against the wall, supported right and left by several millstones of various sizes. The large box-wheel grumbles like a thing going round against its will, and there is a continual noise of falling water. Now and again the white head of a miller appears at the door, and vanishes again into the floury mist. The Miller's house is a plain, substantial cottage of red sandstone. In front there is a little plot of ornamental ground, and behind a large garden, well

stocked with fruit, flowers, and other plants suited to please the fancy or satisfy the sterner demands of necessity.

As Philip Dawson, the miller, and his family have no inconsiderable parts to play in this brief history, it may be as well to introduce them at once to the reader. Philip Dawson was a keen, shrewd man; a man who ground more grain, the capacity of his mill taken into consideration, than any other miller in the West of Scotland. His dam seldom ran dry, and the machinery, all made under his own personal superintendence, was of the finest possible order. Philip, barring a slight impulsiveness of temper, and perhaps an overweening estimate of the accuracy of his own opinions, was all that a good husband and father could be. In his heart, the mill came next in order after his family loves. It was his pride, his weakness. Indeed, the nearest way to

Philip's good opinion was through the mill. His wife was a kind-hearted, thrifty Scotchwoman—one who was careful about many things, but whose greatest care was the comfort and well-being of the family. Her age might be fifty—perhaps a year or two more. She must have been possessed of many natural attractions in her youth. Even at the date of our tale the outline of her face was comely, and there lingered in it traces of that beauty which, thirty years before, captivated the Miller's heart. Their courtship and marriage were attended by a remarkable circumstance, which must not be omitted here.

The mill was built by Philip's father. At his death it fell into the hands of his surviving sons, Philip and Allan, who, by praiseworthy industry and close personal attention, succeeded in building up a profitable business. But the partnership was doomed to be dissolved in a peculiar

manner. They fell in love with the same maiden, and soon there followed a bitter quarrel between the brothers, which resulted in Allan's imprisonment for assault. Allan, rightly, was held in much regard, but his declaration of love had come too late to secure the prize. On his liberation from prison he sailed for California, and for eighteen years his fate remained unknown.

Mrs. Dawson had made a good and careful wife; and though she did not place quite so much reliance on the infallibility of her husband's opinions as did that gentleman himself, he was thoroughly satisfied with the choice he had made.

Annie was their only surviving child. She was now nineteen years of age, and was possessed of more than her mother's beauty, with many of the best traits of her father's character. Her figure was tall and slender, with graceful, tapering

shoulders. There was an easy jauntiness about her gait, which was sometimes mistaken for pride. Her complexion was fair. Her cheeks were full, and glowed with the well-diffused radiance of health. Her eyes were neither grey nor blue, but partook slightly of both shades, and were expressive of much tenderness and delicacy of feeling. She was the youngest of three children. Her elder brother had gone to sea, and was drowned on his first voyage; and her sister died five years ago, and was the only representative of the family in their plot in the parish churchyard. Trained in a simple rural fashion, Annie cared little for society. She loved her parents and her home, and had no desire for the happiness which lay in the uncertain world beyond. The woods, the river, the Priory, and the Castle, were her daily friends. In these she found a constant sympathy and a ready adaptation to

every mood. On quiet summer afternoons she was frequently to be found sitting by the broken walls of the Castle, or amongst the ruins of the Priory, plying an earnest needle. Thus engaged, she would linger till the sun set behind the woods and left a witching twilight in the glen.

Annie as yet had but one bosom friend beyond the small circle of her home. Nelly Lee, who was her senior by about six months, was a very lovable girl. She was an orphan, and lived with a maiden aunt in Glenara. Annie and she had been educated together at the village school, but being possessed of means, she completed her education at a private institution in London, from which she had recently returned under an engagement of marriage.

True love, however, did not promise to run smooth, for since her return she had been seized by a serious and subtle illness which threatened to nip the flower of her

dearly cherished hopes in the bud. During her illness Annie Dawson tended her like a sister, and felt deeply anxious about her recovery. On the morning after the events narrated in the previous chapter, she had taken up a beautiful bouquet of fresh primroses from the Priory Wood, but was unable to report any improvement in the condition of her patient.

"Indeed, Miss Mackenzie thinks Dr. Calder is puzzled with her case," she said, as the family sat at breakfast on her return. "He had one of the Glasgow professors out yesterday for consultation, but her aunt did not hear the result."

"It will be a kittle trouble if it puzzles Dr. Calder," said the Miller. "But they say it's something like what poor Girzy M'Intosh died of, though, poor body, she was but indifferently cared for."

"It is rumoured that the body of Girzy M'Intosh was stolen from the church-

yard last night by some of the Glasgow resurrectionists," said Annie, remembering what the Beadle had told Miss Mackenzie that morning.

"Stolen!" said the Miller, with some surprise. "And where were the watchers?"

"It seems they followed the men into the wood; but in the darkness and confusion they made their escape."

"Ay, another feather in the cap of that absurd Morte Safe Society," remarked her father; "they will no doubt make the most of it; but it never will be better till proper provision is made for the dissecting room. It is the old story of trying to make bricks without straw."

The subject, however, was not one to be discussed over the breakfast-table, so the matter was allowed to drop.

"I have just heard," said the Miller by-and-by, "that Mr. Rodger has sold a part of his farm."

Mrs. Dawson raised her hands significantly, but did not look as if the news was other than might be expected.

"Oh, you must not fancy he was compelled to do so," said her husband. "They say he has got a fabulous price for it; besides, he has two hundred acres left, which is as much, doubtless, as he will care to farm."

"Ah, very likely; but I think it was well his father left Mrs. Rodger provided for in his will; she need not expect much from her son."

"Now, my dear, you should not be carried away by every idle tale you find in the air." When Philip Dawson said "my dear" in addressing his wife, it generally meant that she was treading upon dangerous ground; that in fact he had studied the point at issue—while she, possessing only the silly weapons of gossip and impulse, need not hope to make any impres-

sion on the strong citadel of his opinion. "I dare say he may have been foolish and thoughtless on occasions, like other young fellows," he continued, speaking from his higher ground, "but *we* have never seen anything amiss in Rodger's conduct, and we ought to judge of a man as we find him."

Mrs. Dawson, though she held her own views, could see that nothing was to be gained by a continuance of the discussion, so, with her customary prudence, she let the matter drop; and Philip, satisfied that he was not subject to the stupid prejudices engendered by a "wheen," popular village "clashes," walked across the yard, and turned on the water at the sluice. Then followed a gurgling, splashing noise, and the mill became a thing of life.

CHAPTER III.

THE MORTE SAFE SOCIETY.

As was to be expected, the Morte Safe Society did not fail to use the incident of the lifting of Girzy M'Intosh's body to their own advantage. Preparations had been made some days previously for the annual meeting of the society, and the Bellman was instructed to announce with all the emphasis of the two tongues at his command that the meeting was a highly important one, and that it would be held in the large meeting-room of the Bird in the Hand Tavern. As public meetings in the village were of rare occurrence, it was

not wonderful that the attendance on the occasion in question was a large one. The meeting-room of the Tavern was capable of accommodating about fifty individuals, and, considering that no females were admitted (a by-law, by the way, which was not well-pleasing to certain prominent members of that sex), a full room betokened no ordinary interest in the affairs of the society.

"We're like to have a guid meetin'," said Will Tanner, the baker, to his friend, the Grocer, who sat at his elbow.

"A gran' meetin', sir, ay," replied the man of tea, stroking his chin. The Grocer was a member of committee, and felt that his position justified the somewhat patronizing tone in which he spoke to his neighbour who was but an ordinary member of the society.

"The society has dune loyal service to the parish," continued the Grocer; "loyal

service, sir, by preserving the sanctity o' the dead, an' keepin' doon a noxious traffic; but it's a' in the report, sir, ay." The member of committee stroked his chin again, and drew himself suddenly up, lest he should spoil the interest of the meeting by divulging important information before the time.

"Ye'll no hae heard M'Whannel readin' an annual report?" resumed the Grocer, after a pause.

"No. He's guid at it, I reckon."

"Extraordinar'! He has uncommon tawlents for writin' reports."

"Ay."

"In fac', he can mak' a report oot o' maist naething, ava."

"Ay, ay."

"An' his power o' elocution is something by ordinar'. I understan' the Minister thinks there's no his eekwil in the parish."

The conversation was interrupted by an

infectious hubbub in one of the corners of the room, which gradually spread over the audience, culminating in a difference of opinion not too politely expressed. This difference of opinion arose out of the simple fact that William Simpson, the weaver, who had come in late, was beckoned by Jock Wilson, the beamer, to come up to his corner, and, there being no seat, the Weaver began immediately to eject a dirty little character named Danny Macfarlane, who occupied the next place to his friend. There was a considerable commotion for a few minutes, but, considering that Danny was not a member of the society, and further, that he was not an individual come to the years of discretion, the majority ultimately ruled that the Weaver should take the seat. Danny Macfarlane, however, was determined not to lose what he termed the "sport," and, seeing the business was about to begin, he gallantly

mounted the form before him, where sat Sandy M'Lean, the Miller's gardener, dressed for the occasion in a well-worn green swallow-tailed coat, laying hold of Sandy's shoulders for the purpose of raising himself.

"Haud aff the tails o' ma coat," cried Sandy, indignantly. "Ye hae yer dirty feet richt at the pooch mouth." Danny shifted from the objectionable spot, but still kept hold of Sandy's shoulders to enable him to effect a balance. Sandy quietly gathered the tails of his coat about him and endeavoured to reconcile himself to the position, rather than subject himself to the gaze of a public meeting through an altercation with the disreputable Danny Macfarlane.

"Watch ma breeks noo," said Sandy, humbly appealing to the finer sympathies of Danny's nature; "min' ye dinna draigle them wi' yer taes."

"Ou, ay," quoth Danny, who by this time had begun to beat an imaginary drum vigorously over Sandy's head, to the supreme delight of certain parties amongst the audience. This inaudible solo was continued for a considerable time without Sandy M'Lean's knowledge. At last the mimic drummer, having reached a note in the music doubtless intended to be loud and solemn, smote heavily down on the head of his victim, the result of which was that thirty seconds afterwards Danny Macfarlane was discovered in a corner of the room, fully four yards off, ingloriously rubbing a part of his corporeal frame which had evidently been injured by a severe fall. Just then there was a stir about the door, and all eyes were turned in that direction, and immediately the meeting broke into a shuffling and clapping noise of approbation, while Geordie M'Whannel, and Thomas Elderson, the smith, marched

forward towards the platform. Silence having been restored, M'Whannel rose gravely and said—"Men, I propose that Thomas Elderson take the chair." This proposition was agreed to unanimously. Of course, it was a mere matter of form, for everybody knew the Smith would take the chair; and the fact is he had his speech in his pocket, which, however, everybody did not know. Thomas Elderson was a person rather above the ordinary stature, with a broad, grim face—made somewhat grimmer by a thick outline of black whisker running round the under half of it. A full forehead, a dark sagacious eye, and short jet black hair, were features of the Smith which any ordinary person, seeing him once, could not fail to carry away in his memory. It was a good, sensible, shrewd face. When Thomas stood up at the table and poured out a tumbler of water, there was dead silence.

"Men," said the Smith, in a low, solemn tone of voice, "you a' ken what has brought you here; I need not tell you that; but before I ask my friend M'Whannel to read the annual report, I intend to address to you a word on the objects o' the society, as weel as on twa or three other points. Some o' ye ken a' aboot the concern as weel as I do; but as it is no for the benefit o' ae section of the community, and as there are men here who wad like to be informed, ye maun just hae patience while I go into twa or three fundamental principles o' its history. ("Hear, hear!" from M'Whannel.) The society was started three years sin' for the purpose o' makin' iron safes, so as to prevent the unnatural resurrection o' the dead, which has been so common in this parish for many a year, and I am sorry to say is so still. The name it bears is significant o' its nature. *Safe* means a

'coverin',' and *morte*, in the original tongue, means 'to die.'"

"Comes from the Latin of *mors, mortis*," explained the Secretary, "signifying death." At this point the Grocer gave the Baker a sharp nudge, as much as to say, "Just think o' the scholarship o' the man!" while the Baker drew himself up to attention, and ejaculated "Wonnerfu'!"

"Ye'll get the word in the dictionar'," continued the Chairman. "I am the author o' the invention, and M'Whannel here is the inventor o' the name." (As the Chairman showed some little heat in the delivery of the last sentence, Daniel M'Nee, the cartwright, cried, "No bad, Thamas—it's easy gieing a thing a name.") "There is the safe," resumed the Chairman, pointing to a full-sized specimen which lay before him; "it speaks for itsel'. Ye see it very much resembles a coffin wantin' the sides, and thae four screws, twa at the bottom and twa

at the tap, are there for the purpose of fastenin' the coffin between, and when secured in this way the body is ayont a' scaith frae the doctors, and out o' the power o' thae cursed plunderers o' the grave."

(Much applause, amidst which Danny Macfarlane seized Sandy M'Lean's bonnet, and, waving it in the air, cried "Hurrah!")

"The object, then, o' the society is to gie ye assurance in death—assurance as far as mortal man can assure ye, that if ye lie doon wi' a' yer members ye'll no rise wantin' a leg or an airm—assurance that if ye are buried among friends ye'll rise among kent faces. A bonny like thing for a man to lay doon the hammer wi' the notion that his body is to lie beside the nearest and dearest, and on the 'Great Mornin'' to find that he is gathering himsel' oot o' a dirty *sheuch* or a doctor's kailyaird! ("Grand, Thamas, grand!")

A bonny like thing that! It is a possible thing that ye might e'en rise among a covey o' doctors, but then they canna expect to gang the same gate wi' you, and they wadna be safe company, although they did. (Great applause.) This, then, is the assurance we gie ye. What is the matter o' tippence a week—a drap i' the bucket, or a spark frae the het airn—compared wi' the comfort o' lyin' in a Christian grave? In a word, before I sit doon, let me coonsel ye against delay. The best o' ye dinna ken what a day may bring forth, an' it's aye safest to err on the richt side. Just let me gie ye a single instance o' what I mean. Three days sin' William Simpson cam' intil the smiddy wi' a face I hope I'll never see on William Simpson again; an' he says, 'Thamas, ye maun gang doon an' see Mary Wilson o' the Hough, for she's seemingly nigh to death and in great tribulation o' body an' min'.' 'Then gang

up for the Minister,' says I; 'for though I've been an elder for the last fifteen years, he kens the near-cuts better nor me, and may be able to gie the pair body a lift intil the narrow road.' 'Oh, but,' says William, 'it's no the saul, Thamas, it's the body that's gieing her the fash!' So I saw through the thing at ance, gaed doon to the Hough, made Mary Wilson a member o' the society, and the result was immediate peace o' min'! Dinna lea' this matter to the last minute! there's whiles owre muckle to do then; do't noo, and when that time comes ye can lea' the parish wi' the sure hope o' a decent resurrection. Wi' these few words, I call on my frien' M'Whannel, the Secretary, to read the annual report."

Thomas Elderson resumed his seat amidst a perfect ovation of applause—the Beamer, the Weaver, the Grocer, and the Baker, simultaneously getting to their

feet and waving their red pocket-handkerchiefs, the first three in honour of the Chairman's speech, and the other because Geordie M'Whannel had been introduced to the meeting. The feature of the evening was truly M'Whannel's report. To say that the society commenced three years ago; that its membership then consisted only of half a dozen, including himself and the Smith, whereas now they had fifty names in their books, duly qualified, and entitled to all the privileges of the association; that they had five safes in stock, and a balance to their credit of 15*s.* 10*d.* to meet all ordinary liabilities, is but giving a sorry idea of the report. Add to this vidimus grandiloquent writing, some classical quotations, well-directed elocutionary gesticulation, and half a dozen double verses of original poetry, by way of peroration, and you have a tolerably moderate idea of the materials of which the docu-

ment was composed. After the Secretary resumed his seat, there was a pause for a few moments, and Robert Herbertson, the nailer, started to his feet.

"It's no often we are treated to such gran' discourse, men, as we hae this nicht heard frae the twa heads o' the society; but I canna lippen fine speeches. Truth disna need to be bowstered on big words. I wad like they had said less and tell't us mair. Will Thamas Elderson or Geordie M'Whannel tell us wha pays for the whisky and the cake and cheese at the committee meetin's? There was nae word o' that in the report. Will the Chairman answer me that question?"

The Smith had already said all he was prepared to say. He was not quite ready to meet and rebut such a disagreeable insinuation as that which had just been made by the Nailer. He was, however, about to rise in confusion and anger,

when his friend M'Whannel, fearing what might ensue, started to his feet and at once came forward to the rescue.

"As my name has been associated with yours in this matter, Mr. Chairman, perhaps you will allow me a single sentence in reply to the unmanly accusation just put forward by the last speaker. First of all, sir, I would say that Robert Herbertson has no legal right to occupy a seat in this room, much less to make impertinent insinuations, because he is not, and never has been, a member of this society; and, secondly, I ask you, as discriminating men, to consider for a moment what object the speaker could have in view in starting such a discussion on the present occasion. What object, I ask, but to raise doubts in the minds of non-members present, so as to keep them from casting in their lot with us, and participating in the benefits of the society? I don't say, Mr. Chairman, that

Robert Herbertson is a resurrectionist, nor will I say he is here as their agent; of this the meeting must judge; but I will say, that his remarks are strongly calculated to give them facilities for carrying on their wicked and nefarious traffic." This retort, which was delivered with considerable warmth, was received with great favour by the majority of the members present, some of whom showed they had a tolerably accurate idea of what had been said by crying, "Put the resurrectionist oot!"

"Aboot the whisky and the cakes and cheese," said the Smith, who now got up, with a confused notion that he was expected to say something.

"The subject, I hold, is not worthy of explanation," said M'Whannel, again coming forward in the nick of time. "If I understand the feeling of this large and respectable meeting, it is that we have already spent

too much valuable time in discussing the factious opposition of one who is not now, and is never likely to be, a member of this society. I propose, therefore, that we proceed to the election of office-bearers for the ensuing year." This motion was seconded by the Beamer, who was itching for office, and carried by acclamation.

"What on earth were you going to say about the whisky?" inquired M'Whannel of the Chairman, as the meeting was separating.

"Say!" said the Smith, "I believe I'd have tell't the truth and made an ass o' mysel'. M'Whannel, ye ha'e a tongue wad fit ye for a Prime Minister or a Croon advocat!"

CHAPTER IV.

HERBERT RODGER.

The situation of Blair Farm was all that could be desired. It was well watered, the land was level, the soil was rich, and, under fair treatment, productive; but the annual result was not equal to what one would reasonably expect under such favourable circumstances. Herbert Rodger, if he was not a successful farmer, ought to have been, for his chances and his training were such as warranted this expectation. He had been bred in the parish, and taught under the best agricultural skill. His grandfather, by great expense and labour,

had made the soil productive, and from it his father, by constant, plodding work, had extracted a moderate fortune. Herbert, however, unlike his predecessors, was a gentleman-farmer—a man who, born with a silver spoon in his mouth, was above dealing personally with the soil, or with those who laboured upon it. He had a Grieve, to be sure; but, then, hired servants are not always careful about your interests, especially when you are yourself indifferent to them, and squander the precious outcome of their labours in the pursuits of a fast and unprofitable life. Herbert Rodger had attended the Arts classes in Glasgow College. He had also taken some sessions of Agricultural Chemistry. But during these years of absence from home he learned more than was taught in the lecture halls, and contracted some friendships that had better not been formed. While running his course of education

and youthful riot in the city, he was disagreeably astonished to hear that a sharer of what he looked upon as his future inheritance had been unexpectedly added to the family in the person of a baby brother. Greatly to his relief, however, the intruder as mysteriously disappeared in the tenth month of his age, to—nobody knew where. A heavy shadow of grief and mystery fell upon the parents on the disappearance of their child; but with this event his hopes secretly brightened, and a freer rein was given to his youthful folly. At his father's death he was mortified to find by the will that everything except the farm was left under his mother's control, and that so long as she lived he should have to make his own way. It was earnestly hoped that by this arrangement his mind would settle to the work for which he had been trained, and that habits wiser than those into which he had fallen might be engendered.

On the morning of which we are writing the fields were rich with the promise of a golden harvest. The wheat was bursting into ear, corn and beans were well forward, and even the potato-tops were some inches above the "drills." The atmosphere was pure and invigorating, and the sunshine glistened amongst the fresh leaves in the hedges, and gave them a purer green. Its brightness imparted a sombreness to the distant woods, and brought the hills, with their varied tints and shadows, nearer to hand. The heat was tempered by a gentle breeze that came balmily up from the south, and fluttered the ivy which crept round the windows and darkened the walls of the old house on Blair Farm. Herbert Rodger sat in the small front room upstairs which he used as a library. He was a good-looking, well-made, plausible man. He had a dark bushy beard, a

well-formed Grecian nose, and two small grey eyes. That face had perhaps seen the winters of well-nigh forty years, though it looked somewhat younger. His brow was short and sloping, but there was a scarcity of hair on the fore part of the head, which gave it an appearance of intellectuality. He pulled out his watch and looked at it uneasily several times, and then walked to the window and gazed over the fields. In the midst of his uneasiness the prospect of a good harvest imparted a degree of satisfaction to his mind. The strong sunshine was nestling amongst the green ears, melting the gems of dew that glistened there; but his heart was not in the fields nor in the sunshine. In a few moments the door opened, and a little man, with sharp grey eyes, entered, slapped him on the shoulder, and wished him a very good morning.

"You've slept long, Hobbs," he said.

"Oh, I was deuced tired after my ride on that lumbering mail coach. From London to Glenara at one sitting is quite enough, I can tell you."

"Well, here, take a seat, and let us have a talk."

The little man sat down rubbing his hands.

"I have been anxious to see you for some time back about that affair connected with the Miller's daughter."

"To be sure," interrupted Hobbs, encouragingly.

"You know I am desperately in want of money. I lost a thousand pounds at Hamilton races; and my old lady here," pointing with his thumb over his shoulder, "positively refuses to give another penny. It would save me bonding the farm. I have already sold a portion of it to a sheep farmer in order to keep things moving. Are you sure there is no mistake about the will?"

"Morally certain. Could stake my neck on't. Our old College chum, Dick Williamson, who is confidential clerk in the London office, showed me the deed. £20,000 at his death in her own right. In fact, I made a note of it," continued the little man, producing a memorandum from his pocket. "£20,000, sir, no doubt of it, and without a single condition. Would yield a glorious income in South Sea stock or North American mines."

It will not forestall too much of the interest of this history to say that Hobbs was, and had long been, the evil genius of Herbert Rodger. The acquaintanceship had been formed in Glasgow. Hobbs was also a University man, but had broken down in his course previous to the date on which Herbert entered upon his. He was, however, the chief spirit in one of the low tavern debating societies, so common in the University city of that day. Here

it was, during the long winter evenings of social excess and riot, that Herbert acquired Hobbs's friendship. Hobbs at one time held a post in the office of an accountant in Glasgow, but having been dismissed for unsteady habits, he became the shining centre of a coterie of youths attending College, on whose bounty he lived, and in return for whose liberality he delivered brilliant tavern harangues, instituted and took part in debates, and initiated his pupils generally into the mysteries of his own vicious life. Herbert Rodger was greatly charmed by the versatility of his powers. His speech was ready and pointed; his intelligence and learning were considerably beyond those possessed by his compeers. In particular, he was ever ready with advice when they got into a difficulty, and would not stick at the carrying out of any plan whereby he could do his disciples a service, and

earn a little money, of which he was so frequently in need. Circumstances having compelled him to leave Glasgow, he next turned up in London as a commission agent. . Here, with brief intervals — during which he acquired a practical knowledge of the internal arrangements of several metropolitan prisons—he carried on his vocation, keeping up the while a secret connection with Rodger, in whose sporting and other interests he was frequently engaged.

"I tell you, sir, go in for her strongly. She is not a hag, I suppose; but even in a matter of this kind £20,000 is a wonderful cosmetic."

After a pause:

"I fear I cannot do it, Hobbs—plainly and honestly, it would be too bad."

"Bah! don't speak like that. You will get to like her by-and-by, and then it will come all right."

Herbert remained thoughtful for a few moments, then, walking across the room, he took a note-book from a side-table, and consulted it.

"I have £500 staked on Commodore at the Elmshire races, which I am sure to win; but then I have a bill for £1000 to meet, and what if I should lose? In three months the crops will be housed, but though things seem to look well enough, my Grieve tells me they will be light, and the grain market is falling. The fact is, Hobbs, I am getting embarrassed!"

"A splendid subject, then, you are for £20,000. Ha! ha! I say, you must really take my advice, and go in for the Miller's daughter. Is she oldish?"

"No; a mere girl, and beautiful as an angel of light."

"Capital! then it need not be altogether a heartless job. You have all the elements

of success—a good figure and a pleasing tongue."

Herbert shook his head.

"I fear it will take more than that in this parish. They don't like horse-racing, and they consider gambling one of the unpardonable sins. The fact is, no man's ways are tolerable here unless he goes to church twice of a Sunday, and can reel off the Confession of Faith and Shorter Catechism like a machine."

"Good!" said Hobbs, merrily. "I believe you're pretty near the truth there; but girls like rakes—you know that."

"Yes; but her parents, and public opinion——"

"Well, to be sure, these points must be looked at. Why not become a saint for the nonce? Why not reform your life for six months—or—a year? Give over all your little wicked transactions to me; I can do them in my own name, if necessary,

to keep your precious finger out of the impious pie. You know I am too old a sinner to be injured by the additional burden; besides, I am sincerely anxious to see you out of your present financial difficulties."

"Well, we'll talk the matter over further after breakfast. You don't mind meeting the old woman, do you?"

"Not in the least!"

"Very well; of course, you are a London merchant."

"Ah! Hem!" said Hobbs, putting his hand on his heart and bowing with mock pomposity as he followed Herbert out of the apartment.

Breakfast was set in the parlour, and Mrs. Rodger presided at the table. She was a quiet, motherly-looking person; but from the deep-drawn lines about her face one could see that the ploughshare of time had not dealt too lightly with her.

"I should suppose you have a very quiet, pleasant kind of a life of it here," said Hobbs after breakfast. "There is a freshness and a charm about country life all the year round."

"Times are very much changed," she said, with a sigh. "When the old man was here we had many happy days, but Herbert has so many airns in the fire, and is so often away from home, that it is dreary enough sometimes. I often wish he would settle down to the farm; I'm sure it's not for want of training: he was bred to it by one who knew the value of every foot of soil. There was no man in the country like his father for that. He knew the capacity of the land, just as you know the capacity of one of your clerks. He could tell what would suit this sort of land and what would suit that—potatoes one year, barley next, oats next, and so on, just as the ground would bear it; but

he was never the same man after we lost our little boy. Ay, it's an old story now," said Mrs. Rodger reflectively, in answer to an inquiry by Hobbs—"twenty-five years sin'. He was lifted from the very door, and we never heard of him again. My poor man never got over it. For long he went about as if there was something which he had forgotten to do. Of course, there were other griefs too," she continued, running off into another line of reflection, "which altered his plans and damped his hopes, and made him lose heart in the farm——"

"Tuts!" interrupted Herbert. "Mr. Hobbs has no wish to have a full, true, and particular account of the governor's history."

"Ah, you are mistaken," said Hobbs, politely; "I am indeed interested in the story. He seems to have been a most exemplary person. Nay, Mrs. Rodger, I

should say he must have been a pious man."

"No, not pious, sir, in the sense understood in the parish; but he was a good man. To be sure, he had seats in the church, and paid his teinds as regularly as the time came round, and went to hear a sermon now and again for that matter, but he would never insist on any set religious observance. His Sunday service was often a walk round the fields, or a quiet seat indoors on warm weather to read. He kept his conscience aye right with his Maker, sir, and his fellow-men. He was kind to the poor, owed no man anything, sold his crops fairly, and made his purchases with ready money, on the best terms; for a really good man there wasna many could equal him in the country-side."

Poor Mrs. Rodger had the unhappy knack of talking herself out of breath.

Her physique was of the stoutish order, with a strong asthmatic tendency; and as to years, she must have been considerably over sixty. While Mrs. Rodger paused to take breath, a messenger came hurriedly to the door.

"Yer grey meer has fa'en on the Mill Brae an' broken 'ts leg!"

Herbert started to his feet with an oath.

"The best draught horse in my whole stable," he said to Hobbs, by way of explanation. "Cost £50 last autumn. Where did you say she fell?"

"Jist at the rising on the Mill Brae, on yon ugly stanes. Thomas Elderson, the farrier, was sent for, an' he says the meer'll need to be shot."

"D— the fellow!—he was ordered to take a load of grain to the mill this morning, and that's the upshot of it. Where's the Grieve?"

"He's awa' to Bellshill on some private business."

"Private business, you fool!" cried Herbert, flaring into a passion, "and on his master's time. Why, the place is going to the d——l." The messenger having withdrawn, Hobbs drew his friend aside and whispered something into his ear.

"But how could I help it?" he reasoned, as they hurried along the road to the scene of the accident. "It would ruffle the temper of a saint; the stoical indifference of these wretches puts me out of all patience."

"But you must be politic; your new rôle will not allow you to rage like a jockey and swear like a moss-trooper."

Ere they reached the Mill Brae, Rodger had time to regain some degree of equanimity. There was a large crowd collected. By the assistance of some of the onlookers

the cart had been removed, and was tilted up with its shafts in the air and its back against the hedge. In the middle of the brae was the horse, a most miserable picture, with its leg doubled beneath it. The usually dull eyes were agitated with unutterable suffering. All faces were turned on the poor dumb brute with a silent pity.

"I am very sorry at this misfortune," said the Miller, going a few steps to meet Herbert, as he approached.

"Well, it's a pity, certainly; but I suppose it cannot be helped. How was she so footless?" he asked, turning to the carter.

"Weel, sir, ye see we couldna help it, neither o' us. We were comin' easy up the brae; I stood in the cart an' held the reins, this way, when coup she geid owre a stane, an' I whummul't owre her head, an' I can hardly tell yet whether my neck's

broken or no. The biggest man in Glenara couldna haud again' a beast like her."

"The lad's richt, sir," said the Grocer, coming forward timidly. "I was standin' i' the shop door when it happened, an' I can certifee that every word he has said is true, sir, ay." The man of tea stroked his chin, and felt satisfied that he had borne valuable testimony in an important cause.

"What do you say, Elderson?" inquired Herbert, addressing the Smith; "is there any hope?"

"No, sir, nane; in my opinion, the case is hopeless. It's what is ca'd a compound fractur', an' canna be men't. I wad recommend to put the puir bruit oot o' pain at ance." Herbert approached and clapped the sufferer on the neck. As he did so, the creature turned and gave him a look which filled the eyes of the onlookers with tears. It was at once a look of gratitude and an inarticulate prayer for relief from

an incomprehensible agony. After a few minutes' consultation with the Miller and the Smith, he agreed to the course proposed, and left instructions that the recommendation of the Smith should be immediately carried out.

"Yon was the Miller," said Herbert.

"And the pretty creature at the window?"

"His daughter."

"Well, my friend, I believe that is the most profitable fifty pounds ever you spent. The fact is, you did the business with admirable tact, and my belief is that you have gained a point."

Just then a sharp report was heard; the intense agony which a minute before agitated the dull eyes of the poor creature they had left behind was over, and the powerful muscular system was unstrung.

CHAPTER V.

A FAVOURABLE IMPRESSION.

The Village Fair and the Annual Flower Show fell this year to be celebrated on the same day, and on the occasion there was a special mark in the village calendar. It was one of the few days of the year which was observed in Glenara as a holiday, in the modern acceptation of the word—a week-day on which the Sunday clothing was brought to light, brushed, put on—and actually worn. The Smith extinguished his fire the night before, and, with a stern admonition to his 'prentices to "watch their han' an' no get fou," locked up the shop

for twenty-four hours. His friend, the Cartwright, though busy with some heavy carts for the Duke's farm, which compelled his staff to work till near midnight, said, as he gave the last touch to the job on which he was engaged—"There, lads, ye'll get ease the morn."

The custom of release from work on such occasions was acknowledged on the principle of use and wont. The day was looked forward to with eagerness, especially by the younger people, as having bound up in it all possibilities of great and unknown happiness.

There never had been better weather for the Fair—everybody confessed that. The sunshine was warm and genial, but happily the wind that blew from the east gave warrant that the geniality of the morning would not grow into oppressive heat. On such a day nobody dreamed of umbrellas, excepting of course, the few old

people who, like Paul Pry, never ventured out of doors without one. The intense blue of the sky was chequered only by a beautiful vision of light, fibrous clouds, which weather-prophets knew very well foreshadowed a splendid day. There was a wonderful searching that morning in drawers, presses, chests, bandboxes, and other musty hiding places, in order that the various nicnacs best suited to the personal appearance and the day might be brought forth and displayed to an admiring world.

Since early dawn itinerant merchants, from the proprietor of the nut barrow to the master of the more pretentious caravan with its promiscuous stock of hardware, had been crowding into the village and taking up their places. Here was a booth entitled "The Temple of the Drama," where five-act tragedies were played every half-hour. There were also a couple of wonderful acrobats; a juggler with a full

complement of balls, knives, and zinc plates; a wizard professing to hail from the "North;" and a great many other contributors to the merriment of a country fair, not calling for special mention here. It was a royal hour when the Strathavon band marched in military fashion through the street with its shrill fifes, its loud drum, and its banners streaming gallantly on the pleasant wind.

On its arrival, the gates of the Flower Show were thrown open for the select morning exhibition, and now all were aware that the Fair had formally begun.

The Show, which was under the special patronage of the Duke and Duchess of Avon, was a great success. It was agreed that there never had been such a display of pinks and roses. The cut flowers were beautiful, and the stove and greenhouse plants were pronounced by the judges to be infinitely in advance of those of any

previous year. The contributions from the Ducal garden consisted of calceolarias, fuchsias, achimenes, gloxinias, phloxes, half-a-dozen pots of fern, three bunches of black grapes, one large melon, two cucumbers, with a large case of rare mixed fruits, and other equally important exhibits which need not be particularized. The vegetable department, in which her Grace took so deep an interest, contained several items thought to be worthy of note. It may suffice to say that amongst these there were a couple of wonderful cauliflowers, two cabbages, six enormous turnips, three lettuces, twelve potatoes, and a dish of early peas. Indeed, from the generally excellent character of the specimens sent for competition, the adjudicators had no easy task to perform, but although there was some grumbling about the result, the world on the whole was not seriously put out of its way.

"What a wonderfully plain dress the Duchess has on to-day!" said Mrs. Dawson, as the patrons passed round the vegetable table.

"And how suitable!" the daughter suggested. "She shows such taste in colour; that red rose answers her complexion so nicely."

"These people can teach some of us a lesson worth learning," retorted Philip, giving the conversation a practical turn. "The human figure always looks best when adorned the least. See, here is Hugh Gifford's collection of rhododendrons," continued the Miller. "There is nothing like them for beauty in the parish. I remember when Hugh brought that from Sussex. It arrived on the very night Annie was born, and seemed little more than a bit of withered root."

"And see what fine flowers they are now!" said the mother, referring to the human as well as to the other flower.

"But *it* is so beautiful," replied Annie, blushing.

"And you—— ; well, I'm not going to praise you," Philip said, interrupting himself; "but you have no right to complain."

The grounds were now crowded by the *élite* of the neighbourhood; fashion and beauty moved about in the sunshine from flower to flower, like summer bees. The Strathavon band contributed greatly to the enjoyment of the day by lively selections from the best popular music; and there was much love-making, friendly intercourse, and general enjoyment.

As the Miller and his daughter turned away from amongst the rhododendrons, they met Mr. Rodger and his friend Hobbs — a circumstance not specially striking, seeing that the Miller's movements had been closely watched. Herbert was dressed in a smart suit of light tweed, which, in addition to renewing

his youth, helped to improve his personal appearance. For a moment he seemed slightly embarrassed by the suddenness of the meeting, but, soon recovering himself, he expressed a hope that the ladies were enjoying the Show.

"They seem to be," replied the Miller, affably. "Have you seen the Duke?"

"Yes," said Herbert; "he shook hands with me in the tent, and inquired about the crops; he takes a great interest in agricultural affairs. Have you examined those rhododendrons?"

"I was just drawing the attention of my wife and daughter to them," said Philip; "I think they are well entitled to the award made to them."

"Ah, indeed!" said Hobbs; "we were very much pleased with the beauty of the flower. Are they natives?" Philip again went over the history of the plant.

"I suppose you have not yet seen the

cut flower department?" Herbert inquired, addressing himself to Mrs. Dawson.

"Not yet, sir," she said, with some reserve.

"Oh! they are exquisite this year, a very decided advance on anything of the kind they have ever yet had." Hobbs engaged the attention of the Miller by his ready and intelligent conversation, and Herbert became the leader of the party.

Prepossessions are difficult to overcome. Personally, Mrs. Dawson knew almost nothing of the young laird of Blair Farm, though, with that rapidity of conclusion so characteristic of her sex, she had already set him down as a person whom no mother could venture to look favourably upon or admire. It was therefore with some reserve that she allowed herself and her daughter to be led through the floral labyrinth by the man whom she had thus prejudged. Herbert knew the diffi-

culties of his position: he felt that there was a critical eye upon him; but he had made up his mind to the task, and was determined to succeed.

"I suppose you are fond of flowers?" he said, by-and-by, addressing himself to Annie, who had been observing his words and actions with keen scrutiny.

"I am very fond of flowers," she replied with caution.

"Have you any favourites?"

"I am fond of all flowers," said she. "If I make any distinction, it is perhaps in favour of the primrose. It is such a lovable little thing, is it not?"

"I confess I have a weakness for the primrose myself," said Herbert. "I can hardly tell why—it may be because it is, like the snowdrop, a kind of prophetic flower, telling of the approach of summer. You know we always like the prophet that brings us good news," he continued, look-

ing earnestly into Annie's face. "Isn't it so, Mrs. Dawson?" A smile was the only response.

"Where is your father, my dear?" inquired the Miller's wife, looking behind. "How easily one gets lost in a crowd!"

"He is following. He and Mr. Hobbs are examining that pot of musk with the large flower. This is the department I spoke of: aren't the bouquets beautiful?" A careful examination of the specimens exhibited ensued, during which Herbert displayed much taste in discoursing on the agreement and contrast of colour. "Don't you like the deep rich hue of that pansy, Mrs. Dawson?"

"It is very pretty, indeed," replied she, somewhat interested. "Your pansies are nothing to be compared to that, Annie."

"I only wish they were," Annie said. "Perhaps we could get a cutting, if we knew to whom they belong."

"I shall be delighted if you will accept the root," Herbert said, pleasantly. "I believe these were contributed from the garden at Blair Farm."

Annie, somewhat confused, begged his pardon. "I did not know they belonged to you, Mr. Rodger, but we really must not deprive you of such a lovely plant."

"I have others equally good," replied he, "and it will give me pleasure if you will accept it."

The band in the immediate neighbourhood now struck up "Caller Herrin'," and the din of the instruments drowned all further conversation. They afterwards visited the fruit, fern, and vegetable departments, with which they were much gratified. Before the termination of the select morning exhibition, a small party of ladies and gentlemen, previously invited, sat down to luncheon with the Duke and Duchess of Avon, in the grand

refreshment saloon. The Duke, in a short speech, complimented the committee on the great success of their exhibition. He considered the exhibitors could not be too highly praised for their industry and zeal. He urged them to aspire after still greater excellence, and concluded by handing the committee a cheque for £20 towards strengthening the funds of the society. George M'Whannel next spoke. He proposed the health of the Duke of Avon, and in the course of his speech, read an original poem, written by himself, giving the history of the House of Avon from the reign of Edward III.

The most effective hit, however, in the way of speech-making, was that of Herbert Rodger, who, on the spur of the moment, when observing a hitch in the arrangements, got to his feet and proposed the health of the Duchess and the ladies. This speech was so well

timed and so well put, that the Duke, in responding to it, paid him a high compliment.

"What did you think of Mr. Rodger?" inquired the Miller of his wife, on the way home.

"He seems to be an agreeable enough person," the mother said cautiously.

"Not the horse jockey you believed him to be, eh? Oh, you women are so easily led astray. If I had formed my judgment of people from hearsay, I should have found precious few worthy of my friendship at the present time."

"He is very fond of flowers," said Annie, who had been listening attentively. "And what a nice speech he made about the Duchess and the ladies! I think the Duke was very much pleased with him."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DAWN.

THE morning was clear and warm, the strong June sunshine had withered the primrose in the Priory Wood and on the bank beneath the Castle; but the woods had grown denser, and summer had taken undisputed possession of the land. The village gardens were in their prime of flower, and the fruits were well forward on bush and tree. The river murmured on through the rich landscape, much reduced by the continued heat, but sufficiently deep and strong to drive the Mill and to discharge the other duties incum-

bent upon it as a providential power. The warm light lay mellow on the floor of the Miller's parlour. Annie and her mother had been engaged all morning in making some pinafores for Mrs. Wilson's children, in order that they might be able to go to the Sunday school treat, which was shortly to take place in the park adjoining the Manse. For the last week a good deal of the family conversation had turned on the incidental meeting with Mr. Rodger at the Flower Show. Additional interest had been imparted to the circumstance by a visit which Rodger and his friend Hobbs made to the Mill a few days after. Herbert came to pay an account, but he was anxious that his friend, who was much interested in machinery, should see the admirable mechanical arrangements of the Mill, which he understood had all been planned by Mr. Dawson himself. The Miller was much pleased with their

attention. He showed them over the various departments, and felt greatly gratified by the very intelligent interest which they seemed to take in the numerous mechanical contrivances which were shown to them.

"I have a plan," said the Miller to Hobbs, "which I should like you to see, though it is only yet on paper, by which it will be possible, in the busy season, to do double work by the same motive power."

Hobbs expressed a strong desire to understand the process.

"Very simple, sir; but I shall be delighted if Mr. Rodger and you will step over this afternoon, when we can go into the whole matter after a cup of tea. I have never seen the idea worked out anywhere."

Hobbs consulted his diary. He believed he had arranged with Mr. Rodger

to ride into Glasgow; but if his friend wouldn't mind postponing this journey, he should very much prefer seeing Mr. Dawson's scheme for economizing power.

Herbert gave a ready assent.

"Then we shall avail ourselves of the opportunity of seeing your plans," said Hobbs.

And the Miller turned in to his work, as they departed, feeling that his hands were strengthened by this intelligent sympathy.

"I am just thinking how happy the children will be," Annie said, as she sewed a tape on the back of the last pinafore. "The little creatures so seldom get anything new that there will be no limit to their joy."

"It is a good thing that their mother is getting round," replied Mrs. Dawson. "If it be so willed that she is spared to them, they will be of use to her yet. I suppose her eldest boy is getting on well?"

"I believe the Doctor has taken a fancy to him, and Mrs. Wilson says he has raised Johnny's wages twice since he went to the shop."

"There!" said Annie, with a tone of self-commendation, as the last stitch was fastened, "we've done a good morning's work, mother. It is not quite twelve o'clock. I'll just run over and give them a pleasant surprise, and see how the things fit before I leave. I would like also to call for a few minutes and see Nelly on my way back; she wearies so much when I don't call."

"But you must remember the engagement, my dear, which your father has made for us this afternoon. You know how thoughtless he is in asking people to the house; he never dreams of the trouble it gives us. You had better bring some things with you from the village, but mind that you are back in time, for we don't

know how soon the gentlemen may be here."

Mrs. Wilson and the children were delighted with the new *peenies*.

"I'm no rich in this worl's gear," said the poor woman, as Annie was about to leave, "but the Lord has ways o' lookin' efter His ain. Ye hae been kin' to me and mine, Miss Dawson, but it is written that the cup o' cold water's no forgotten."

Annie felt happy as she left the widow's house—happy because of the pleasure she had been the means of bringing to that humble household. In her pure and simple heart there was a strong feeling of gratitude that Providence had cast her lot amidst so much natural beauty and so many personal comforts. As she passed up the lane her eye was pleased with the various objects of tree, flower, and sky upon which it rested. The hedges were white with hawthorn-blossom, the perfume

of which pervaded the warm air. Birds darted in and out of the thick foliage of the trees, and chirupped and sang in happy chorus. The world seemed to her invested with a quiet beauty, but it was a beauty which could only be seen by the single eye and enjoyed by the guileless heart. Little did she guess how soon the charms of these lovely scenes were to be blurred by the stormy life on the margin of which she now stood.

Nelly Lee was delighted to see her. Miss Mackenzie had removed her niece's bed to the front parlour window, which was more cheerful than her own bed-room, and Nelly had watched all morning for her friend's coming.

"I was just telling her that she was looking a heap better," said Miss Mackenzie. "What think ye, Miss Dawson?"

"I do think she is mending," Annie replied; "she is more lively to-day. What does the Doctor say?"

"Toot! thae doctors maun aye be sayin' something. He's talking about an operation o' some kind; he says it's a mere trifle. I think the man kens better what he's daeing noo. Talking o' operations," continued the spinster, "I believe that lad o' her's in London is as much needin' an operation as hersel'. I declare, Miss Dawson, I never kent the like o't. Twa letters in ae mornin'—just think o' that. I hae a mind to write his landlady and advise her to put him through the cauld water cure. Ye may laugh, but I believe it wad help him. In a' my experience I never met twa young folk sae daft aboot ane anither."

Miss Mackenzie was a good hand for the sick-room. She had some humour, with a rough and ready sympathy, and these qualities did not suffer from lack of exercise. The operation, however, to which she referred was a matter of much

greater moment than even she imagined; indeed, the operation was so important that Dr. Calder deemed it prudent to delay for a week or two, until the patient had gathered sufficient strength to bear it.

"Mr. Sheffeld has a much juster opinion of you than you have of him," said Nelly, in reply to her aunt. "He says in his last letter that I have much cause for gratitude at being in such good hands, as there is no other nurse in whom he could place such implicit confidence."

"Ay, just hear that; there's a fine cheap compliment! but mind, I dinna think ill o' the lad for a' that," retorted Miss Mackenzie. "Indeed, he's something by ordinar', so far as that goes; but twa letters in ae morning—oh, the thing is rideeculous."

"There is the Beadle," said Nelly. "I think he is coming here, aunt."

"Ay, what will the body be wanting the day? Jenny, open the door."

"Hech, mem! but this is a braw day." The Beadle came in, took off his cap and wiped his brow with a large red pocket-handkerchief. "Heigho! and are ye ony better this mornin', miss?"

"Thank you; I think I am a little stronger."

"Onything new, Andrew?" Miss Mackenzie inquired.

"Eh, no mem; naething by ordinar'. We hae never gotten thae resurrection loons. It's an awfu' time, mem; folk are no safe, leevin' or dead. What a gran smell ye hae here!" The Beadle looked about the apartment, as if to discover the source of the pleasant odour. "I think ye'r makin' kail, mem, if I'm no mista'en?"

The girls smiled, and Miss Mackenzie, knowing the infirmity of the man, brought in a basin of steaming broth and placed it upon his knees. He laid aside his

broad-brimmed bonnet reverently, and in an audible but solemn tone said, "Lord bless the meat," and immediately began to stir the broth.

"I hope ye will forgi'e me, mem, for sayin' meat," he remarked, thoughtfully, after a little while, "for I had my een shut at the time, and didna ken there was nae meat in't." The "Chamberlain o' the Lord's Hoose" was sometimes rather bare-faced in his suggestions, but they were generally conveyed in such pawkie forms of humour that nobody ever took them amiss.

"But we can remedy that in the second basin," said Miss Mackenzie, laughing.

"Oh, I see, mem, thank ye; that'll keep the grace a' richt."

"I suppose ye are kept gey and busy?" Miss Mackenzie remarked, after she had given him the second supply.

"Busy, mem?—eh, no. Aboot the Kirk

we're ordinar', but trade in the yaird is gaun a' tae deuknebs. I've only had twa beerials for the last fortnicht—just think o' that—and I hinna put in a spade for the last sax days. The Lord help puir folk in thir slack times. Ye'll may be no hae heard that Maister Rodger has gotten his name painted on his pew in the Kirk?" the Beadle continued, wiping his mouth with his red handkerchief.

"On his pew?" said Miss Mackenzie. "Did ye hear onything o' that, Miss Dawson?"

"No," replied Annie, colouring slightly.

"I saw him in the Kirk last Sunday, and thocht the circumstance droll."

"Ay, nae wonner, mem, nae wonner; but better late grace than nae grace, ava," as the Minister says. He laid down the empty basin, and deposited his red handkerchief in his cap. "I promised to gang owre to Mr. Clydedales's and get a bit

denner," he said, "and I thocht I wad just look in and speer for the young leddy before gangin' across. Guid day, mem; I'm glad she's a kennin' better this mornin'."

When Annie returned, her mother was busy with preparations for the expected visitors. Though Mrs. Dawson did not like visitors, she had too much regard for her husband's good name not to treat them well when they did come on his invitation.

The Miller's plan for the improvement of the machinery, the merits of which were fully gone into after tea, was a subject of very great interest to Hobbs. He highly approved of the scheme, and offered some suggestions which readily convinced the Miller that the interest he took in the matter was deep and sympathetic. Herbert, on the other hand, confessed that he was no mechanic. He was, however, particularly fond of flowers, and Annie was instructed to show him over the garden.

"I forgot till now," she said, unfastening the garden gate, "to thank you for sending such a beautiful pansy. It was so stupid of me to speak as I did when it belonged to you."

"I am only sorry," said Herbert, "that it is not more valuable. It was a very small favour." As they passed under an apple-tree, loaded with young fruit, a low-hanging branch caught in the intricate braiding of Annie's hair. Herbert, with ready gallantry, set her free, and had for reward hurriedly expressed thanks, and the sight of an innocent face suffused with blushes.

"You are not hurt, I hope?" he inquired, tenderly.

"No, thank you, not in the least. It was so silly of me not to stoop."

They strolled on, chatting pleasantly over fruit and flower. Herbert culled a pink, and requested liberty to place it in

her hair, which, after a little blushful hesitation, was half taken and half granted. The evening had grown sultry and dark. There was a dead stillness in the air.

"I fear we shall have a heavy shower," Herbert said, leading Annie towards the laurel arbour, "we can take shelter here till it passes. The ground will be nothing the worse for it."

As they passed in, the heavy drops began to fall thickly on the garden walk. In another moment the full shower was loosened, hissing among the branches and beating on the fruits and flowers, till the air was laden with a silvery mist.

"We are quite safe here," said Herbert, as the rain dashed off the broad leaves of the laurel. "It will soon be over. How pleasantly the scent of that sweetbrier comes out with the rain!"

"Father got it from the Castle gar-

den," replied Annie, as she plucked a spray from the bush and handed it to Herbert. "It is a very fragrant species of it, I believe."

"Delightful!" They sat silently looking out at the rain.

"You have quite a Paradise here," Herbert said, breaking the stillness. "Such seclusion and such natural beauty of situation! You must be very happy, Miss Dawson?"

"We are very happy," the girl replied, innocently; "but do you not think our happiness is much intensified by the beauties of the situation?"

"Yes, and by the simplicity and purity of your lives; these are essential elements in happiness."

"Our habits are very simple," said she, feeling sure that her companion should know all about the usages of fine society; "indeed, we are rather primitive in our

ways, Mr. Rodger; but you see we have few opportunities of knowing any better here."

Herbert was charmed with the ingenuousness of her manner.

"I like simplicity," said he, in reply; "I do not think the stupid conventionalities of society by any means tend to promote happiness. People were never made to fall down and worship forms and ceremonies. I believe we are capable of the highest enjoyment when we are natural."

Annie was pleased that he should think so, and Herbert did not fail to see the sweet flush of satisfaction that came over her face.

"Do you not feel life lonely here sometimes?" he inquired, looking into her face, after a short pause.

"No; I like retirement. When I am disturbed, nothing gives me peace like a solitary ramble in the Priory Wood or a

seat beside the Ruin. I think it is very pleasant to sit there sometimes, and watch the sunsets, with the pure river rippling past the foot of the Rock. I don't believe I could be so happy anywhere else."

The rain was now over, and the sun was just dipping behind the dark shadow of Kelmore Wood. There was a creaking noise at the garden gate, and when it opened Hobbs and the Miller came in. Hobbs reconnoitred the position, and evinced the deepest interest in the greenhouse, the sun-dial, and some other bits of garden architecture.

"I never was much of a gardener," Hobbs said, as the Miller and he sauntered towards the summer-house, "but I always do appreciate good taste and good arrangement when I see them."

"We have no garden to speak of," the Miller remarked modestly, "but I dare

say we have made the best use of what we have."

Herbert and Annie now came from the arbour, and immediately thereafter the visitors took their departure. Mrs. Dawson was left to the prosaic task of tidying up the house. The Miller went over all his plans again, feeling gratified that they had been the subject of so much interest; and Annie retired to her own room, sadly puzzled with the mystery of feeling which was beginning to dawn upon her young life.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRIORY WOOD.

When Annie awoke next morning, her bed-room was filled with sunshine. A linnet was swinging on the bough of a rosebush outside the window, singing a matin in the exuberance of its joy. There was not a cloud in the sky, and the woods on the other side of the river were motionless in the heat. As she rose, a blackbird came and perched on the window-sill, and having whistled a few liquid notes, fluttered away amongst the branches of her favourite apple-tree. The warm light touched her dainty feet as she

stepped over the carpet, and imparted a feeling of comfort. It was her custom to arrange the work of the day in her own mind while engaged in her morning toilet, but now her thoughts were not obedient to her will, and for the present she abandoned the task. For a while she gazed dreamily out of the window. The broken and irregular walls of the Castle rose over the tops of the trees, and the river projected glancing lines of light through the close environment of foliage underneath. The grey line of the garden wall lay beneath the window, enclosing flowers and fruits, carefully arranged diamonds, hearts, and crescents, beautifully edged with boxwood and daisies. All this could be seen at a glance, but Annie saw none of them. Sandy M'Lean was raking about the roots of a pear-tree, and whistling his feelings in a broken medley of Scotch airs, but he was unobserved. Her heart was in the laurel

arbour at the far end of the garden, the sight of which brought the pleasant conversation which had passed on the previous evening fresh to her recollection. She was aware of a strange, new, listless feeling—a feeling which she could neither account for nor understand. Her eye was on the arbour, but she was not contemplating the bright green leaves nor the speckled honeysuckle that grew in fragrant clusters around the entrance. Rousing herself by a great effort, she proceeded to dress, but the mood came on again, and she stood for some minutes looking at herself in the glass without being aware of her own presence.

"You have slept long this morning, Annie," said the mother, as she presented herself in the parlour, where breakfast was waiting. "I fear you caught cold last night in the garden, with nothing on but your light shawl. Did you get any rain?"

"Oh, no, we took shelter in the arbour."

"Your eyes look heavy."

"I am only a little tired," said Annie, assuming a cheery look; "that's all. I did not think it was so late, or I should have been down earlier. Is father in the Mill?"

"Yes; one of the boxes came off the wheel this morning, and he has been out getting it repaired. This is rather unfortunate, as he is so busy with the Duke's corn. He has been at work from six this morning, and got such a wetting. I never saw a man like him; he thinks nothing is well done unless he does it himself."

"You were on fine terms with my friend Rodger, last night," said the Miller briskly, addressing his daughter after breakfast.

"Me?" said Annie, slightly startled at the unexpected remark. "Oh! he seems a nice enough gentleman—at least, as far

as I was able to judge; but we have not seen much of him yet."

"That's the man about whom you women believe all sorts of unkindly stories, simply because a few ill-tongued gossips, who cannot understand the habits of an educated young man, choose to circulate them. Fie upon you womankind! 'Speak of a man as you find him,' is my motto. I believe he is a good-hearted, genial fellow."

"The Beadle told Miss Mackenzie yesterday that Mr. Rodger had got his name re-painted on the pew in Church," said Annie, unconsciously endeavouring to foster the good opinion which her father had formed.

"Ah! that accounts for his being at Church last Sabbath," said the mother. "Several people remarked it. There is no better sign of reformation than that. Those who don't wait regularly on the

means of grace can never expect to find out the right way."

"That is where you go wrong again, my dear," said the Miller, from his high platform. "Your social and religious notions are all old-fashioned and wrong. Your opinions are much too narrow. Is a man to be set down as a heretic and a sinner because he does not worship his Maker in your way? Why, woman, you only think it is right because you have been trained to it, but if you had been brought up a Brahmin or a Mohammedan it would have been just the same thing. Let us remember that every man has a conscience, and let him worship the Almighty in whatever way he thinks best."

These were common enough sentiments in the Miller's household, and he did not fail to express them when occasion required. Annie sat listening dreamily to the conversation.

The only point that was specially clear to her mind was this, that Mr. Rodger was being brought out of past obloquy with clean hands and a pure heart. Annie's was a generous and sympathetic nature. She was slow to believe ill of any one, and particularly ready to accept evidence calculated to remove misrepresentation or wrong. She felt, from her own observation, that whatever his conduct might have been, it could not be so bad as it was said to be. "Simplicity and purity of life are essential elements of happiness." Could any man express sentiments like these, and still be a bad man? She did not believe it. Then he was such a lover of the pure and the beautiful in nature. How prettily he could talk about flowers and fruits and plants! "There is no fruit so delicately coloured as the cherry and the peach." Talking of society, he said, "I like simplicity; I do not think the stupid

conventionalities of society by any means tend to promote happiness. People were never made to fall down and worship forms and ceremonies." Was his conversation not more beautiful to her than it had been to her parents? She almost wished they had heard him speak as he had done to her; his words were so noble, so good. When Annie came out of her reverie she felt ashamed of herself. During the time she was indulging in it the Miller had been extolling the clear head, the skill, and intelligence of Hobbs; but now he had gone to the Mill, and her mother was superintending the bleaching of some grey linen in the green outside, while she sat alone in idle and profitless meditation. It was her father, however, who had opened up the question, and it was he who was to blame. Rising hurriedly, she brought down her seam, but her mind did not lie to sewing. Being milliner and dressmaker to the frugal

household, it occurred to her to make up her mother's summer bonnet; accordingly, she set about the task, but as she arranged ribbon and lace and flower, she could not help wondering what *he* would think of the harmony of colours. Mrs. Dawson was too busy with her work outside to observe her daughter's unusual absence of mind and fickleness of manner, for which Annie was thankful, as she was not prepared to give a reason for them.

In the course of the afternoon she visited Nelly Lee, and, under the lively conversation of Miss Mackenzie, Annie thought she had been cured of her meditative trouble; but when she returned to the parlour window and saw the apple-tree, and the drooping branch which had caught her hair, and from which he had relieved her, the mood returned, and she went back again to the fascinating past of yesterday.

Next day was cold and wet. From early morning the rain came down in drenching clouds of "Scotch mist," soaking to the roots of the grass, and dropping in continuous rills from the yellow pendants of the laburnum. The garden was dull and cheerless—the flowers hung their heads under such unseemly abundance of rain; and the melancholy birds sat shivering on the boughs, with not a warble in their throats, disgusted, of course, with the incongruity of the weather. Now and again a restless sparrow would flutter to the garden wall, or to a higher bough, as if to see whether it were going to clear. A close mist lay on the neighbouring woods, and, distilling, fell in great drops from the leaves upon the brown earth, which gradually darkened as the moisture spread. The outline of the Ruin was hardly distinguishable, and the river moved gloomily on between the hazy banks. The dull, grind-

ing, and chattering sound of the Mill, as well as the general aspect of the landscape, were very depressing to Annie, though the Miller cheerfully said the rain would fill the grain and improve his supply of water. His wife thought it would do the linen a world of good; besides, the parsley and the pease had all been languishing from want of natural sap.

The following day made ample amends. The sun had it all its own way from early morning, and before mid-day the superfluous moisture had been sucked from the grass, the trees, and flowers, and again the earth was brown and dry. Annie felt much happier, but she could not divest herself of the recollection of that man whose manner and conversation had so clung to her for the last few days. As she wandered that afternoon through the Priory Wood, the sun scattering, the while, bright fragments of light on her path, and

the blackbird and thrush piping melody over her head—she could not but acquiesce in his remark that she lived in a Paradise. Why should he inquire if she felt lonely? Were there not evidences of tenderness in his tone and voice as he put the question? Then she remembered how pleased he looked when she spoke of the Wood, the Priory, and the sunsets.

While thus meditating, the little brown path in the Priory Wood indulged in the drollest antics of twist and angle—now running on the margin of the River, and then scampering up the shoulder of the Wood, overhung by odd-looking roots of various names—now darting through cool defiles of fern and lichen and moss, with soft dripping springs of water, and anon over arid beds of sand with no vegetation save a few unhealthy spears of grass. By an effort Annie suddenly brought her reflections to a truce. Why did she thus allow Mr. Rodger

to tyrannize over her thoughts?—a man who was but casually known to her as a neighbouring farmer, and who was reputed to be a spendthrift and a person of questionable habits. To be sure, his character had, to her at least, been satisfactorily cleared. He had shown that these charges were either false or that he had mended his ways. In any case, he was worthy of sympathy. If the reports were false, he must have suffered much from the circulation of the lie; if he had changed the course of his life, then there was need for some one to extend a kindly hand, and help him to stand upon his new resolves. This touched a tender chord in her heart, though on a closer scrutiny of herself she doubted whether it were right to indulge the feeling. She had been alone with him, doubtless, and enjoyed his society; but were not these meetings accidental? Why had she been left with him in the garden? Simply

because he was no mechanic, and because her father knew his fondness for flowers. They were driven into the arbour by the rain—there was no other choice. All these circumstances occurred in the most natural way. Besides, he must be at least twice her age. She was but an undeveloped girl —he was in his prime, with all the power and wisdom of manhood. He was a man of social position, with access to the best society, and she was but a miller's daughter, knowing nothing intimately but the simple manners of her own home. It was not likely that she, a poor simple girl, should ever cross his mind again. Thus, pursuing a process of antithetical reasoning, she reached the Priory.

The Ruin was approachable only from the south. The height from the River to the top of the highest remaining wall was about two hundred feet. A short flight of steps, rudely cut in the face of the ascent,

being scaled, two strong planks of wood, closely set together, made a rustic bridge across the deep ravine, and led by a narrow pathway to the interior of the building. The outer wall, which was still in fair preservation, enclosed a large area of ground, carpeted with grass, and ornamented with violets and daisies. Amongst the stones grew the rank nettle and the dusky sloe, and here and there within the enclosure might be seen a wild cherry-tree or a stunted elm. There was a weird light within the Priory wall as Annie entered. The sun was well down in the west, and the walls cast long cool shadows over the stones, the nettles, and the grass. Annie's favourite seat was a clump of brown moss, near a broken part of the wall which overlooked the River. It was half in sun and half in shade, but the air was rich and balmy. On the opposite bank stood the magnificent ruin of the Castle, with its

surroundings of green lawns and deep woods. Annie dreamily surveyed the picture; but there was a restlessness in her manner which even the calm of the landscape could not subdue.

Taking her knitting from her pocket, she began to count the stitches on the wires, as if mistrusting her own accuracy. For a considerable time the needles twinkled deftly about the points of the little white fingers.

"I wonder who his friend is," she thought; "they are so unlike each other; there is such a difference in their manner, and in the expression of their faces."

She did not understand how he could make friends with one so unlike himself. Annie could not quite define to herself the cause of this aversion. His eye was not good; but it was not wholly in the eye. His brow was full enough for his other features; but his mouth was large, giving

indications of sensuality and coarseness. There was also an unnatural redness about his face which heightened the effect of this impression.

The sun was now lying like a great ball of fire on the tops of the woods, and the western and southern walls of the Ruin opposite were bathed in crimson.

While Annie was watching the beautiful effect on the opposite bank of the River, a rustling sound was heard amongst the shrubbery a few yards off, and, on looking round, a little grey dog pushed itself through the branches of a wild currant bush; in a few seconds its owner entered by a low arched door, and Annie stood face to face with Herbert Rodger. There was much confusion in her manner as he approached.

"I expected to find you here, Miss Dawson," he said, shaking her warmly by the hand. "I was up at Mr. Howatson's

ordering some late grass seed; and remembering what you told me about the sunsets, I came down this way just with the hope of meeting you here."

"Indeed," said Annie, colouring deeply, and, in her confusion, not knowing what to say.

"How diligent you are!" continued Herbert, taking up the knitting which had fallen from her hand. "You like to improve the time, Miss Dawson?"

"I can knit and enjoy the pleasant landscape at the same time."

At this point an incident occurred which for a moment interrupted the conversation. Herbert's dog, in the course of its peregrinations through the Priory grounds, had started a hare, which, in the hot haste of desire to escape its pursuer, plunged into the Ruin, and with one mad bound leapt over the precipice and found instant death in the River below. Annie shuddered and

turned her back as the poor creature fell, while Herbert, in a few sharp words, admonished the dog, which stood on the brink wagging a disappointed tail and watching the fall of its victim with a look of ill-concealed chagrin.

"Do you not feel chill?" Herbert asked, "after sitting here in the shade?"

"No, thank you, the air is quite balmy."

"But then you are such a lover of nature, such a princess of the woods, such a queen of all rural influences, that you ought to be exempt from these little inconveniences!"

"You are affluent in compliment, Mr. Rodger," was Annie's reply, as the blood again rushed to her cheeks. "Please remember that I am the Miller's daughter."

"It is because you are so, that what I have said is deserved."

As they talked, Herbert watched closely

the effect of his words, and he was pleased to find they were not distasteful to her. He could see, moreover, that his society was not disagreeable, so he resolved to proceed carefully. Annie's feelings on his sudden appearance in the Ruin were those of surprise and pleasure. Though she had made up her mind to the belief that their future intercourse could be nothing more than that of mere casual acquaintances, she had done so with a slight degree of pain, and with an unconscious wish that it might be otherwise. For the first time in her life she was thoroughly alive to the fact that she was alone with one of the opposite sex; yet she had no fear in his presence—she had successfully fought down all scruples as to the thorough honourableness of his character.

"How would you like to leave your native Woods, and the Priory, and the

River?" said Herbert earnestly, as they sauntered homeward through the Wood.

"I should not like to do so," replied Annie.

"It is a pity to waste so much goodness and beauty on solitude," continued the suitor, looking earnestly into her simple, earnest face.

Annie made no reply, but charmed him with a look which was meant to convey a reproach.

"To be plain, Miss Dawson, I cannot express my estimate of you in compliment. I must tell you that I love you—love you as I never loved any one else! I have thought of you since our last meeting night and day, and my happiness will not be complete until you say you can love me in return." There was more than assumed earnestness in Herbert's tone—there was true feeling. He did not intend to be so abrupt; he did not think of the

great risk he ran in pressing this important question prematurely: the occasion was a favourable one; he was so charmed with the beauty and simplicity of the girl that he recklessly embraced it, and he felt there was more at stake than he had originally intended, in the uncertain silence which followed this confession.

They had now reached the last stile in the Wood, and they paused before going over. The air was quite calm. As they stood there, amongst the sounds that fell pleasantly on the ear was the clack, clack, of the mill-wheel beating its regular circuit. But there were no sounds in Annie's ear save the melody of the earnest words she had just heard. A gap in the foliage let through a beam of yellow sunlight, which fell amongst her hair and made it more golden. Her face was pale, and she trembled from head to foot, unable to utter a word in reply. Herbert put his

arm tenderly about her waist and drew her more closely to him, without resistance. "Oh! tell me you can love me!—tell me you can think of me as your companion, your friend, your lover! Come,—speak to me!"

Annie's face was averted, and her tears were flowing copiously; but as he finished this passionate appeal she held up her innocent face to him with one eloquent glance which convinced him, more certainly than words could, of the conquest he had effected. For some time they lingered at the stile without speaking a word, clinging close to each other—he, really proud that so much youth, innocence, and beauty were his; and she, giddy with a strange new happiness that had taken possession of her soul.

At first she had thought of giving him an evasive answer until she had spoken of the matter to her mother; but her whole

heart had dissolved under the tender passion of his words, and how could she say No?

"Shall I break the matter to your father?" inquired Herbert, as he pressed a kiss upon her glowing brow. After a long pause—

"It is all so sudden," she said; "but if you think it is right, you may."

There was little spoken between them after that. Annie dried her tears and tried to look calm. As they reached the Mill the sun went down, and twilight enveloped the landscape in its dusky mantle. With the gathering darkness, the noisy rooks returned to their nests in the Priory Wood, and precious dreams of a wonderful new life nestled in Annie's heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS.

Hobbs waited anxiously about the farm all afternoon for Herbert's return. The scheme he had propounded was deeply interesting, as on its success his own future very much depended. Few knew Herbert Rodger's circumstances better than himself, and he felt certain that, unless some such timely relief as that he had proposed came, he must soon become a financial wreck. Mrs. Rodger had already, in order to keep peace, given to her son a portion of her own money; but this he had squandered on turf speculations in less than

a couple of months. He had, moreover, but two days ago, taken a heavy bond on the Farm, with the view of keeping things moving with a show of respectability. This step was taken entirely unknown to his mother. Indeed, the only person who knew, besides himself, was Hobbs, at whose instigation it had been adopted. Hobbs deemed this advice prudent, inasmuch as he himself had got to the bottom of his limited resources; and from the attitude in which he had left certain of his creditors in London, he feared he might have occasion to make a call upon his patron to which it would be absolutely necessary that he should accede. His services, he knew, would meet with more appreciation and a fuller reward if the plan now in process of trial should prove successful.

To break the severity of the suspense he took down a novel, and, making himself

as comfortable as possible at the library window, tried to read. He could not, however, catch the interest of the story. He turned over page after page, reading a short sentence here and there. At length he shut the book and gazed out of the window. The wind was urging graceful waves over a sea of wheat, and a dozen earnest labourers were ricking the new-cut hay in a distant field. Then he lighted a cigar and opened the book again, but with a similar result—the dialogues were incoherent, the descriptions were tedious and prosy, and the plot was without any apparent consistency. Finally, he put on his hat and walked out into the farmyard. The large eight-days' clock in the lobby pointed to seven as he passed, and he knew it could not be long till the result of Rodger's interview should be made known.

"Twenty thousand pounds," he muttered, smiling grimly; "no mean stake to run

for." The shadows were fast settling over the Wood; and the tanned labourers, one after another, came out of the fields, and wended their way homewards with weary, careless footsteps, having by the honest labours of the day earned a humble sufficiency for those dependent upon them, and for themselves, a night's repose. As he watched the apparent joy around the cottars' doors at the return of these uncouth-looking, footsore men, and saw the light which dawned in their faces as they came within sight of their little ones, who, with ruddy cheeks, bare feet, wild yellow hair, and joyous laughter, ran to get a place on the paternal shoulder, or even a hold of the strong leg, he felt a strange kind of uneasiness in his heart.

Hobbs was very little given to philosophical reflection, but as he went down the loaning past the cottars' houses, he involuntarily wondered if, with all his

educational and social advantages, life had ever brought him one such gleam of pure happiness as was the daily portion of these simple men. Why had it not done so? "Bah!" he articulated, suddenly breaking the thread of his reflections, and chopping off the head of a wild thistle at the same time, as if to confirm his determination. "The worries of the present are sufficient of themselves; the dead past will do little for a man, so let it be buried."

He came back by a pathway leading through the meadow, but Herbert had not yet returned. Entering the summer-seat, he again lighted a cigar, and began to build new schemes for the improvement of his future, but the sound of footsteps interrupted the process, and he went to the gate.

"How far is it to Glenara, sir?"

This inquiry was made by one of a party of two, whose accent soon clearly showed

that they had not acquired their style of speech in the Valley of Clydesdale. Hobbs glanced hurriedly at the men from head to foot, and, with affected indifference, replied—

"About a quarter of a mile, or better."

"You are a residenter of this place?" said the other.

"Yes," replied Hobbs, feeling a little uneasy, not from having told the lie, but from certain apprehensions which arose in his own mind.

"You are strangers in these parts, I presume?" he said boldly.

"We are."

"From some part of England?"

"Yes, from London; we came by this morning's mail."

"Ah! then you haven't been to Glenara before?"

"No."

"A most interesting place," said Hobbs,

"to strangers especially. Perhaps I can give you some information about the neighbourhood. You are on pleasure, I suppose?"

"Partly on business and partly on pleasure," replied the first speaker. "Have you seen any strangers in these parts lately?"

"Bless you!" retorted Hobbs. "Strangers! Why, they are continually coming and going here."

"The person we want may have been here at least a fortnight."

"With whom does he stay?"

"We have no information on that point."

"His name?"

"John Hobbs."

"Well, you had better call at the Bird in the Hand Tavern," said Hobbs, with a nervous twitch about the mouth which he could ill conceal. "You'll find it about ten minutes' walk farther on. They may

know something of the person you want." Hobbs smoked vigorously as the footsteps died away.

"Bailiffs!" he said; "no doubt of it. I must see Rodger. They are sure to find me out here."

After a few minutes' consideration, he resolved to go and meet his friend, and explain how matters stood. Hobbs knew Herbert would return by the back way over the bridge, rather than through the village, so that there could be no danger of his coming into contact with the men who were in quest of him. It was fully half-past nine o'clock when he started. He took a near cut through the meadow to join the road at the bridge. The path to the mill struck off to the right after crossing the River. He quickened his step, for it was now quite dark, and the thick woods on either hand made the darkness dreary. The air was sultry, and the clouds were

gathering as if foreboding rain. There were no sounds on the way save his own footsteps, or when a restless crow turned in its slumbers amid the tree-tops and gave a dreamy caw. His thoughts were not of the most agreeable description as he hurried sullenly along.

What if Herbert should be refused? It was more than probable that such a good-looking girl might be engaged, as the manner is with good-looking girls. A hundred chances to one arose before him against the success of the scheme. Or, even if she should give her consent, the money might not be got hold of in convenient time, while the expense of wife-keeping would only add new troubles to those already in existence. Herbert, meantime, must give him a hundred pounds. He was, fortunately, in funds, and could not refuse. Then he reflected that he ought to have changed his name when

he cut his beard. Thus disguised, they could not have found him out. He had not supposed they would send so far North for such a trifle, but—but——

There was a stir on the other side of the hedge, and, before he had time to think, a sudden rush was made through a breach, and he was in the iron grasp of a couple of strong men.

"I will go peaceably with you," said Hobbs, resigning himself meekly under the firm hold. "I was under the impression you had gone on to the village."

The men, who held him tightly from behind, looked at each other in astonishment.

"I suppose you are after that trifling eighty pounds?"

"We want your money," said one of them gruffly; "all of it, too, and lose no time!"

"Oh, highwaymen! Ho! murder! robbers!" shrieked Hobbs, lustily, per-

ceiving his mistake, and at the same time making a desperate effort to escape. "Rodger! Murder! Ho!"

"None of your cursed bawling," said ruffian number two, "or we'll pitch you into the quarry. Give us your money!"

"I am poor as Lazarus," replied Hobbs. "Upon my soul I am, but I have important work to do. Let me go."

"Where is the eighty pounds, you lying scoundrel?"

Hobbs struggled hard, but as he did so he received a heavy blow from behind, and he fell senseless to the ground. A hurried search of his person only resulted in the discovery of one shilling and some few coppers. Their disgust at the emptiness of fashion and foppery, however, reached its climax when, on pulling the large massive chain and seals out of his fob, they found, instead of a watch, a goodly sized brazen tobacco-box filled with small

twist. They had only time to make this discovery when they heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and two figures came suddenly into view round the angle of the wood. These were Herbert Rodger and George M'Whannel.

"What is wrong?" cried M'Whannel. "What are the fellows running for?"

"I'm afraid there's something wrong. What is this?" cried Herbert. "My God, it's Hobbs! John! John! have they hurt you?" There was no response. They stooped over his body and looked into his face. It was very pale, and he breathed heavily; but there was a cut on the back of his head which they did not see, from which the blood flowed profusely. Without further ceremony they carried him home, and M'Whannel went for the Doctor, who dressed the wound. Herbert stood earnestly waiting while the process was going on.

"I hope it is nothing serious," he said, as the Doctor finished his task. In his inmost heart he almost wished it might be otherwise. Hobbs had a disagreeable mastery over him which might one day fall to be shown. Besides that, if ever there was a time in his life when the desire for reformation came over him with anything like power, it was that night. He had gained a most important point; but a feeling had been awakened in his bosom which he did not calculate on being roused, and the completeness of the trust which had been reposed in him made an appeal to his better nature stronger than anything he had ever experienced before.

"Rest and quietness," said the Doctor. "There is nothing specially wrong; it is only a flesh wound."

Next morning the news had spread far and wide over the parish. The Bellman,

in his official capacity, offered a reward for the capture and conviction of the offenders, and the Beadle found it a convenient topic to ensure him a good reception in several farm-houses at meal-time; indeed, by a judicious selection of the localities, the subject had the double effect of being interesting to his hearers and beneficial to himself for many days.

Regardless of verity of detail, Rumour, that false-tongued expositor of events, indicated that Hobbs had been robbed of an immense sum of money which, unfortunately, he had on his person at the time, besides a handsome gold watch, with chain and seals of fabulous value. As the news circulated, a number of Bank of England cheques for large sums were added to the loss, though it was understood that these would be found to be of comparatively little value in the hands of the delinquents. While all this had the effect of drawing forth

a good deal of sympathy for Hobbs, and a hearty denunciation of the wretches who had been guilty of the treacherous and wicked deed, two men at the Bird in the Hand Tavern found without much inquiry an easy clue to the whereabouts of the person they sought.

"You are not much the worse," said Herbert, as they talked the matter over next morning in Hobbs's bed-room. "It's an unfortunate thing you were not off to Stappleton before these friends of yours from London came. You could have stayed there until the fellows had got off the scent. What is your liability?"

"Over eighty pounds; but there will be expenses."

"Well, I suppose what will be, must be. We cannot afford to do anything, at the present stage, but pay. I fancy you will be able to go to Stappleton yet?"

"I think so; barring that confounded giddiness, I am perfectly well."

"Remember, you must bet cautiously on that Grey Mare until you discover the feeling."

Herbert's virtue of last night, like the early cloud, had passed away, and he was again in the giddy whirl of speculation.

"By the way," said Hobbs, "I have a rare bit of information in one of my letters from London this morning. It is one of the funniest coincidences I ever knew."

"What is it?" inquired Herbert, with some curiosity.

"Sheffeld is desperately in love with a young lady in Glenara, and is thinking seriously of marriage."

"Good gracious! With whom is he in love?" demanded Herbert with impatience.

"A girl they call Lee, I think."

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in. Well, Betty, what is it?"

"It's twa men, sir," said Betty, "twa gae stoot-lookin' chiels, furriners, frae their tongues, for if I hadna travelled a bit mysel', and ser't in Glasca, I wadna hae kent a syllable they said. I put them intae the leebrary, though maybe I shouldna, as in thir days ye can hardly tell a keely frae an honest man."

"What do they want?" inquired Herbert, who was accustomed to Betty's roundabout way of putting things.

"Eh, I forgot to tell ye that, sir. They speer't kindly for Maister Hobbs. Maybe they're frien's o' his. I beg his pardon, but I told them that he had gotten an awfu' fraction on the brain, forby being robbed o' a' his valuables, which was an unchristian-like daeing; but as to gettin' in to see him was a thing I daurna alloo; but I said, says I, 'I'll see.'"

After a brief consultation with Hobbs, Herbert left the apartment. Hobbs's con-

jecture, while he stood at the gate on the previous evening, was verified by disclosures which were made to Herbert when he reached the library. The trifle of eighty pounds, by the various items connected with the legal proceedings, had assumed the shape of one hundred and five pounds nineteen shillings and threepence halfpenny sterling, every fraction of which fell to be paid, otherwise the demands of justice would seek satisfaction in another way. After a further conversation with Hobbs, Herbert with much reluctance adjusted the claim, giving as his reason for doing so the fearful loss his friend had sustained on the previous night, and the humane pretext that imprisonment under present circumstances would be as much as his life was worth. The officers were perfectly satisfied with these reasons, more particularly when the claim had been so promptly met, and in a manner involving

so little trouble to themselves. Herbert rang as they were about to leave, and instructed Betty to see the gentlemen past the dog.

"Gentlemen!" reiterated Betty to the lame servant whom she found in the scullery after she had obeyed her master's behests. "Gentlemen, indeed! I'm nane for prophesying nor for clashin' or claverin' aboot ither folk's concerns, ye ken that, Jeen Armour, but if yon twa fallows the Maister ca's 'gentlemen' are no Shirra offishers, my name's no Betty Broon."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECRET TRYST.

Annie Dawson's new burden of happiness became very heavy to bear, considering that she had to bear it all herself. Herbert, prudently for his own interests, forbade her to name the matter to her parents until they should have a longer and more intimate acquaintance with each other. While he had been successful in winning Annie's heart, he felt satisfied that the half of the work had not yet been accomplished, and that what remained to be done would have to be gone about with judgment and caution. Annie at once saw the reasonable-

ness of this course; she knew that her father had a prepossession in favour of Mr. Rodger, and that her mother did not now think he was quite so bad as he had been represented to be. Yet she saw the course Herbert had proposed was politic, and might turn out satisfactory in the end. So, though she felt it was very wrong, she made up her mind to keep the secret and calmly await the issue of events. This Annie found to be much more difficult than she at first anticipated. Her head was full of a new joy—so full, indeed, that her mind was occupied with nothing else, night or day, until even the joy became painful to her. She could not now trust herself in her mother's presence, where before she had found so much true happiness. She felt sure that if her mother scrutinized her too closely she would discover her secret, and find out how wicked and undutiful she had been. Annie felt as

if she had entered upon some new phase of existence, her feelings were so different from what they had been. The past pictures of her life had been full of a pure, beautiful, and uniformly warm light, but the present was composed of sudden and sharp contrasts—keen light and sombre shadow.

Nelly Lee was too ill to bear any share of her secret; even Annie was not allowed to do more than speak to her in the presence of her aunt, so that she had to bear it quietly and alone. Annie had frequent headaches during the early stages of this new experience, which kept her much in her own room, or at least somewhere out of her mother's presence. She had seen Herbert several times since his confession of love. Twice she had met him secretly in the Priory Wood, and twice he had found occasion to visit at the Mill. During the former meetings she had told him all her difficulties, and he had spoken such

tender words, and given her such manly comfort, that for the time she felt confident and strong. His visits to the Mill had been, on the whole, successful. Her father's good opinion of him was growing stronger and stronger, and her mother's prejudiced reserve was beginning to thaw. During these visits she had to assume a perfect indifference in his presence, and act a part which was not in consonance with her own feelings. Though Annie played this part successfully, she often wept bitterly in private over her hypocrisy, and while she would not give up the newly-acquired pleasure, she prayed earnestly that the old love and confidence and singleness of aim might be restored.

This morning, Annie's mind was in a more comfortable condition than it had been for many days. She felt cheerful, and could look her mother in the face without any feeling of shame or fear. The

annual trip of the Sabbath-school, which had been fixed to take place a week ago, but which was deferred in consequence of the wetness of the weather, had been arranged to come off to-day; but not the least part of the buoyancy and comfort which the day brought arose from the fact that Herbert had appointed to meet her that evening in the Priory Wood.

Herbert Rodger's name was fast becoming a household word in the Miller's family. Annie was much pleased by the frequent recurrence to the subject, though she had often the greatest difficulty in hiding her confusion on these occasions. During the morning meal, while talking over the trip, the Miller made much headway against his wife's prejudices from the fact that his *protégé* had voluntarily made a contribution towards defraying the expense of a treat for the children. Philip had ceased to taunt his wife on the subject

of judging without evidence, but he always took the trouble to say how *he* arrived at his conclusions, and this he considered a striking instance of the correctness of the process.

"I believe," said the Miller, as he wound up the conversation, "Mr. Rodger only requires to find out that there is intelligence in the parish, and a kindly sympathy with him in his way of thinking, to become a good, generous, and useful man."

At twelve o'clock the children met in the school-house connected with the Established Church. There were between sixty and seventy present, in addition to the teachers. The Rev. Mr Clydesdale, the honorary superintendent, who had been the direct means of instituting the school, was present, and delivered a short address to teachers and scholars. George M'Whannal, the acting superintendent, afterwards gave them instructions regarding

the order of march, and some advice as to their expected behaviour during the afternoon. The day was most favourable. In fact, as M'Whannel remarked to the teachers afterwards, it was truly a day worth waiting for. The order of march was three deep, and the destination was the Castle grounds, kindly opened for the occasion by the Duke of Avon. On arriving at the Ruin they were arranged in companies on the grassy plateau inside the walls. Four verses of a psalm having been sung by the children and re-sung by the echoes inside the Castle, Mr. Clydesdale in a few words invoked the Divine blessing, and afterwards the Miller's cart, which accompanied the party, was wheeled into the historical inclosure, and they were sumptuously supplied with good things.

Now the sport began. There were skipping-ropes for the girls and footballs for the boys, and races for both sexes, old

and young, for which suitable prizes were offered. Jean Gardner and Beenie Geddes, two of the spinster teachers, much to the amusement of the whole party, ran a race for half a pound of tea, which had been kindly placed at the disposal of the superintendent by the Grocer. After the races, the girls played at "Jingo-ring" and "Campsie Dukes," while the boys indulged in "Keep the Corbie frae the Craw" and "Hot Pies." While the children were thus enjoying themselves the teachers had some pleasant games of forfeits, in which the Miller's daughter had the prominent honour of being kissed by young Mr. Clydesdale, who, at the time of the trip, was enjoying his college vacation at the Manse. After forfeits, the game chosen was "Ba-ba-babity," during which the fun was climaxed by bachelor Davie Blair spreading the handkerchief before Jean Gardner, and the struggle that ensued

before the spinster would yield to afford the eager farmer the luxury of a kiss. In the evening the party returned to the school-house, much delighted with the events of the day.

Though Annie Dawson had enjoyed herself tolerably well on the occasion, it is no exaggeration to say that her day's enjoyment was all in store for her yet; indeed, the whole happiness of the day had been heightened and charmed by the thought that she had to meet Herbert after it was all over. Having parted from the teachers as quickly as she could, she crossed the bridge above the village and passed into the fir glen. The path which led to the Priory was almost entirely shrouded from the sunlight by the closeness of the foliage above, but the air was balmy and soft, and laden with the scent of wild myrrh. Annie's impatience led her to start before the time, but she lingered

over the scene with an enjoyment which was made keen by the memories and the expectations of the day. She hoped no one would meet her in the glen, for though the pathway led ultimately to the Mill, she feared lest she might have to offer an excuse for taking such an unusual way thither. Pausing over a beautiful cluster of harebells, she was examining their tender shades and fragile texture when she heard the sound of approaching footsteps. Her heart beat fast. That was the way by which he generally came. It was he. She saw him, and approached with outstretched hand. Herbert saw the pure, earnest, and simple faith in Annie's face as she met him, and was touched by it.

"What a pleasant surprise!" said he after the first greeting. "I am glad the Priory Wood is nearer to me than I thought. I have never been so purely happy anywhere as when with you there;

but I can make a Priory Wood of any place when I have your presence. Did you weary for me, dear?"

"If you just knew how much!" said Annie earnestly. "I don't know how I should have passed the day had it not been for the children's trip."

"Poor things! I hope they enjoyed themselves."

"Yes; it was a most enjoyable day, and your kindness was very much appreciated. If you had just seen how the children clapped their little hands and cheered when Mr. M'Whannel told them how much they were indebted to you for their treat, it would have pleased you very much. I felt so proud of what he said. Oh! Herbert, it is hard, hard to bear all this happiness alone. I love you so much, you are so good and noble, and yet I must keep it all to myself without letting anybody know." Annie spoke from the ful-

ness of her heart, and tears came freely with the words.

"Annie dear! what is the matter, Annie?" Herbert put his arms about her and looked troubled.

"Nothing," Annie said, removing the handkerchief and wiping her eyes; "I am better now. My heart was too full, and the tears came in spite of me."

"Tell all your love to me," said Herbert, kissing the upturned brow.

"You know it all already."

"But I never weary of it. Was anything troubling you?"

"No; but I feel so lonely at home—I cannot bear to think myself a hyprocrite, you know—and mother must think me so queer. I cannot sit with her and work and talk as I used to do. I am always glad to get out of her sight, for fear she should look at me and see the secret I am trying so hard to conceal. I

dare not speak about you, Herbert, and it is very hard to prevent my love from showing itself sometimes."

"I know it is hard, Annie, to an honest nature like yours; but isn't it best to carry the old people with us?"

Annie paused before making reply.

"You are very wise and good, Herbert, and I am sure will do nothing but what is right. I am impatient and foolish, and ough not to complain. I wish I were oftener with you, it makes me so strong."

"Do they think me a 'scapegrace?'"

"Oh! Herbert."

"I know some people in the village, who don't understand me, think so."

"Just because they don't understand you, but what people don't understand they should not speak about. My father is very proud of you."

"Your father!"

"He is, indeed. My father will judge

no one by hearsay; he thinks you have been ill-used by stupid people who can't sympathize with your ways."

"Good! And your mother?"

"She also has a high opinion of you."

Annie's heart would let her say no less, though she felt the statement she had made required some qualification.

"Then you think, Annie, they would not be averse to our marriage?"

"Oh! I wish they knew you as I do, Herbert; but they could not say No."

"That is the point; they don't know me. Beside, old heads are hard to reason with—they are full of laws and ceremonies gathered from experience, and whatever does not square with these is set aside. When I next visit the Mill, however, I shall break the matter carefully to your father. Will that do?"

"Yes."

The sunset was burning among the

trees on the Chapel Hill as they reached the Priory.

"This is your favourite seat," said Herbert, leading her into the hallowed enclosure. "Let us rest here. You seem tired."

"Do I?"

"Yes; you have not been ill?

"No, Herbert. I am only too happy, that's all."

For a long time they sat together on that clump of brown grass. Annie was happy, and his presence made her bold and strong. She felt she could bear anything if she only had his approval and his love. Herbert was proud of her. He discovered a tenderness growing upon him which he had never experienced before. He was charmed, and, for a time, purified, by the truth, beauty, and earnestness of those thoughtful, innocent eyes, into whose depths he looked, and in which

he found such admiration and trust. In her presence, his desire was to wipe out all the past and open a fresh page for the future. As they left the Ruin, Annie led him round by the lower terrace, and showed him the "Lichen Well," with its beautiful shades of green and its clear cool water; then they wandered homeward by the Priory Wood. The sun had set, but they stood lingeringly in each other's arms at the last stile.

"So you are happy, Annie?" said Herbert, after a pause, looking tenderly down upon her.

"Yes—but——"

"But what, dear?"

"It is so hard to part."

"It is, indeed," said Herbert; "but we shall soon meet again—you will promise to be strong and firm?"

"Oh! Herbert, it is so hard."

"But, dear, you must."

"Then I will." Annie summoned all her firmness to aid in the articulation of this last sentence, and Herbert sealed the resolution with a kiss. As she hurried through the Wood the distant future seemed bright and beautiful with his love; but immediately before her there was a fearful shadow, and that shadow was her own home.

CHAPTER X.

AN IMPORTANT OPERATION.

It was never known whether the theft of Girzy M'Intosh's body had any reference to the illness of Miss Lee and the steps that were subsequently pursued by the doctors with a view to her recovery. It may be said, however, that Dr. Calder, who had studied and taken his degree at Oxford University, was a personal friend of Mr. Sheffeld, and from this circumstance, as well as from the interest naturally excited by the peculiarity of the case, he was intensely anxious about the result. It was a fact that immediately after the

mysterious opening of the pauper's grave, Dr. Fergusson and he had spent many hours together in the pathological sanctum of the latter in the Old College, High Street, discussing the case, and while an operation had been decided upon as the result of their deliberations, they could not but feel that the issues of the course they proposed to adopt were of a doubtful nature.

"I have secured the services of Professor Fergusson," wrote Dr. Calder to Sheffeld, on the eve of this important event, "and so far as human skill and care can go to save a life, you may trust us; but at the best it is an experiment which, even with the greatest watchfulness and attention, may fail."

The agony of the lover in London, during the long days of anxiety that intervened, was intense, but the eagerly expected bulletin at last reached him—

the work of the surgeons had been successful. So the sun of hope once more burst through the gloom, and the "grey bird joy" again sang in the air.

The next post brought with it a little note, hurriedly written.

It was as follows:—

"My dear, dear Edward,

"The dreaded crisis is over. The Doctor says he has been successful, though I am still very weak; but, dearest, I would willingly suffer it all over again for your sake. I hope God will spare me to make you happy.

"Annie Dawson has kindly written this for me. I shall never be able to repay her for all her kindness. Auntie is quite well, and is preparing a little wine toddy for me. Poor dear creature, she has suffered greatly too."

In six weeks Nelly Lee was so well as

to be able to take her first walk. It was a great morning, that, in the household. The doctor had called on the day previous and granted the joyous license for a short stroll in the garden, with, if the weather should prove favourable, a rest in the arbour under the drooping willow. The pleasure which the announcement brought was about equally divided between the invalid and her aunt. Miss Mackenzie, as might be expected, was not idle on the occasion. She was engaged all the morning with matters pertaining to the comfort and adornment of her niece. The blue merino dress (that colour, she considered, would suit her best) had hung on the winter-dykes in the kitchen for hours, to air, lest the shadow of dampness should have passed over it, or lest the closeness of the wardrobe should have robbed it of that freshness which she deemed so essential to the personal comfort of her niece.

"We hae snatched ye, as it were, frae the very fingers o' Death," Miss Mackenzie said, as she put Nelly's boots on the fender, "and we maun tak' care o' ye noo. Jenny, see that ye put the red cushion on the summer-seat, and see til't that ye hae the wee stool for her feet, as I telt ye. Eh, lass, but Providence is kin' in sending such a guid day."

The experiment in the garden was repeated daily, when the weather was favourable, with the very best results, and Nelly's convalescence was both rapid and satisfactory—so much so, indeed, that the Doctor informed them his presence was no more required, and that the gathering of strength was simply a matter of time. Annie and Nelly were now very much together: a new sympathy had sprung up between them, and they wandered frequently, as of old, through the woods, and visited the pleasant haunts which they

used to know so intimately in childhood. It was a happy time for these two loving hearts, with their new hopes and desires. When Nelly grew weary with the exertion of the walk, they would rest on the trunk of a fallen tree or on a dry mossy bank, but most frequently of all within the sacred walls of the Priory, and there lay bare to each other their mutual loves.

Annie's love was keen, impulsive, and restless ; but Nelly's was deep and earnest, interwoven so strongly and completely with her whole being that all her thoughts and feelings were steadily obedient to its influence.

At this time Mr. Sheffeld enjoyed the feast of correspondence to the full. It was after one of Nelly's long forenoon rambles with Annie early in September that she wrote the following letter :—

"Glenara, Thursday.

"My dearest Edward,

"I have just returned from a long walk in the Castle grounds and through the Priory Wood. I wish you could see me sitting here in this little snuggery as I write. My cheeks are quite tanned with the sun, and I feel so very strong. Aunt has gone to the village to buy some wool. She says I am getting into idle habits, and must do some knitting, so until she returns I will dedicate the time to you. I have tried your recommendation, dear, as to early rising for the last week, and find myself ever so much better. Whether it be from the practice, or from the fact of your having recommended it, I cannot tell. How pained I have been about your cold! I hope you are taking something for it—some sirrup or cough mixture. I only wish I were near you, that I might nurse you when you are ill. Be sure and let

me know in your next letter how you are. I would prefer, dear, if you put off our wedding till spring. I know how uncomfortable you must have been during my illness, and how cheerless your life is all alone by yourself; but I have such a lot of things to get ready, and such a deal to learn before entering upon so important a duty, that I feel it will take me all this time to prepare for it. Indeed, I sometimes wonder, if ever I can be worthy of you—if ever I shall be able to do for you all my heart would prompt me to do. I am afraid not, but if you will kindly bear with me in my shortcomings I shall do my very best. I am glad your pic-nic came off well. I should like to have seen you flirting with your senior partner's daughter at Waterfall Gardens on that beautiful July day. Beware! You know what Ruth did to Boaz; that would have been meet punishment for such transgression. Shall I tell

you? She pulled his ears and trod upon his corn! My old friends the Comptons were there, too. I can imagine what a brilliant galaxy of beauty and fashion you would make. Poor dear Annie Dawson! My heart was sore for her to-day. Mr. Rodger failed to keep his engagement yesterday afternoon, and the poor creature is nearly distracted. She is so fond of him. Her fear is that some accident may have befallen him at Glammerton Fair. You cannot understand, dear, how prone we girls are to invent horrors with which to torture ourselves when anything seems to go wrong; but that is one of our weaknesses, you know. I don't think she closed her eyes all last night, and you would have been sorry for her if you had seen her to-day. But I hope, for her sake, it may yet all be well. Oh, Edward, I wish you had been with me to-day in the woods. It only required your dear presence to complete

my happiness. If you could only visit the Castle grounds, I know you would be so pleased. The river is not like the one we knew in Kent; nor are the banks here like the dear banks with the moss and the violets which heard our first confession of love. They are much grander than anything I ever saw in England; but this I know you will put down to provincial prejudice. The trees, too, are so stately and mature in their foliage, and the September sun has given a fine mellow colour to the leaves. But, dear, it is sad to think that this very beauty is the first stage of decay. We visited the Lichen Well, the Trysting Tree, and the old Priory, to all of which I shall lead you when you come. The Sabbath evening school for the village children, of which I told you a month ago, is getting on most satisfactorily. The Minister takes a deep interest in it, and I believe it is likely to do much good. I

have promised to take a class in the course of a week or two. The Doctor called two days ago. He says my health is likely to be better now than ever it has been. Do you know, Edward, I shall respect that man as long as I live. I never shall be able to tell you all he has done for me, but I hope God will bless him abundantly for it. I suppose you will be tired with this long letter. I had much more to say, but Auntie has returned with the worsted, and I must try and make myself useful now. As I write, she comes in to say that I am to send her kindest regards to you, which I beg to do herewith. Take care of yourself, dear. Tell me early how your cold is, and I'll write soon.

"Ever your own affectionate

"NELLY."

The new relationship which existed between Annie Dawson and the young

laird of Blair Farm was now tolerably well understood in the village. Perhaps a careful analysis of the feelings of those who knew the parties, and who took the trouble of thinking over the matter at all, would have shown that there existed some regret that the Miller's daughter had thrown so much youth and beauty and goodness away on a person so unlike her in every way; but as nobody felt specially interested, this regret was never expressed by any one in the presence of the Miller or his family. So far as the Miller himself was concerned, it would have been utterly unavailing. Mr. Dawson was not the man to be easily turned aside by public opinion. He had given his consent to the match, not only because he understood there was reciprocity of feeling, but in order also to vindicate the wisdom of his choice. On the whole, Herbert Rodger's reputation was improving: his increased personal

attention to the farm was commented upon even by his own servants. Betty Brown, who prided herself on her unfailing prescience of events, told the lame servant, one morning as they sat together at breakfast, that she believed the maister wad come to something yet, but she didna like that brandy-drinkin', tobacco-smokin', ill-tongued bruit, Hobbs.

"Ye ken, Jeen, maisters hae a richt to do what they like. Aye mind that, for I wadna like to instil wrang thochts intae onybody's head, far less intae a glaiket head like yours; but it is my opinion that the maister wad hae less o' the deevil aboot the hoose if Hobbs was awa'."

Herbert's attendance at Church gradually became more irregular; but he had entered his name as an annual contributor to the Foreign Missions in connection with the Church of Scotland, and had sent a donation of £5 to the Sick Ministers'

Relief Fund in Edinburgh, an act which got into the *Record*, and was spoken of with some favour in the village. During all this time he was a frequent visitor at the Mill, and every wise or benevolent deed, as it became known, raised him in the family estimation. Annie valued Herbert's good name far above anything else in the world. It may have been partly because she herself once doubted it. There was no discourse so sweet to her ear as that which took notice of any act that tended to elevate him in public favour. She never was so truly happy as when in his presence. There was such a charm in his conversation, and his admiration of her was so fascinating and sweet. In addition to the formal visits at the Miller's house, they had frequent meetings in secret at the Priory, and happy summer rambles by the river and through the woods; but these meet-

ings were all too brief and unfrequent for the demands of Annie's love. Of late he had seemed a little changed. He was not quite so often at the Mill nor in the Priory Wood; but Annie knew he must have been so busy in getting in the harvest, which was said to be not so abundant as had been expected. His speech was not so direct now, nor his conversation so well sustained: he would sometimes walk by her side, looking thoughtfully at the ground, without speaking a word, until her voice would startle him out of his reverie. But she loved him all the same—nay, her love and sympathy for him were increased. There might be some pecuniary difficulty, of which he would not tell her, weighing heavily upon him. Many reasons came to her mind to account for these unpleasant moods. Annie's heart was as full as ever of hopeful trust. She knew his affection for her was

so true, so tender, that he would not willingly give her pain. The disappointment referred to in Nelly Lee's letter was keenly felt—one of the sharp incisive pangs that make young people old. The worst of it was she had to bear the whole of it herself, as her parents were not aware of the tryst. These rustic rambles were not all under parental sanction. There are doings of ineffable sweetness to youth which age would write down as folly. Annie kept all the secret sorrow in her own heart. The day after Herbert's engagement to meet her at the Priory passed, yet there was no word from him. She would fain have walked over to the farm, but a sense of propriety held her in check. Had her parents known what was preying upon her mind, they could easily have assuaged the anxiety; but she had not courage to tell the truth. The next day came, but still there was no word, and her

conviction grew into a certainty that some dreadful thing had come over him. Only an accident or something worse could deter him from breaking this terrible suspense. She went to see Mrs. Wilson early in the day, but her mind was so unsettled that the customary chapter was left unread. Mrs. Dawson marked her nervous restlessness, and questioned her closely about her health, but she was ashamed to tell the cause of her anxiety. That evening, after the mill stopped, there came partial relief. Her father, in the course of conversation, observed that he had seen Mr. Rodger driving the bay horse at a steady trot past Biglea Farm.

She breathed freely. He was safe. He would come over immediately. What a history he would have to tell her! How he would regret causing her so much anxiety!

That night she slept soundly. Next morning, after breakfast, she hurried over

to tell Nelly that her fears had been groundless—that, in fact, he was safe, and must have been detained by some insurmountable obstacle. In the afternoon, while going to the Priory, she met him in the wood. After all, Annie was not too exacting. She had thought to punish him for disappointing her; but in his presence her petulancy vanished. His simple statement that business of importance had detained him at the fair, was all the explanation she received, or, indeed, cared to have. Beside him, the past was forgotten, and all that she knew, or desired to know, was that the present was full of joy.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MISFORTUNES OF GENIUS.

All this time a genius had been growing up in the parish within the humble outer habiliments of a gingham weaver. John Thomson had been born to make a "flying machine, and make a flying machine he would." On the whole, the weaving had been pretty good during the spring and summer, but the Weaver's family were not exempt from the ordinary ills to which flesh is heir. Jock was laid up with scarlatina, and wee Jean had had a severe attack of the measles. The neighbours all said they were "bonny measles," but

John Thomson could not see the beauty of anything that stood in the way of the flying machine; and, as misfortunes seldom come in single file, his guidwife, to crown the series, presented him with an infant son, which Sandy M'Lean's mother declared was the "real pictur o' his faither; far liker him nor Jock, wha was a mongral bairn, and like naebody ava." Invention, under these circumstances, he found to be very uphill work. One day in Glasgow, for twopence, he had picked up a ragged life of Bernard Pallissy, the potter, which he nibbled like a sweet cake in secret. He dared not show the volume to his wife, for she had a favourite text which she used to crack over his head like a whip, and which smarted him almost as keenly, and he knew that a sermon from this text would be the certain result of an acquaintance with the life of the French potter.

"Think on the words o' the apostle,"

she would say when the family got into straits through John's zeal for the public good, "If a man neglecks the folk in his ain hoose he's waur nor an infidel."

To do her justice, however, this strong style of address was sparingly used, and was called forth only by the severe pinch of necessity. At heart she sympathized a good deal with the project her husband had in hand, and was not without hope that the scheme might yet come to something; but to confess as much to John would have been equivalent to opening the door to stark destitution. Though exposed to much disheartenment, John always recovered patience and determination from a fresh perusal of his book.

About this time a rather unfortunate incident occurred in the history of the scheme, which seriously damaged his credit in the eyes of some who looked upon him as a successful rising man.

Jock and Jean had recovered from their ailments, and the little "pictur of himself" was thriving quite equal to expectation. John had had a hard week's work, and to his wife's great satisfaction he finished his web on Friday afternoon in time for payment before the shutting of the agent's office. It so happened, too, that John was as well pleased with himself as his wife was, and he considered that he had justly earned a little liberty, which he decided should assume the shape of a treat. Having settled this matter, he next made up his mind that the subject of this benevolence should be his intimate friend and admirer, the Beamer, whom he speedily sought out and conducted into the kitchen of the Bird in the Hand Tavern. The engrossing subject of conversation was the flying machine. The Beamer was the only person of his acquaintance who seemed fully to understand the utility of

the invention, and who could enter into the discussion of the subject with anything like intelligent appreciation, so that John, heated by the talk, stayed rather later than he intended. During the course of the evening the Nailer, the Shoemaker, the Beadle, and Ballynahinch, were added to the company and joined in the discussion. Ballynahinch and the Nailer doubted very much the practicability of the scheme, the Shoemaker shook his head and declined to offer an opinion either way, while the Beadle and the Beamer were sanguine of the ultimate success of the project.

"Sure, isn't it against all rason yez are talkin'," said Ballynahinch, as the discussion proceeded. "If the Creator had meant us to fly, couldn't He have give us wings just as ready as not. It would have been no trouble in the world to Him."

"Haud there," said the Shoemaker, speaking from his neutral ground. "On

the same line o' argument, if He had meant us to be astronomers He wad ha' given us een to go oot an' in like telescopes. I dinna agree wi' ye there, lad."

"I have heard the deevil had a hand i' the makin' o' that telescope," said the Beadle, doubtfully. "Troth, I think we hae enough to dae wi' oorsel's, without fashin' oor heads aboot oot-o'-the-way stars and things like that."

"I dinna ken muckle aboot stars or telescopes," remarked the Weaver confidently. "Ye'll seldom get an able man that kens everything; but as to makin' a machine to carry ye through the air, I'm perfect sure o' that, and I believe ye'll see men, ay, and women tae, fleein' through the air on my principle before ye dee."

"I don't know what your principle is," said Ballynahinch, with a wicked wink at the Shoemaker, "but I can tell you this, John, that I have seen men flying often

enough before now without any principle at all; but I'll never believe it can be done as you say till I see you as high as the top of your own chimley—now, boy."

The Weaver was considerably chagrined at this defiant scepticism. A strong desire sprang up in his mind to dispel it at once by a practical test, and then cut the sceptics out of his favour for ever. But this he was hardly prepared to announce, so with an ominous shake of the head, which announced far more than his words, he said, "Weel, weel, ye'll see."

That night, when he got home, he went and cast all his week's earnings into his wife's lap.

"That's no bad, Mattie, for five days, eh?"

"No bad, John; but the shop's to pay, that'll tak' the maist o't, and I have to gie Maister Wotherspoon twa and thripence

for the plants and the seedlings. Whaur hae ye been?"

"I hae anger't mysel' wi' twa blockheads about the machine," said John, lighting the candle.

"Aren't ye gaun tae yer bed?"

"No, Mattie, no yet; I maun gie the wings a bit ca' through first; I'll show them that the thing can be dune. Go ye to yer bed, and I'll be after ye."

Mattie pled on the ground that he needed rest after his sore week's work; but John was inexorable.

"Whaur's that black silk claith?"

"It's in the press 'yont the hoose; wait though, and I'll get it, for ye hae nae hands to let in among claes. But, man, it wad be wiser like gin ye gied tae yer bed."

John paid no attention to the admonition, but took the cloth and the candle and quietly marched "ben the hoose" and instantly set to work. John laboured all

night most assiduously, and at six o'clock in the morning, when his wife turned in bed and blessed herself, and asked him if he was "daft," he came joyously into the kitchen and told her that the wings were finished.

"Just look at that," he said, as he fastened them on and gave two or three flaps; "there's nae mair need for leg power noo, Mattie; I could flaff ower the hoose like a corbie, and mount like the eagle. Eh, Mattie, Mattie, this'll be a great day for Glenara. I'll show them what can be dune by a weaver.—A we-a-v-er!" shouted the inventor, with an expression of scorn, "I'll mak' them confess I was a genius in a weaver's brat" (apron). Mattie lay looking out at her husband in silent wonder. She was more than astonished at the contrivance of the man. "He's no unlike a fleein' cratur," she thought, "and what if I have been

keepin' him doon." Several pangs of regret visited her that day, as she lay looking out at the man who seemed to be possessed of the wings of the morning. "Preserve us, John, but ye hae an awfu' head for contrivances."

"Ay, nae doot," said her husband, making a further trial of the wings.

"Ye'll blaw us oot the hoose!"

"Dinna fear ye."

"Mercy! but ye will, though; ye hae blawn the blankets clean aff the wean."

"Weel, weel," said John, stopping to examine the fastenings of the silk, "we'll hae a better trial by and by."

"Is it finished noo?"

"A' barrin' the tail."

"What's the tail for?"

"Guidn't. It's no unlike the witch's broomstick. I got the idea frae ane o' the pictures in Allan Ramsay: only the broom-head is turned intil a wing. If I had it

ready I micht be in Edinburgh before breakfast time. But I'll astonish them this day."

This announcement was made with such an air of confidence that his spouse shifted the "wean" to the other side, turned her face to the wall, and dreamt that she saw her husband flying round the sun in company with a couple of eagles.

Jock was roused earlier than usual that morning, and found that his porridge was steaming on the table waiting for him. Jock considered there must be a purpose in all this, but nothing was revealed until he had finished the last spoonful.

"Jock?"

"Ay."

"Are ye through wi' yer parrich?" Jock gave a double-syllabled affirmative through his nasal organ, and nodded at the same time, indicating not only that he was done, but that he was willing to obey his father's behests.

"This'll be a great day for ye, Jock." said the father, still dressing the wings. "Rin doon tae the Beamer's a' yer pith, and tell him I'm gaun tae flee; tell him to bring the Beadle, the Eerishman, the Shoemaker, and the Nailer, and ony ither body that's interested in the invenshen, for I'm gaun tae flee frae the lum-tap this day at twal' o'clock. I'll show them what a weaver can do." For a minute Jock stood looking at his father with wide-eyed astonishment.

"But ye'll no be like Neil Fulton's guiss, faither; ye'll come back again?"

"Of coorse, laddie, of coorse, but rin yer eerand. Ye ken what to say?" Jock, satisfied that his father was not going to be so foolish as Neil Fulton's goose, replied in the double-syllabled nasal affirmative, and took his departure. Jock, as instructed, went to the Beamer with the news, but everybody he met by the way

had a special hint of what was going to take place at twelve o'clock, and in a very short time the report was well spread through the village that Weaver Thomson had completed his machine, and was going to fly. At half-past eleven o'clock there was a large crowd gathered in front of the inventor's house, composed chiefly of women, children, and grown-up boys, all assembled according to appointment to see the wonderful phenomenon of a flying man. John's particular friend, the Beamer, had arrived, and was serving the double purpose of helping on the wings and consoling Mattie, who was afraid her husband might either fly away from her altogether or fall and hurt himself.

"Tut, Mattie, woman, what are ye aye yaummerin' at? Haven't I telt ye aboot a dizen times that I winna leave ye. Ye ken fine I canna gang far wantin' the tail."

"Of coorse no," said the Beamer, with

an air of the fullest confidence. "He'll only gie a bit flutter owre the wud, seeing that the tail's no ready, and he needs the lum tap to gie him a bit lift, ye ken. There's nae danger in the worl'."

With this assurance her "yaummering" ceased, and the Beamer was allowed to give his whole attention to the adjustment of the wings. During this time the adult male population of the village was fast gathering outside of the cottage. Amongst the crowd, in a conspicuous group, were seen the Beadle, the Nailer, the Shoemaker, and Ballynahinch.

"What's wrong with your face, Robert?" inquired the Shoemaker of the Nailer, whose cheek was visibly swollen.

"Man, I hae had a sair swing o' the toothache."

"Gore, and it's no a canny thing that."

"I was at the Doctor's before breakfast time, and left it there."

"I have aye thocht that the best plan," said the Grocer, who had now joined the party. "Get it drawn, and it never fashes ye again."

"Weel, M'Auslane, it was eating a piece o' yer new bacon that brought it on."

"Ay, that's a pity," said the Grocer, "for it's no bad bacon. I took guid care wi' the feedin' o't."

"I think it's just a shade owre lean," said the Nailer. "I like it weel mixed."

"Besides bein' a kennin' owre dear," remarked the Beadle. "There's no muckle danger o't gein' me the toothache, Robert."

"Talking of rearing well-mixed bacon," said Ballynahinch, "I could give you a hint on that subject, John."

"What is that?"

"Some Eerish trick, nae doot," said the Beadle.

"Feed it well one week and starve it

the next, and you'll have a streak of lean and a streak of fat time about."

In the laugh which followed, the Grocer came into a disagreeable altercation with Danny Macfarlane's mother. The incident happened in this wise: Danny, who was anxious to have a good view of the Weaver's ascent, had effected a nice balance of himself on a high fence opposite the door, and had begun to crow like a cock, to the great amusement of the younger members of the crowd, when the Grocer, being more than commonly tickled with the Irishman's joke, staggered back, and in the act of lifting his right hand to bring it forcibly down on his left, he struck Danny on the breast and sent him heels over head into the field beyond. In a moment the vixen came up to the attack.

"What did ye dae that for, Mr. Cheat-the-public?"

"I meant nae harm, mistress; tak' care o' yer words."

"Tak' care o' my words! Tak' care o' yer ain neeves, ye limb o' Sautan. Ye hae maist killed my bairn."

At this moment the Weaver's head made its appearance through the skylight window, and a grand chorus of cheering, led by the Beadle, was commenced and continued for nearly a minute, by which time the shoulders and the wings, and finally the nether limbs, had emerged from the opening, and the Weaver stood, life-size, on the rigging, with his wings outspread, as if in the act of pronouncing a benediction on the spectators who had come to see him making his *débût* in mid air.

"Dinna gang owre far for the first," cried the Shoemaker, as John reached his perch—the "lum tap."

"Oh, he'll no venture far wantin' the tail," explained the Beamer, who had now come out to watch the success of the

experiment. There was breathless suspense. John stood for a moment with outspread wings, like a swimmer on the brink of a broad river which he must cross, the spectators the while eagerly expecting the plunge. The Inventor, however, anxious to draw forth their interest to the full, gave two or three preliminary flaps.

"He's awa," cried the Beadle, shutting his eyes, and groaning inwardly.

"No yet," said the Shoemaker. He had staggered a little, but recovered himself. John's own feelings at this point were not quite so exultant as they had been. He was beginning to fear, as he looked on the serious height of his position, that he had maybe been too precipitate in his decision. What if the buckles or the silk should give way? What if, not being able to guide himself, he should flutter into the river? These

and other thoughts occurred to him as he stood there; but twelve o'clock struck. Now was the time for attempting the one great aim of his life; and repeating to himself that he would either "mak' a spoon or spoil a horn," he leapt forward, gave a desperate flutter; as he did so his arms went up, his wings lost their hold on the air, and falling heavily at the end of the house, he broke his leg—so, for a time at least, the starry kingdoms were saved from invasion by the winged races of men.

CHAPTER XII.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

"'Neck or Nothing,' Hobbs. I believe that is the winning horse," said Rodger, as he and the person named rode out together on the morning of Stappleton Races; "but keep your head clear and watch the betting. If you lose this, I am ruined."

"Temporary ruination," Hobbs said. "A man with the prospect of £20,000, unburdened by a single condition, should not speak of ruination. In any case, you must meet that bill of mine which falls due to-morrow. It will neither suit you nor me to have anxious inquirers coming so far north."

"Well, we shall see. Let us hope for success. I will not grudge you a handsome commission if the result be satisfactory. I suppose my people expect I am going to the races to-day," Herbert said; "but I'll see that the d—ls do their work. I must go down by the mill by-and-by, and show myself. Be sure you keep steady, Hobbs."

"I promise you I shall taste nothing till the business is over."

"You will return immediately and let me know the result?"

"Immediately."

"Then, I shall ride out and meet you in the evening."

Herbert turned his horse, and rode back to the farm. It was yet very early in the morning, and there were few persons abroad. The harvest lay around him everywhere, in rich yellow "stooks" of grain. Glenara, with its church and

manse half enveloped in trees, slumbered beneath him. Beyond, were seen the broken walls of the Castle and Priory, and further down the course of the river he could see the blue smoke rising from the Miller's chimney. The sky was without a cloud, the air was perfectly calm, and the pleasant morning silence was only broken at intervals by a defiant chanticleer sounding or answering a challenge from a neighbouring farm. Herbert reined his horse off the public road and struck into a quiet lane leading through the centre of Blair Farm. The path was one of pleasant seclusion. His mind was restless and anxious, and his meditations of a somewhat serious character. That day his great card would be played at Stappleton Races, by a man in whom he was rapidly losing confidence. If successful, he should be able to get smoothly over immediate difficulties; if not——He could not bear to

make up his mind as to the consequences. He suspected that Hobbs had already been false to him on several occasions. He had been drinking of late more freely than was seemly, and had raised an unpleasant talk about the farm. Besides all this, his demands for money were growing disagreeably frequent and imperative. Though to some extent in his hands, Rodger felt certain he should be compelled to make a stand on this point, and, as to the result—well, it would doubtless be serious, but he did not care to follow the subject to its darker consequences. He must be rid of him in some way, if ever he meant to establish and maintain his claim to respectability. The twenty thousand pounds of which Hobbs had made so much might be a mere *ruse* after all. He had only the word of an unprincipled man for it, though no doubt it had the appearance of feasibility. Suppose it,

however, to be correct, and suppose he married Annie, the money might be tardy of coming; but a plan crossed his mind whereby it might be more speedily secured, in the carrying out of which Hobbs' assistance would be useful. Thus meditating he reached the farm. After breakfast he slung on his bag, took down his gun, and went out into the fields. Passing quietly down a lane towards the river, he came suddenly upon a dozen labourers sitting under the shelter of a hedge, smoking. At his appearance they started awkwardly to their feet, and endeavoured to hide their pipes. A short distance off a couple of horses were grazing at large, and a couple of carts stood in the field, half-filled with grain. Herbert demanded an explanation of this untimely suspension of work; but the men began to slink off in confusion without uttering a word.

"Where is the Grieve?"

"He gaed to the races, sir, this morning."

"To the races!" reiterated Herbert, using some rather forcible language. "Who is in charge?"

"His son, sir."

"And where is he?"

There was some hesitation before a reply was given.

"He gaed up after breakfast to help Willie Speirs, the keeper, to set some gins."

"Ay, like father like son; and you think you have a right to rob me because others are doing it, and because there is no one left here to see after you?"

Before Herbert had finished there was no one left to answer his interrogation. In a couple of minutes they were all busy at work in the field with an energy to which they were quite unaccustomed.

"This is how it comes," Herbert said,

as he walked slowly down the lane, "that my crops are poor when all others' are good. Every one does as he likes here; it is a system of robbery from bottom to top. Gone to the races, the confounded scoundrel! Just at the time when all hands are needed. But I'll clear them out, root and branch."

That forenoon Herbert devoted to a personal superintendence of the work on the farm, which was pushed forward with unusual celerity. In the afternoon he went over to the braes, where he secured a good bag of game, and returned by the mill. Annie had gone to spend the evening at the Manse, and the Miller, who was wishful to entertain him, insisted on his waiting for tea. Then they drove over to Hillfoot, to see the new machinery for the mill, which was now nearly completed, and which the Miller fully expected would be ready to grind that year's grain. During

all this time Herbert had to assume a fair face. Though he seemed interested, he felt dreadfully bored with the Miller's incessant talk about wheels and cranks, and all that sort of mechanical nonsense. It was a most humdrum business for him, and when he returned to Blair Farm he felt in a very discontented and irritable condition of mind. The Grieve had not returned, neither had Hobbs. The one ought never to have gone, and the other had time to be back. Under these circumstances, he wished he had gone himself. What need had he to become a slave to public opinion? He was impatient and fretful. The issues of the day were weighing heavily upon him, and he paced the apartment restlessly.

"There's a young leddy asking efter ye, sir," said Betty, coming unceremoniously into the room.

"After me?" inquired Herbert, paus-

ing and looking anxiously into the housekeeper's face. "What is she like?"

"She's a nice creatur, and weel put on, too, though pale awee in the face; and she has the bonniest rosebud o' an infant in her arms."

Herbert walked towards the window.

"I am in no humour to receive visitors, Betty," he said, with much agitation in his manner. "Tell her I am not in."

"That ye're no in, sir," retorted Betty; "I canna tell a barefaced lee. She kens fine that ye're in, for I hae telt her that already."

Herbert again paced across the room.

"Do you know what she wants?"

"She says it's private business, but I'll sune see."

"Here, come back; attend to your own work," Herbert cried, as the officious servant was about to leave the apartment. "Send the lady in."

The meeting which ensued was not by any means a cordial one. There seemed to be something of an old friendship between the young farmer and his visitor; but the one was timid and constrained, as if doubtful of her reception, and the other was cold and reserved. Herbert beckoned her to a seat, but continued to pace the room.

"I expected to have seen you before this time, Herbert," said the girl, diffidently.

"Yes, I daresay, but I have been too busy."

"Did you get my letter? I wrote telling you of my illness, but I suppose you did not get it."

"I got a letter from you," he said, coldly.

"Then you will know what I have suffered on your account. I hardly thought I would see you again."

While the girl spoke the tears began to drop over her pale cheeks.

"The fact is, we have all had our suffer-

ings," said Herbert, "and every one has enough to do with his own."

"Oh, Herbert, you are very unkind!" the girl said, sobbing. "I did not expect you would treat me in this way, after coming all this distance to see you. You once loved me. At least you told me so, and I believed you."

"Yes, but we were both foolish then. People change with circumstances."

"But true love never can change, Herbert."

"The heart is deceitful, you know," he said, with a cruel smile, "and it is sometimes hard to tell what is false and what is true. We are often deceived, even by our own feelings. No doubt we have both been very foolish, but we cannot help what is past. A little suffering will rub it all out."

"Then, Herbert, is it possible you have been false?"

"I have not time to argue the question with you now," he replied, impatiently. "I am sorry you should have come so far on such a fruitless errand; but you must just make the best you can of your trouble, for, God knows, I have enough to do with my own! I have an important engagement."

As he spoke he went towards the door, and waited till she should retire. Stunned by the sudden cruelty of his words and manner, the girl passed him without reply, and went out into the twilight, not knowing whither she went. On reaching the highway, in the blindness of her disappointment and grief, she knew not which way to turn. As she paused, Herbert spurred eagerly past her, and while the man to whom she had given all her confidence and love disappeared on the distant winding of the road, she sank down in the darkness of despair. He had not even looked at his own child!

CHAPTER XIII.

A COMPROMISE.

That George M'Whannel was the busiest man in the parish, nobody who knew his duties could for a moment deny. For years he had held the appointment of School-master, Precentor, and Session-Clerk; but the Heritors who, with the Kirk-Session, had the responsibility of relieving the poor, had recently appointed him Almoner to the Relief Committee. Though this was no pleasant task for M'Whannal, it was a source of great comfort to the youngsters attending the school. What could be more agreeable, in the midst of parsing a

piece of difficult English indifferently learned, than to find a swarm of paupers invading the Master's desk, each one in turn insisting on making known the hardship which had brought him into such humiliation. After an invasion of this sort he usually sent the class back to their seats, with instructions to learn next page, and he would hear both lessons on the day following. Next day, however, usually had enough to do with itself, and, with the exception of a little recapitulation, bygones were generally forgotten. The first and third Tuesdays of each month were great days for the scholars. On these days the Relief Committee held its meetings in the school-room, and a half-holiday was inevitable. M'Whannel usually varied the monotony of the ordinary work of the school by a little music on meeting days. The programme generally consisted of secular and sacred music in

equal proportions. His custom was to close with the sacred, in order, as he said, "to cool their young heads, and send them soberly home."

For the last half hour M'Whannel had been indulging in psalm tunes; and, to air his musical knowledge before certain members of the Board who had already arrived, he gave a long dissertation on the subject of three-two time, showing how it was specially adapted to express emphasis and feeling, as seen from the rendering of "Hanover" and "Bellerma," which he sang with much taste and pathos. Having drawn a triangle, with chalk, on the black board, he directed them to let their hands trace that shape in the air while he accompanied them, counting one—two—three. After some time spent in this practice, he called them to a dead silence. "Let us sing the fourth verse of the thirty-ninth Psalm, after which," he said, "I shall ask

my friend, Mr. M'Ilwham the elder, to close with a word of prayer." This verse having been sung by the whole company to the latter of the two tunes already named, Elder M'Ilwham, in a few words, lasting fully twenty minutes, and embracing the "whole worl'," the "Indes," the "Parish," and "a' ither pairts o' the inhabited universe, wi' their folk and peoples," closed, and the schoolmaster, having intimated the half-holiday, dismissed the school.

In the absence of Mr. Clydesdale the minister, Mr. Rodger was called upon to take the chair, and M'Whannel proceeded to read the minutes of the previous meeting. While this was being done, the Beadle came in and handed Herbert a letter, addressed to the Chairman of the Relief Committee. He broke the seal carelessly, attending the while to the various items in the minutes. As his eye fell on the first line he turned visibly

pale, and for the next minute his whole attention was absorbed by the communication. Recovering himself, he folded the letter hurriedly, and endeavoured to assume an air of indifference. The chief business before the meeting was the case of John Thomson, the weaver, whose family was represented as utterly without support, while he himself was confined to bed, dangerously ill from the effects of the fall. After considerable discussion, the Almoner was authorised to give the family six shillings a week until he was persuaded of the weaver's complete convalescence. Having disposed of some minor cases, the Committee then resolved itself into a meeting of the Local Authority, and did business also in that department. The letter which the chairman had received was intended for consideration at that day's meeting, but it was of the utmost importance to him as an individual that

it should not be submitted, and feeling tolerably certain that none of the members present could know whether or not it was a private letter, he put it quietly into his pocket. It was half-past two o'clock when the business was over. He had promised to go down and spend the afternoon and evening at the mill, but circumstances had changed his mind. Going down to the Bird in the Hand Tavern, where he had left his horse, he ordered dinner to be ready as soon as possible, and took a turn over to the churchyard. The Beadle was busy decking a grave with flowers as he entered.

"Who gave you the letter you delivered to me?" he enquired by-and-by with affected indifference.

"The Glasca' carrier, sir. He speer't if I'd tak' it up to the Board-room. Was it no richt? I never look't at the super-scription."

"It was quite right," Herbert said, with a feeling of relief. "The letter was for me. Here is something for your trouble; but you need not mention the circumstance to any one."

Dinner was not quite ready when he returned, so he took out the letter and read it slowly. It was as follows :—

"To the Chairman of the Relief Committee, Glenara.

"SIR,

"I don't know how to make my case plain to you, but I think when you know it, it will recommend itself to your consideration and sympathy. I live in Glasgow with my widowed mother, who is dependent on me for the necessaries of life, which up to three months ago I was able to provide for her, but since that time we have often been without food for days. I am sorry to say that the

author of all this misery is Herbert Rodger of Blair Farm. Two years ago, while I was in a good situation, he came about the place where I was engaged, professed a strong attachment to me, and promised to make me his wife; then he left me, and three months ago his baby was born. Since that time I have been unable to work, and we have often been in a state of destitution. I visited him some days ago to see what he would do, but he put me from him as if I had been worse than a beggar at his door, and as if he had never known me and never professed that he loved me. Begging your pardon for this letter, and hoping you will do something for me,

"I am, Sir,

"Your humble servant,

"ISABELLA GRIEVE."

"Confound her!" he muttered, as he

again folded the letter and put it in his pocket. I might have been ruined, and I have only escaped by a fortunate accident. Had this gone before the Board the result would have been disastrous; but no fault of her's that it did not."

In all this soliloquy regarding what might have been, it never occurred to him that a purer and better reputation than his had been lost, and that by his own wickedness. If a man sin, he may flee from it and grow respectable again in other society; but a sinning woman must abide with her sin, and bear its consequences as long as she lives. Before Herbert had finished dinner he had made up his mind to prevent, if possible, a recurrence of this unpleasant correspondence. Forgetful of his engagement at the mill, and of Annie's longing desire to meet him, he mounted his horse and set his face towards Glasgow. The sun was shining intensely as Herbert

hurried towards the city at a brisk trot. The reapers were busy in the fields, and the yellow grain was fast being gathered and stacked by active hands. In the branches above him the birds sang the hymn of abundance, but Herbert had no sympathy with their song. When a man's purpose is honest there is no suspicion of evil, however much he may be oppressed with labour or care—to him Nature has always a welcome face and a happy voice; but when his path is crooked, and his life morally out of joint, the soothing influence of grass, and flower, and tree, and the beauty of the landscape, are all out of harmony with him, and utterly fail in touching his sympathy or in imparting satisfaction. These reflections were beginning to dawn on Rodger's mind during his restless meditations as he rode along; but he suddenly thrust them from him and hushed the inward voice,

though he knew it spoke with the tongue of wisdom and in the accents of truth.

It was five o'clock when he reached the city and threw the reins on his horse's neck in front of the Tontine Hotel. The sun was flooding the streets with light, and the statue of King William III., at the Cross, stood grimly out against a brilliant background of white sunshine. Turning up High Street in the direction of the College, he walked smartly on for a few minutes until he came to a street leading westward, down which he went; then, stopping in front of a plain but respectable house, he plied the knocker familiarly, and immediately, to his surprise, an unknown face presented itself at the door.

"Is Miss Grieve at home?"

"Oh, sir, she's flittit last Whit Sunday. They say the hoose was owre big for them; but I doot there was mair nor

that if a' things are true. A' that I ken is that they behaved real decent wi' us, and gied us the keys three days before the term—though ye canna keep folk frae speakin', sir."

"Do you know where they have gone?" inquired Herbert.

"Ye ken Sheriff's Close, in the High Street? I think the number is 126, but onybody will let ye see the place. They hae gotten a nice bit hoosie, though it's sma'. I aye feel sorry for folk comin' doon in the world."

Having got rid of his loquacious informant, he soon sought out Sheriff's Close, and was directed to Mrs. Grieve's house. Isabella answered his knock, and exclaiming "Herbert!" instantly burst into tears. Near the window sat the mother, with some white cotton stretched on her knee, over which she had been working with pain and difficulty.

"So you have come," said Mrs. Grieve, taking off her glasses, and speaking with bitterness in her tone; "are you satisfied now with what you have brought us to?"

"Oh, mother!" pleaded the daughter deprecatingly.

"'Don't try to shield the man who has ruined us—who has drawn us from our respectable place in society, and made us a byword in everybody's lips. Oh! it is hard, hard, this labour at three-score; but it is worse to find that one whom you have taken into your house as a friend, and trusted and loved, should turn out a hypocrite and a villain——"

"What does all this mean?" Herbert cried, suddenly growing angry. "I will not be insulted in this way, Mrs. Grieve. If I have done you an injury I have come here in a good spirit to offer reparation, so far as I can; but if this is to continue I must go."

"Oh, mother!" said the daughter, again beginning to cry bitterly, "you are only making matters worse."

"How can they be worse?" demanded the mother, in a hopeless tone; "he has taken from us everything we held dear, and now he comes to tempt us with what he calls reparation, as if virtue and honour and a pure conscience can be purchased with gold."

"What do you want, then?" interrupted Herbert. "What is the meaning of this," he inquired, holding up the letter, "if you don't want money?"

"Ay, that is another proof of what you have brought her to," said the mother. "Before knowing you she was a high-spirited girl, and would have scorned to do what she has this day done against my will. I would have sewed my life out in stitches rather than do that meanness; but, sir, there is a day coming—a great

day—when you will be compelled to make reparation, not to us, for that you never can do, but to One who alone knows the depth of our great sorrow; till then I wish to see you no more."

As she concluded, the poor, proud mother bowed her head on her knee, and hid a grief that was too heavy for tears. Herbert was staggered by such an outburst of bitterness. He was not prepared for this reception, after the letter he had received. He knew the mother was a proud, high-minded woman, but he thought circumstances would have made his present visit pleasant to them, especially when he went with the intention of offering relief. His first impulse was to leave the house, but remembering the object he wished to accomplish, he controlled himself and followed Isabella into a small room, sparingly furnished, which was the only other apartment in the dwelling. His manner

was unusually conciliatory, and his speech very different from what it had been on the last occasion of their meeting.

"The fact is, I never meant to be other than honourable in this matter," he remarked apologetically; "but I need hardly tell you I have been sorely harassed in business, which, you know, unhinges a man, and causes him often to do things that he would otherwise shrink from. I hope you didn't think I meant to desert you?"

"Oh, Herbert, how could I ever hope after what you said? You were so cold and cruel to me.

"Well, that is a matter for which I have since been sorry. It so happened I was crossed before you came. I believe I should have quarrelled with an angel. But why didn't you tell me you wanted money?"

"That was not what I went for, Herbert,"

said the girl, bitterly, "though God knows we have had hardships enough. After what I suffered for you I expected your sympathy, your love, and it was because I got neither that I left your door with a broken heart."

"Well, I am sorry I was so bothered at the time, and apparently so unkind; but, how could you love me and write a letter like this—a letter calculated to blast my reputation and injure me for life?"

"Oh, Herbert, that was not a matter for which I was responsible. I consented to it in the blackness of despair. It was done for me, and I signed it, but we did not know what it all meant till after it had gone."

"Well, well," he replied, with an injured look, "fortunately it did not do much harm, though I expected you would have had a greater regard for my reputation. I shall try in the meantime to make pro-

vision for the child, which you can give to some decent person to nurse."

"Oh, I cannot do that; I cannot give it away. It would be taking the sunshine out of my life."

"No doubt it will be hard, but I think it the best policy, as after our marriage the child can be adopted and brought back." A ray of hope lighted up her tearful face.

"Then you will be *my* husband, my own dear, dear husband, after all. God bless you, Herbert; God bless you!"

"Of course," said Herbert, qualifying the new hope, "circumstances may prevent our marriage taking place immediately; but I think when you understand my intentions you can wait with patience. An old landlady of mine in Bell's Wynd will nurse the child," he continued, "and for the present you could return to your situation and prepare for what awaits you."

"Oh, Herbert, do not ask me to give away my child," pleaded the girl, with upturned face, while fresh tears filled her eyes. "I will wait patiently enough till you are ready; but do not ask me to give it away. I will work night and day for it, but do not compel me to do this hard thing."

"Consider for a moment what I mean. Suppose your child grows up with you, people will always look upon it with suspicion; besides, the boy will be called by a name unpleasant to hear. But send him to a nurse, and after you are married you can adopt him and make him your own son, while society will give us the credit of doing a generous thing. Don't you see what I mean?"

"Yes," she said, wavering under the pressure of the fatal argument, "but won't I have liberty now and then to see him, and take him in my arms and kiss him, and call him my own child?"

"To be sure you may, but the policy I suggest ought to check the desire for too frequent visits. The indulgence of this feeling may do much harm. You must be firm, you know; won't you?" and the deceiver kissed away her hesitancy.

Allured by this crumb of apparent affection, and by the revival of an old hope, the fond mother consented to part with her infant; and after settling some trifling business matters, Herbert left, feeling conscious that, for a time at least, he had stilled a troublesome voice. The sun had half an hour ago gone down behind the sombre architecture of the city. The streets, however, were lively with boys and girls in their games. Skirting the pavement, an earnest file of lads were playing "prison base," while in the centre of the street a happy troupe of girls ran, arm-linked, singing the song of the

"Campsie Dukes." Herbert walked on without taking notice of the youthful enjoyment around him. Though his mission had been so far successful, he felt he had done a mean and cowardly thing. "But a fellow can't get reforming," he said to himself; "these old sores are always breaking out." He was in a most uncomfortable frame of mind. He walked sullenly down High Street, meditating on the difficulties of his position, when, suddenly looking up, he found himself face to face with Dr. Calder.

"Good evening," said Herbert, blandly, but with some embarrassment in his look and tone; "I didn't expect to meet you here, Doctor."

"I dare say not," the Doctor said, quietly.

"You are on business, I suppose?"

"Yes; for some months past I have been giving my friend, Dr. Abernethy, a

little professional aid. He has a large practice about here."

"Indeed!" said Herbert, with a sudden nervousness, which he was sure the Doctor could not fail to perceive. Only a few minutes ago he had given Isabella Grieve money to pay an account headed by the name of the medical gentleman just mentioned.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "BIG SPATE."

HALLOWE'EN was one of the great events of the year at Glenara. Preparations were carried forward in many households for days and days, for the worthy celebration of the occasion. Many a cupboard and "press" knew sweet secrets of rosy apples, shining nuts, and other palatable luxuries; but, barring the scent of these good things, which could not well be retained under lock and key, these custodiers kept their secret faithfully.

It was a particularly busy day amongst the youngsters. Mr. M'Whannel had

given them a two days' holiday, and the thought of being free from lessons and early rising on the day after the evening of festivities and dissipation brightened the prospect of their enjoyment. All day long, turnips had been undergoing laborious excavation, and grotesque designs were being carved in a rude, artistic fashion on the outer rind. Kail-stocks, surmounted with bits of candle, were also ready to take their part in the general illumination. In every house the biggest "byne" had been specially scoured for the "dooking." The potatoes were pared and placed in the large pot, and the mysterious ring, thimble, and button were ready to be stirred up with them, in order to solve an interesting problem in the future of youthful lovers.

The Miller's household was amongst the busiest of the busy that day. From early morning it had been in a stir of preparation

for the festivities of the night. This was also Annie's birthday, and as the Miller felt it was probably the last that should fall to be celebrated under his roof, he made up his mind that it should be kept in a fashion truly worthy of her prospects.

During the day an additional cause of anxiety pressed itself upon his mind. The large sluice connecting the river with the mill-dam had partially given way under the heavy pressure of the "spate," and threatened to inundate the house and the mill. For several days the rain had been almost continuous, and the river was so swollen that the pathway on its banks was rendered impassable. The Bush Glen meadows were lying two feet deep in water. The Miller was greatly alarmed, and despatched a messenger for the Smith and the Cartwright, while he and several of his men endeavoured to stop the breach. There had not been such a rise on the

river for many years—not since the time the old sluice had broken down, and when the wheel and part of the gable of the mill had been carried away. It was some time before the tradesmen arrived; but, under the skilful direction of the Miller, his men had been successful in propping the damaged sluice against the violence of the stream.

"A gey spate this, Mr. Dawson," said the Smith, wiping the perspiration from his broad, grim face. "We have had a race for't; just haud on twa meenits, lads, and we'll gie ye relief." The Smith was down on his knees making a diagnosis of the fracture. The cause of the mischief was not long of being discovered. The flanges of the groove in which the sluice worked had been forcibly sprung, and the pressure from without threatened to wrench the whole fixture away. There was no time to lose in the elaboration of a plan. Some

simple and effective barrier was what the circumstances demanded, and this the tradesmen were not long in providing. For half an hour they all worked with a will, and, after careful inspection, the Miller expressed his belief that the extemporized barrier would stand until the river fell. The accident naturally caused much consternation in the Miller's family—so much so, indeed, that the anxiety about culinary operations gave place to apprehensions regarding the safety of life and property.

"There's nae fears o't noo, I suppose," said Miss Mackenzie (who with her niece had come over to assist at the Miller's), addressing Mr. Dawson as he came in with a large auger in his hand, after the alarm had subsided.

"I hope there's no danger," replied the Miller, seriously; "but the spate would thole to settle soon. I fear there's too

great a current on yet for the resistance of the sluice."

"It is such a pity," said Mrs. Dawson, shaking some raw potato parings from her apron.—"Girzie, turn that tairt and wash thae raisins weel before putting them into the dumpling.—Poor Philip, he'll just no hae a bit o' pleasure for thinking about it."

"I should say there's no muckle wrang wi't if the Smith has dune his will to't," remarked Miss Mackenzie, encouragingly; "he's a man who winna do things by halves."

"Will I put a' thir tauties on?" inquired Girzie, looking doubtfully at the large gobletful which Miss Mackenzie and Mrs. Dawson had just pared.

"Put them all on! Of course, lassie; what are you doubtful about?"

"I was just speerin," replied the servant, with a puzzled smile. "Atween the tauties and the tairts, an' ae thing an' anither, they'll no want for guid meat an' plenty o't."

This was Girzie's first term in "genteel" service, as she termed it. She had been brought up as a farm servant in Selkirkshire, and knew the "gauge" of ploughmen and labourers, but such unseemly abundance for a small genteel party was what she could not quite understand.

Mrs. Dawson and Miss Mackenzie undertook the work of the kitchen, while Annie and Nelly Lee exercised their taste and skill in otherwise putting things in order for the occasion. Nelly's thoughts were pretty much in London that day. The previous morning had brought with it a letter—the letter of letters—in which it was definitely fixed that the marriage should take place at the New Year. Her lover had pressed her to this early celebration of the event. Miss Mackenzie's remark, on her opinion being asked, was characteristic —"What will be, maun be," she said; "it's folly to try and hinder it: men'll hae their

way." In the circumstances, Nelly had left the matter entirely in his hands, and now he had had his way.

"I am glad you have given me something to do to-day," Nelly said, as she polished vigorously the lid of a Britannia-metal teapot. "If I had not had something to do, I should have been thinking and making myself unhappy."

"Unhappy!" said Annie, with a look of surprise. "Just to think of one's wedding-day being fixed and being unhappy. Nothing but marriage itself should bring more happiness."

"I believed so, too," said Nelly, looking at her companion with a watery mist gathering in her eyes; "but somehow I feel as if I could cry, now that it is all settled, just to think the strange life is so near at hand."

"No doubt it will be a great change," said Annie seriously, taking down the

antique china with the blue pattern; "no doubt, but it must be so pleasant to have your own house, your own husband, everything your own—it makes you feel you are somebody, you know."

"To be sure, so it does," said the bride-elect, drying her tears. "To have somebody all to yourself to care for and to lean upon is a great matter; and Edward is so very kind. Just think of how he charges me to take care of myself during winter. I wrote him that you meant to invite Dr. Calder for to-night, and he says he has engaged the Doctor to be my partner and take care of me in his absence. When did you see Mr. Rodger?"

"Last night. He called as he came home from Lanark, but it was late. He said the markets were bad—— Who comes?"

"Miss Annie Dawson?"

"Yes."

"A parcel for you, mem," said the messenger.

"What's that?" cried the mother from the kitchen.

"A man with a parcel for me."

"A birthday present, nae doot," said Miss Mackenzie, dusting the cover of a large tureen. "Bring it ben and let us see what it is." Annie brought it in and put it on the kitchen table, and with a flush of impatience on her face, began to undo the cords, which was a matter of difficulty, as it was well tied. In a few seconds the lid of the box was sprung, when lo! amidst the upper packings of white cotton wool was discovered a morocco case with a beautiful gold brooch and necklet. The search was continued further down; and in numerous wrappages of brown and tissue paper a satin dress was discovered, and further down still they came upon a gorgeous harness shawl, in the folds of

which they found an envelope, on which was written, in a rude and unfamiliar hand "To Miss Annie Dawson, of Glenara, from an unknown friend." Annie's hand shook with joyous excitement as the valuable articles were turned over.

"Annie, dear," said the mother, seriously, "how have these things come here?"

"I have not the slightest knowledge, mother, any more than yourself. I did not expect them."

Mrs. Dawson put on her glasses and turned the box upside down, thinking to discover some error in the address. But it could not be mistaken. There it was, in the same unknown hand, "Miss Annie Dawson, Glenara, Scotland, N.B."

Annie stood looking at the presents in a delightful puzzle. She felt as if she had all at once become rich, but the personal regard which the gifts betokened was dearer to her heart than any material

value they possessed. It was so mindful of him—so like his dear, kind, generous heart—and the markets so bad, too. She examined the address; it was not his writing, but of course that was simply designed to add to the happy mystery.

Miss Mackenzie, in her womanly fashion, doffed her apron, spread a sheet of brown paper over her knee, and proceeded to an examination of the quality of the material.

"My lassie, ye should be prood o' yersel', for I hinna seen better stuff oot o' London; and though I'm nae judge o' gold, I's warrant the jewellery is nae waur. Just you see what your daughter has gotten this day, Maister Dawson."

The Miller, who had come in, for the moment forgot the broken sluice, and, coming awkwardly forward, examined the articles with a pleased look on his face. "Love makes fools of us all, Miss Mac-

kenzie ; but he hasn't disgraced your birthday, Annie," said the Miller, turning suddenly to his daughter.

Annie's face flushed deeply. There was no ambiguity in her mind regarding the personal pronoun employed by her father, The happy suspicion which she had at first entertained had been confirmed by it, and the look of pleasure on the paternal face enhanced the value of the gift. Mrs. Dawson was not the least gratified of the party, though she suppressed the free expression of her thoughts. She had lived long enough to understand that a present like this represented so much money, that so much money represented personal sacrifice, and that personal sacrifice in this manner must be called forth by regard. She did not believe that Herbert Rodger was the donor. To be sure, to win favour he might do such a thing, but that he would not do it in this anonymous, unostentatious

way, she felt tolerably sure. This impression was confirmed when, later in the day, she asked Sandy M'Lean whether he had seen the person who brought the parcel; and when she discovered that it had been brought by a messenger from the London coach office, the matter was very mysterious, but she had faith that time would divulge the secret.

Mrs. Dawson and her daughter had some time before made a plan for cheering the Hallowe'en hearth of the invalid widow, Mrs. Wilson, by a seasonable present. This present consisted of warm underclothing for the younger children, a gilt-edged story-book for Johnny, a flannel sleeping-gown for the invalid herself, together with a plentiful supply of nuts, apples, raisins, and sweeties, so that all might be enabled to enter happily into the festivities of the season. It was arranged that Annie should go first, and

that Sandy M'Lean should deliver the small hamper while she was there. All day the rain had poured incessantly. The roads were miry, and the river was still increasing in volume and rapidity. Sandy ferried her across, and in a very short time, with a light heart and a happy face, she was kissing the little Wilsons all round. The invalid herself was much better. As Annie entered, an interesting spectacle presented itself. The children were all gathered round the bedside, and were being served with a limited supply of apples preparatory to the "dooking," for which provision had been made. On seeing Annie the widow's eye brightened, and her pale cheek flushed with pleasure.

"Come awa, Miss Dawson; I maist didna expect ye the day, for I ken't what-na' fecht ye wad hae in getting oot. Johnny, bring owre the airm chair for Miss Dawson."

"You are getting stronger, I hope; I am indeed glad to see you sitting up and looking so well."

"I think my memory has helped me awee, for I was just awa' amang auld Hallowe'ens when ye cam' to the door. I aye feel better when the bairns are happy, puir things. Johnny has gotten leave frae the shop to mak' merry wi' the weans, and I just felt as if I could rise up among them and enter into the gladness o' their puir wee hairts. Eh, Miss Annie, I'm glad—glad to see ye, though I didna expect ye tae come. I hope ye are a' ordinar' weel at the mill. I was sae ill and sleepy when your faither ca'd yesterday, that I had nae power to ask him ben. I hope there was naething particular wrang."

"Was my father here yesterday?"

"Ay; I was lying thinking, after Johnny gaed to the shop, about the text

the minister left wi' me in the morning—'perfect through suffering'—and I was praying that the perfection wad sune come, when Mr. Dawson opened the door and cam' in. He was agitated like, and lookit about the hoose as if he was seekin' help. I tried to speak and ask him what was wrang, but he gied awa' without saying a word. I thocht maybe his horse had fa'en, or something like that, and that he was seeking the help I couldna gie."

"It is curious he never told us," said Annie; "but it is equally curious that he should be here at all, as he was away all day at Mavisburn market, and only returned late in the evening." Her father had met with no mishap, so far as she was aware, but she promised to mention the matter, and give the desired explanation.

By this time Sandy M'Lean had arrived with the hamper, which Annie, in the

presence of the wondering children, proceeded to unpack.

"Eh, Miss Annie, just to think o't! It's by-ordnar strange. I havena ceased prayin' day nor nicht for the last week that the Lord wad send the weans some warm claes, and here they are. I am a puir body, Miss Dawson, an' can only stretch oot empty airms; but the Lord hears the cry o' the helpless."

CHAPTER XV.

AN ALARM.

Annie returned home by the bridge. The rain had ceased, but there was a fearful current on the river. The brown water, in its impetuosity, almost choked the narrow arches; and large blocks of wood, and broken fences, which had been carried off by the violence of the stream, dashed past, or struck heavily against the wooden piers, threatening destruction. The path on the bank was completely covered with water, and the foundation of the strong wall was washed by the angry current. Annie shuddered involun-

tarily as she passed along, and saw the cold, restless water hurrying eagerly through the arches. She had never seen the river so fearful, or so mad in its blind haste. She earnestly hoped it would soon subside, for she knew that these unusual risings always meant destruction of property, if not of life. It was a comfort to think the sluice had been repaired. Her father was strong and skilful. She knew that he would not be satisfied with anything short of absolute safety. He knew all about spates, and, with the aid of the Smith and the Cartwright, had no doubt prepared for any emergency. With this reflection, Annie dismissed her fears, and gave her mind full rein over a pleasanter field of meditation. She wondered what she should do when she met Herbert that evening; whether it would be better to tell him right off that the parcel came safely, or

wait until she saw the present in his face. He would no doubt look very queer in his desire to try and hide his knowledge of the secret; but she would watch him closely, and then tell him with a sudden laugh that love could see under the mask, and that it was no good his concealing what was already known. When she returned she met her father in the yard.

"You did not tell us you were calling at Mrs. Wilson's yesterday?" said Annie, proceeding to adjust her father's necktie.

"At Mrs. Wilson's?"

"Yes, poor body, she seemed troubled that she didn't ask you in."

"But I haven't seen Mrs. Wilson for six months."

"Did you not look in yesterday?"

"No; how could I when I was at Mavisburn?"

"That is strange," Annie said, thoughtfully.

"Did she say I called?"

"Yes, just for a minute. She said you looked about, as if you wanted something; but as she did not speak, you went out again. I fear it must have been a dream or a fancy."

"Ay, no doubt; poor body. I fear her mind is beginning to break up."

"She is very sharp and keen to-night," said Annie, "and seems to be a child with the children in their enjoyment, though she is filling up her bigger cup with the memory of past Hallowe'ens."

Annie passed in and proceeded to dress.

"Will I put on my brooch and necklet, mother?"

"To be sure, my dear; they will answer nicely with that blue dress."

"Ah!" thought Annie, "I have no need to tell him that they came safely; these will speak for themselves."

The party at the Miller's that evening,

being select, was got up in a very handsome and sumptuous manner. The Miller seldom did a thing of the kind; but when he did, it was always done well. Tea was served in the dining-room, and the general arrangement of the guests was considered very satisfactory. Dr. Calder sat beside Miss Lee, M'Whannel took charge of Miss Mackenzie, Annie and her mother managed the tea at the one end of the table, while the Miller and Mr. Rodger presided at the other. The rest of the company, especially the young people present, were pretty carefully matched. Annie performed her duties with much calmness and self-control. She had just had time to shake hands with Herbert when he came in, without remembering the brooch and necklet; but though she hardly ventured to cast her eyes more than half way up the table, she felt certain he was looking at, and admiring his own taste.

"Miss Dawson is looking very beautiful to-night," said the Doctor, helping his partner to bread.

"She is, indeed," replied Nelly. "I have just been admiring the easy way in which she goes about her duties. Mr. Dawson seems proud of her."

"Very, and I don't wonder at it."

"I have been watching the man who ought to be proudest of her," said Nelly in an undertone, "but I do not think he has once looked at that end of the table since we sat down.

The Doctor smiled and shook his head. The party was as yet only talking in pairs.

"I say, Rodger, you nearly turned my daughter's head with yon fine parcel you sent to-day," said the Miller as he finished his first cup of tea.

"What parcel?"

"What parcel! Upon my word, you are a sly fellow. The parcel with the

gown and the shawl and the trinkets. Don't you see she has the brooch and the necklet on? I haven't seen anything that suits her so well, for many a day."

"Did she get these in a present to-day?" inquired Herbert, with some nervousness.

"Yes; and what has given them a value far beyond their market price, though that must be large, is that they came from Mr. Herbert Rodger, of Blair Farm, to Annie Dawson on her birthday."

"Was that stated?"

"No; the disguise was perfect," said the Miller, laughing. "It could not have been better done."

"How did it come?"

"How did it come! Oh, apparently by the London mail, addressed Scotland, N.B., and all the rest of it. But we saw through it immediately. I believe the only person who was in the least deceived was

my wife. In addition to the handsomeness of the present, it was really a capital joke."

"Ah!" Herbert's suspicions were to some extent allayed. He thought he could comprehend how the matter stood, and, all things considered, it might be as well for him not to dispute their conclusions regarding the authorship of the gift. He would, however, get fuller particulars from Annie by-and-by.

"We had a visit from your friend Mr. Hobbs last night," resumed the Miller, after a pause.

"Hobbs!"

"Yes, he looked in at the mill before we stopped."

"Had he been drinking?"

"I am sorry to say he had; but I advised him to go home before my wife and daughter should see him. I sent Sandy M'Lean over the Ara with him in the boat. Is he addicted to whisky?"

"I fear he is getting into loose habits. What did he want?" inquired Herbert, with some uneasiness.

"He was eager to have more drink, and kept on saying that you had lost £1000."

"Me!"

"Yes, something like that, but he was very tipsy; I didn't allow him to wait many minutes."

"He is a fool," said Herbert, endeavouring to assume indifference. "He talked such a lot of nonsense last night when he came home, I was ashamed of him. I must get him packed off to London again. It is not safe for a man to leave his business so long."

"Neither it is. I hope you are attending to the ladies down there, Mr. M'Ilwham?"

"I hope the leddies think sae," said M'Ilwham; "but, to tell ye the truth, I am mair ta'en up wi' some o' the gentlemen. I never saw M'Whannel lookin' sae weel

a' his days. He is real like himsel' the nicht."

There was a general laugh at the Schoolmaster's expense, but he set himself all right again by remarking that he "never had so much occasion to look well." This rejoinder drew all eyes on Miss Mackenzie, who, in the opinion of those nearest to her, blushed.

After tea, the ceremony of "puin' the stock" was gone through with mock seriousness, when a band of voluntary love votaries went out into the Miller's kailyard, hand in hand, to determine their future lot. M'Whannel was, perhaps, the most unfortunate of all. He and his partner had been pretty near the end of the kail plot, and he especially had pulled a most ungainly stock.

"Oh, sic a bow't runt," said M'Ilwham, inspecting it afterwards; "I'm astonished at ye, M'Whannel, puin' a thing like that."

"I am astonished at myself, but it is no good running in the face of fate," said M'Whannel, looking knowingly at his partner. "I did the thing fair. I suppose true love never runs straight any more than smooth."

"Ay, that's it, Miss Mackenzie," said the farmer, with a desire to molify her feelings "that's it, the course o' my freen's love is no to be lang, though zigzag awee in its way o' gangin'."

"It's the nicest party I was ever at," said Miss Mackenzie to her niece shortly after, when they were alone; "but just think o' the assurance o' that man, when he saw he had gotten a bow't stock, he cam' foret an' kissed me when my een were shut."

"Well, auntie, that was very nice."

"Eh! the thing was rideeculous."

While the younger members of the company burned their nuts, the seniors

were drinking the health of the host and hostess, and wishing Miss Dawson many happy returns of her birthday.

"There's no mony like her," said M'Ilwham, as he concluded this toast. "M'Whannel tells me she's ane o' the best teachers in the Sabbath Schule, and there's no a puir body in Glenara but kens the kindness o' her heart. As to the man she has set her heart upon, I wad say a word, seeing he is for the moment absent. I believe the Lord has wrought a great change on him. He is now a man o' guid report, and, in addition to attendance on the means o' grace, he is a regular contributor to every good cause; and I hope the work which the Lord has begun may be perfected to the end, and that he may mak' a guid husband and a lively stane in the Lord's Kirk, weel tried and true."

The Miller briefly responded to the toast, and afterwards the large pot of beat

potatoes was brought in, and, the whole company having been summoned, Mrs. Dawson's marriage ring, Annie's silver thimble, and a mother-of-pearl button, were dropped into it by Miss Mackenzie in their presence, while Girzie, with her well-scoured "spurtle," stirred "a' throu'ther," as each article was put in. Miss Dawson handed round the spoons, and Dr. Calder was authorised to put out the lights. This having been done, the "pot of destiny" was besieged, and for the next quarter of an hour there was an active and eager silence.

"The thing's done noo," said Mrs. M'Ilwham, scraping the bottom of the pot to get the last spoonful. "Licht the caunels, Doctor."

"Declare the fortunes of the night," said the Miller, looking round the party. "Who has got the ring?"

"Miss Mackenzie," cried M'Whannel,

boldly holding up the blushing spinster's hand with the ring on it.

"Well done," said the Miller; "there's corn in Egypt yet, Miss Mackenzie. M'Whannel, if your partner is to be the first bride in the company, you'll have to look sharp."

Dr. Calder caused much merriment by producing the thimble; while Annie Dawson, with mock seriousness, held up the button, and was pronounced an inevitable "auld maid."

"I was quite sure my guidwife had got the thim'le," said M'Ilwham when they were seated; "what was yon ye put intil yer han' after the third spoonfu'?"

"Tuts, it was only an ill-beetled tawtie."

"Na, I thocht ye were on the outlook for anither guidman."

A game at forfeits ensued, while the Miller and Mr. Rodger sat apart in a corner of the room.

"It was the stiffest job I have had for many a day," said the Miller, while narrating the story of the broken sluice; "it took all the men in the mill to hold against it till I got in stays."

"I have seldom seen the river so full," said Herbert; "the pressure must be something very great."

"Yes, but Elderson made a strong job of it; there is not much danger now that the rain is off. We might take a turn and see how the water looks; see, the moon is out."

At this point, Dr. Calder, according to sentence passed, was endeavouring to kiss Miss Dawson through the spars of a chair, and Herbert looked on approvingly, while Annie, with much confusion and much blushing, sustained her share of the punishment.

For the next quarter of an hour there was considerable kissing and merriment. The Schoolmaster had been awarded a

flying kiss with Mrs. M'Ilwham; Miss Lee was bound to go into the lobby and count the stars with Mr. M'Ilwham, and Miss Mackenzie had to kiss the four corners of the room, which meant, as she expressed it, that she was "to be slaikit a' owre at every corner o' the house by folk she cared naething for." While the party were thus enjoying themselves, a sudden crash was heard outside, followed by a hissing and rushing noise—in a moment, the sport gave place to alarm.

"The dam has burst!" cried Mrs. Dawson. "Oh! where's my husband! where's my husband!" In an instant all were at the door. As they reached it they heard shouts of despair rising above the noise of the water, which was now flooding the yard and rushing in awful fury past the gable of the mill. Mr. Rodger was running along the margin of the lade without his hat, crying——

"Help! help! Mr. Dawson's in the water—bring a rope—for God's sake bring a rope, fast—fast, or he will be drowned!"

Dr. Calder was the first to reach the spot. He saw in a moment what was wrong. The sluice had given way, and the water was running with fearful violence into the dam, which in turn also yielded to the pressure. The Miller, who had been carried off his feet by the sudden inflow of the water, was now struggling against the current, which was fast carrying him to the broken corner of the dam. M'Whannel came up with a rope, but it was too short. The Miller was fast approaching the dreaded spot. M'Ilwham seized a rake and rushed into the water up to the waist, but he was too late—for at that moment the Miller was carried into the awful current which surged past the end of the mill, towards the river. The Doctor had thrown off his coat, and leaping to the

lower terrace reached the margin of the river just as Philip was carried down on the seething current; quick as thought he plunged after him into the boiling flood, and both disappeared under the shadow of the overhanging bank.

END OF VOL. I.

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