THE

DAWSONS OF GLENARA.

A Story of Scottish Life.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE & RIVINGTON,
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1877.

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CHAPTER I.

IN THE BALANCE.

It was a fearful ten minutes which ensued after the Miller and Dr. Calder disappeared in the stream—one of those sharp points of time that cut into the life and leave a furrow. The suspense and excitement were most intense. Some said the Doctor had been carried away by the current, but others declared he had gone in voluntarily to save Mr. Dawson. He had thrown off his coat at M'Whannel's side, and Miss Mackenzie and her niece had seen him run across the yard and leap upon the

lower terrace. Meantime there was no time to discuss probabilities — life and death were in the balance; and even now, perhaps, death had kicked the beam. There was a cry for "Lamps, lamps," in the getting of which there was some delay. The water was still surging with great violence over the breach in the dam, but fortunately the Mill was not in imminent danger. Nothing could be heard distinctly for the rushing noise of the water. While the lamps were being prepared, M'Whannel leapt the fence and ran down the margin of the river. The night was very dark, and the ground was wet and slippery. A large portion of the bank had been carried away by the force of the current, but he was sufficiently far removed from the Mill not to be influenced by the noise. He shouted, and paused to listen. Was it only the echo of his own voice? or was it a real human response that

returned to him from that dark, frightful distance? He shouted again, and while he paused, with all his desires in his ears, a cry came back to him which could not be misunderstood: it was not a cry of despair; it was not even an urgent cry for help; it was a cry in which he thought there was something of re-assurance, of triumph; and when he returned with this report to the Mill, there arose a shout of joy, which was heard even above the rushing of the water.

"Bring the lamps! bring the lamps! there is yet hope!" Mrs. Dawson, who was previously strong with the energy of despair, on hearing this cry, fainted away, and was carried into the house.

"Take care of the bank," said M'Whannel, "there a dangerous slip here; keep well up in the wood, and mind your feet—hallo-o-o—listen! Did you hear it?"

"Yes, yes."

"It is the Doctor's voice."

"The Lord be praised!" said M'Ilwham, "he's no far frae the Bushglen Meadows; rin hard, rin hard." There was little need for the injunction. M'Whannel led the way, and in five minutes more they reached the bank whence the sound came.

"Where are you, Doctor?"

"Under this bank; quick! quick, for God's sake!"

"This way, Mr. Rodger; swing yourself down by the branch of that tree, M'Ilwham —now."

"Is there any hope, Doctor?"

"I fear not. Lift him. Gently, gently; a little farther—there. I have been trying to excite respiration. Give me that lamp, M'Whannel. Rub the limbs upwards. Don't be afraid. Ah! there's an ugly gash here," continued the Doctor, examining his head. "Just what I feared. Rub on, rub on—thank God, he is breathing."

In a short time M'Ilwham came back to the Mill to make preparations for the Miller's return, and the joyous tidings sent a thrill of relief through every heart. Mrs. Dawson was still unconscious, but Annie was calm and strong for the occasion, and went about the work of preparing for her father's reception with much energy and composure.

In a few minutes the lanterns were seen swinging through the darkness, and Annie ran forward to meet the solemn procession. The sight of her father's pale, haggard, wet face, stunned her for the moment, and she uttered a low, plaintive cry; but suddenly recovering herself, she beckoned them to follow, and quietly led the way into her father's bedroom. The work of removing the wet clothing was soon accomplished, and after applying such restoratives as they had, the Doctor proceeded to dress the wound. During all

this time Annie was most unremitting in her efforts. There was no flurry, no excitement; all the Doctor's wants were supplied as if they had been anticipated; every one gave place to her. In that great hour of need she was of more value than them all. Annie acted under the feeling that her father's safety depended on what she did, and every other consideration was for the time shut out from her mind.

"Hadn't I better fill another jar, Doctor?"

"Yes; let it be as warm as possible."

"I have also some more warm blankets."

"The more the better; we must get up the heat. His breathing is not good." The Doctor put his hand on the Miller's chest, and assisted the natural action.

"Oh! Doctor, you are so very wet," said Annie, with much tenderness. "Let

me watch while you attend to yourself. Mrs. M'Ilwham will show you my bedroom. You will find a good fire and a change of warm clothing." The Doctor had forgotten his own condition in his earnest desire for the Miller's safety. On reaching the house he had hurriedly swallowed some brandy which Annie had offered him, but his fingers were now beginning to get numbed and discoloured, and a general chillness was creeping through his blood.

"For the present there is nothing further I can do," said the Doctor. "You might apply another jar to the feet; roll it well in flannel. Can you mark the breathing?"

"Yes."

"If you observe it getting weaker, be sure and call me."

For half an hour Annie sat there, watching every breath. The brow was still cold, and there was a slight quivering about the

half-opened eyes. For the first time she felt the true awfulness of the position, but she laid down her head for a moment, and prayed that He who is a present help in every time of trouble would make them strong in this their supreme hour of need. Miss Lee now came in, and approached quietly where Annie stood. Her cheeks were wet, and her eyes were full of the deepest sympathy. Annie grasped her outstretched hand and kissed her. Their trouble was too deep for words, but she felt the truth, the earnestness and depth of that sisterly love, which could not be uttered, in the grasp of the hand, and in the unmistakable expression of those large, noble eyes.

"Is mother recovering?"

"Oh, yes; she is getting round. My aunt and Mrs. M'Ilwham are doing everything for her that can be done. Is there any change?"

"I think his breathing is a little freer. Where is Herbert?"

"He and M'Whannel have gone to the village to get help; the breach in the dam is becoming more serious."

Mrs. Dawson having recovered consciousness, inquired eagerly for her husband, and was assured that there was no need for her presence, as he was receiving every attention. Fearing the worst, however, she insisted on seeing him, and was assisted into the room where he lay. There was an excited look in her eyes as she came in to verify her own fears. Annie looked startled as she approached.

"Mother, mother, don't be alarmed," pleaded the girl; but the mother darted past without appearing to hear her daughter's words, and passing her hand over the cold brow, threw herself backwards, exclaiming—"Dead! dead!"

By this time the court outside was full

of willing workers. The pressure on the dam was very great. The breach was widening rapidly in the direction of the Mill, and the gable was now being washed threateningly by the angry surge which boded its destruction.

Thomas Elderson was the first to see the danger.

"We maun tak' the pressure aff that gavel," he cried. "Len' me that licht, M'Whannel." The Smith seized the light and surveyed the spot.

"Here, lads, we'll mak' anither breach here, wider and deeper; it'll tak' the stress aff that corner. Bring yer picks this way. We'll lead the watter into the burn. Min' yersel's noo, for it's desperate strong." As the Smith spoke, half a dozen strong men, wielding picks, shovels, and spades, set to work. "Here, M'Ilwham, you ken a' aboot opening grun'; tak' charge here, and I'll see if I can fix up a new sluish."

During this time the Mill-wheel was revolving with frightful velocity. The small sluice for putting off or on the Mill had also been carried away, but the foreman miller, with half a dozen men, were inside, and had already thrown every possible thing out of gear, and kept down the danger of fire by pouring water on the heated machinery. Under M'Ilwham's direction the men engaged at the new cutting worked with great energy, and by daybreak all apprehensions regarding the safety of the Mill were removed by the opening of this new and more extensive breach in the bank. The Smith, who had been absent for about an hour in search of a temporary sluice, now returned, bringing with him in a cart a large worked iron door, with which he proceeded to the mouth of the lade leading from the river to the dam. "Ye've made a gran' job o' that new opening, lads," the Smith said, as

he watched the heavy body of brown water dashing over the bank into the hollow below.

"We hae saved the Mill, though it's a pity we should wash a' the yirth oot o' that field. That's yours, isn't it, Mr. M'Ilwham?"

"Dinna fash yer thoom aboot the fiel', Thamas. It's easier sortin' a fiel' than biggin' a mill. I dinna grudge a' the damage ye hae dune."

"No, M'Ilwham, I dinna think ye dae. Come, then, lads, gie's a lift wi' this door foret tae the mooth o' the lade; it's owre braid, ye ken, but we'll just drap it doon in front, and the pressure o' watter will keep it in. I think it'll ser' till we get up a new ane. Canny, lads, canny. Tak' yer side owre awee, M'Whannel; steady —dinna let it fa' owre fast. That, noo—there!"

As the Smith spoke the last word, the

iron door slipped heavily down in front of the entrance, and almost entirely cut off the inflow of water. In a few minutes the dam had almost emptied itself, and the noise of the rushing current was hushed. Immediately there arose a wild ringing cry of approbation. Annie was still watching anxiously beside her father. The Doctor had gone over to the village for some restoratives, and most of the young people had returned home. Miss Mackenzie lay down for an hour, and her niece sat beside Mrs. Dawson, who had fallen into a quiet sleep.

"Don't be alarmed, Annie," said Herbert, entering as the cheer of the workmen died away. "Elderson has cut off the water; the danger outside is all over now."

"Oh, Herbert!" Annie advanced to meet him, and hid her face in his bosom.

"Don't cry, dear," he said, after a pause, "your father may yet be restored to you."

For a few moments Annie sobbed aloud, giving full vent to the torrent of her grief. Herbert pressed her more closely to him; then, lifting her little head from his breast, he kissed the beautiful lips while the tears poured down her cheeks.

"Oh, Herbert! I have need of a good, strong, true friend," she said, raising her head and looking earnestly into his face. "I have no one now I can look to but you."

When the Doctor returned Herbert had gone, and she was again calm.

"Has there been any motion since?" said the Doctor, feeling the pulse.

"No; only a slight twitching of the eyes."

"There is more animation; but the result cannot be known for an hour or two yet. I will take your place, Miss Dawson. You have been most faithful; but you require rest."

CHAPTER II.

A FALSE HOPE.

It was hard for Isabella Grieve to give away her own child. Her heart was up in arms at the thought; but, believing the man who had already deceived her, she crucified the mother's feelings at the shrine of a slender hope. Isabella had gone back to her situation with her heart and her ears full of the deceiver's words. He would yet be her husband. He would yet make amends for all her suffering and right all her wrongs. The child, which policy had compelled her to give out of her bosom, should be taken back

and nursed with double tenderness and care. Her good name would also be re-established, and in a short time society would cease to repeat her sins. Herbert had promised to write, but a week passed without bringing the eagerly expected letter. He was doubtless very busy with the crops. He had told her business was troubling him, and men had so many things to look after that women knew nothing of. He was, no doubt, thinking frequently about her and his own baby, and would write so soon as he got a moment to spare: thus a fortnight passed. One letter from him would make her strong. She had given away the baby against her mother's will, and now, though her heart was yearning after it and the faithless father, she dare not refer to either in her mother's presence. Three weeks passed. It was a weary, anxious time. She had inquired at the Post Office when letters

from Glenara arrived, and by what deliveries they were sent out. She rose early in the morning, so that she might have the house tidied before the time of the postman's coming, and that she might take up her mother's seam and sit at the window and look out for him before breakfast. Three times during that period the man of letters had turned into their close, and on each occasion Isabella was sure the name he called out was hers, but on going to the door she saw the letters put into the hands of more fortunate neighbours. On coming out of the warehouse at night, she would slip home by a quiet back street, thinking all the time of a letter that might have arrived in her absence, which would be placed beside her cup and saucer, and of which she should read every word before she tasted supper. A glance was always sufficient to show her what was on the table; but then there was

still the possibility that her mother had forgot to put it on the table—it might be on the drawers' top, or on the dressing-glass, or on the "dresser;" but these places having been searched in vain, hope again receded, and placed her flickering lamp on the horizon of to-morrow.

During all this time the desire to see her baby was growing stronger and stronger. If he had but written and told her to be firm, it would have enabled her to resist this feeling, but five weeks had passed, and she began to doubt his constancy. She had stolen out several nights after the lamps were lighted, and watched that window in Bell's Wynd, with the hope that she might see an infant shadow on the window-blind. Only once had she seen a figure passing with a child, but the shadow was not that of hers, and she returned home, thinking there might possibly be a letter

yet. Oh, the weary, weary waiting! At the end of six weeks she could bear the suspense no longer. The mother's feelings were too strong for resistance, and she made up her mind to see her child. One evening as she returned from the warehouse she called round by the house in Bell's Wynd, and was shown into the kitchen. There was a child lying upon a rug on the floor, half naked. Its little face was wet with tears, and it was very filthy. The little voice was husky with crying.

"Puir wee thing, it aye greets when it kens it is gaun to get itsel' washed," said the woman, taking the child up in her arms. "Eh, ma wee mannie! This is no your wean, Miss Grieve. Puir dearie, it was sent here frae Kirkintilloch three weeks sin'; its mither is in genteel service there, and pled on us to tak' it in. We hadna much way for it, but we thought it

a pity to see the wean gaun wrang, an' she gies us a guid price for't, which is a great consideration wi' us, Miss——Grieve, I think, is your name? Ay, my sister looks after your wean, but the puir wee lammie has had a real sair tout sin' it cam' here. It is sair ta'en doon, but there's nae accountin' for trouble in infants, Miss Grieve. We've had a guid deal o' fash wi't nicht and day; but, of course, the wee dearie couldna help that."

"Has my child been ill?"

"Ay; I suppose it was the change o' milk that brought on the trouble."

"What was the matter?" inquired the young mother, with much anxiety.

"Oh, it was a kind o' complent, real common among weans, ye ken, but sairer on some than ithers."

"Poor wee dear!" Isabella said, her whole heart dissolving in the expression; "and me not to know it was suffering.

Can you let me see it? Let me take it in my arms, and sit with it for half an hour."

"Ye look pale like, Miss; ye'll tak' a mouthfu' o' toddy if I mak' it for ye. The wee thing's sleepin', and we canna disturb it enoo."

"No, no," said Isabella, impatiently, "I'll have nothing. I want to see my child; I will not disturb its sleep. Let me lay its little head on my breast."

"But ye ken he disna want ye to——"

"Oh, I know, I know."

"And he was real glad, when he ca'd last week, tae ken ye were keepin' yersel' sae weel under control."

"Who—Mr. Rodger?"

"Yes."

"Did he call last week?"

"For a wee while, only to gie us some siller, ye ken."

"Does he know of the child's illness?"

"Oh, ay, but men hae nae skill o' weans."

"Did he look at it?"

"No, he hadna a minute to stay, but he was glad to ken ye were keepin' sae firm —and I think he would be better pleased if ye didna insist——"

"Yes; but how can I be so cruel, when I know my child is ill?" interrupted Isabella. "Oh, Miss Glendinning, will I not be allowed to look at my own child?"

"To be sure, to be sure," said the spinster; "but I thought it might be best for baith yersel' and him: just sit doon a minute and I'll see." Miss Glendinning set a seat in front of the fire for her visitor and disappeared. Isabella Grieve's mind was in confusion and perplexity: she did not know what to think or do. Herbert had been at the very door, and had not called. He had been told his child was

ill, and yet he had not as much as asked to see it. Oh, it was cruel, cruel! She felt also that her own conduct to her baby had been most unkind. Six weeks without seeing it or inquiring for it, and the poor little dear suffering all that time in the hands of strangers—yes, strangers, who had no more interest in it than the interest which was purchased by a small pittance of a few shillings a week. She had believed him, and had again been deceived. She had done evil that good might come, but a worse evil had followed. She felt miserable. There was also something about the manner of the person who had just left which aroused her suspicion that all was not right. The child she had seen on the floor was a horrid picture of filth and neglect, and what if her child had been subjected to the same treatment. Her heart was moved with the tenderest pity for the little innocent who had thus

suffered by her own unnatural neglect. In the midst of her ruminations Miss Glendinning returned.

"Keep your seat, Miss; my sister is just changing it—she will bring it in enoo. Puir dearie, you will see it has got an unco shake, but I hope the worst o't is past. Come in, Jen; this is the mither o' the wean." As she spoke her sister, a sharp-faced, keen-eyed hag of fifty summers, made her appearance at the door, carrying the child in her arms, rolled in a black shawl. Without ceremony of any kind, Isabella ran forward at once and drew aside the covering from its face.

"Dinna start, Miss," said Jen; "weans are gey teugh; it's thin, nae doot, but there's a guid deal o' life intil't yet." Isabella took the tiny form into her arms, while the two hags watched her closely. Such a change! The little face, which had been newly washed, was

shrivelled and worn. The fingers were long and thin, and the skin on the shadowy arms was loose and withered. At first Isabella was inclined to doubt whether it was really her child, but a closer examination supplied abundant proof that it was so, and she kissed the small attenuated lips with motherly tenderness. Disturbed by this unusual display of affection, the child raised a little querulous cry; but Isabella hushed it gently in her bosom, drawing in her chair close to the fire, in order to warm the small, cold bony feet which she held in her hand. "Oh, my little dear!" Isabella laid her face down upon the tiny silken cheek and sobbed aloud: the language of her heart was that of the deepest self-reproach.

"I suppose this is yer first wean, Miss?" said Jen, after a long pause.

"Yes."

"Oh, ay, folk are aye fondest o' their

first, and mair particular when they're silly weans; but they are real kittle creatures to bring through. Wad ye be vext if it deet?"

"What! if my child died?" Oh, Miss Glendinning, how can you ask me such a question?"

"Plenty o' young lassocks are glad to get them oot o' their gate; it's no an easy thing payin' for the decent keepin' o' weans, especially aff a sma' fee."

Isabella made no reply, but pressed her baby more closely to her bosom.

"We may man' tae bring it through yet," continued Jen, "but it'll tak' great care, for if ony o' thae weans' troubles, such as measles or scarlatina, should come on, I wadna like tae answer for the consequences."

Miss Glendinning now came in, and informed her sister that it was past nine o'clock.

"The wean maun get aff its claes, ye ken, Miss. Puir wee lammie, it has been owre lang up already. I thocht it was sleeping when ye came in, but it was as waukrife as a lintie. Wad ye believe it, it hasna sleepit a wink sin' twelve o'clock i' the day. Come awa' tae me, ma sweet dearie. Gie yer mammy anither kiss. There noo, Miss. If ye should think to rin up ony time again, we'll be gled to see ye, but ye should study tae please him."

"Tak' care o' yer feet on thae dark stairs." The door was shut with a bang behind her. The whole thing was done with the utmost dexterity, and she had no time to think until she found herself in the dark, busy street. Her head was in a whirl. The baby had been torn forcibly from her, but she still felt the soft downy heat in her bosom. She meant to ask them to be kind to her child. She

intended also to give them a small sum of money—all she possessed—in order to purchase a little additional tenderness and attention, but she had no time, and now it was too late.

She passed out of the busy thoroughfare into a quiet street. Her own neglect pained her above everything else. Poor, helpless little thing, how it nestled in her bosom, how it crept close to the heat when she put down her face to kiss it, but she had left it behind her at the mercy of these cold-hearted, cruel old women. She believed they were cruel, especially the one who had charge of it when she went in. How could she have a spark of kindness in her heart and speak as she had done? The idea of asking if she would be vexed if her own child died, and of speaking so lightly about putting children out of the way! She shuddered at the thought of having left her baby in such

hands. A strong impulse seized her to return and carry it home with her. But she controlled herself. She had gone against her mother's wishes in what she had already done, and she found, to her bitter experience, that her way was wrong. She had better consult her mother now, and carry her along with her in what she did. This thought quickened her footsteps, and she soon found her way home. At first her mother was stern.

"In this matter you have already taken your own way," she said, "and why do you come to me now?"

"Oh, mother, I have been very wayward and wicked; I have brought much suffering and shame upon you; but, then, to think my poor, dear, innocent baby is dying in the hands of strangers!"

The mother could not resist her daughter's earnest repentance and tears.

"Do you think the bairn has been

neglected?" inquired she, after Isabella had told her all.

"I fear it has; they are such heartless, cruel people."

"They should never have had it at all, but I think you had better be guided by Dr. Abernethy. Take him with you in the morning, and let him examine the child; if he advises you to take it away, do so. Hide nothing from him, for he has already been a kind friend."

Next morning, Isabella Grieve and Dr. Abernethy made an early visit to the house of the Misses Glendinning in Bell's Wynd. The visitors were as unwelcome as they were unexpected, but the presence of the Doctor carried with it a certain amount of awe which made the sisters pay at least apparent deference to his behests.

"Come awa, Doctor," said Jen, as she opened the door; "we were just thinkin' tae send for ye aboot this puir wean."

"I fear you have thought too long about it," replied the Doctor. "Bring the child here. Poor little thing! How long has it been in its present quarters, Miss Grieve?"

"About six weeks."

"Ay; and how long has it been ill?—immediately after it came here, I suppose?"

"Weel, yes, I dare say it would be a fortnight after it came, but I never saw a wean dwine awa' sae fast."

"I suppose not," said the Doctor. "Did you ever see a wean getting worse usage?"

"Eh, Doctor?"

"Were you fee'd to put it out of the way?"

"I wad advise ye tae be careful o' yer words, sir."

"There is nothing wrong with your baby, Miss Grieve; its organs are as sound as yours or mine, but it is on the point of being killed by culpable neglect."

"Oh, Marget, just come and hear this. The Doctor says we hae been neglectin' Miss Grieve's wean. After a' we've done for't, and after a' the labour and anxiety we've had, just tae think o' that. Ye had better tak' care, or we may mak' ye prove yer words, Doctor."

"I have a mind to prove them whether you make me or not," said the Doctor. "Under its present treatment the child would have been dead in a week. It is the most heartless piece of work I have seen for many a day. Would you like to be handed over to the police?"

"Eh, just hear the man!"

"Dinna be impident wi' the gentleman, Jen. Ye ken it's the faither we hae to do wi', Doctor," said Miss Glendinning, coming forward and endeavouring to be pacific.

"I suppose so."

"Ay, he arranged wi' us tae tak' the wee dearie aff Miss Grieve's han'. It's him

that pays for't, and I suppose it's him we maun please."

"And he is quite satisfied?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" said the Doctor, "it is just as I supposed. The father is anxious to get rid of the child, and he is quite satisfied with the way in which it is being done. Here, Miss Grieve, take charge of your own baby; I'll see if there is no strong hand of justice to deal with this heartless wickedness." Isabella took the child and kissed it tenderly. There was only one light in her life—the pale, sickly, flickering light which she held feverishly to her bosom, but it was a light which might go out at any moment; indeed, looking to this uncertainty, and the dark and cruel future before her, she would willingly have died with her child; but a new thought came into her mind—it had been rescued as by a miracle from the hand of death. There

was a Providence in the deliverance; might there not be a great Spirit in these latter times? Might there not be in that little sickly frame the embryo of one of the great minds that should yet rise and shed a splendour over the world? It was the old darling hope of a mother's heart, but it nerved her for the task that lay before her, and made her strong.

CHAPTER III.

A TRIUMPHAL PROCESSION.

THE accident at the Mill caused great consternation in the village. Everybody turned out next day to see the damage that had been done, and eagerly gathered and rehearsed any new bit of information that could be learned about the melancholy occurrence. The first rumour which got abroad was that the Miller had been drowned, but as the morning advanced the bulletins that issued from the sick chamber spoke hopefully of ultimate restoration, and the people breathed more freely, and thanked God that the calamity was not so

bad as it had appeared. Mr. Clydesdale, the minister, was amongst the earliest visitors on the following morning, and did much to reassure and comfort Mrs. Dawson in her sudden and sore affliction.

Before midday the news of the unfortunate occurrence had found its way into every house in Glenara, and was the all-engrossing subject of conversation.

"Eh, just to think o't," said Mrs. Elderson, senior. "It's a pity I didna raise ye at midnight, Thamas, when I heard the yowlin' o' that dug. I kent fu' brawly what it meant, but I was fleyed tae speak for fear it micht be some o' oor ain weans. Whiles it was like the cryin' o' an infant, and whiles it was a deep, lood roar that gart my flesh creep tae hear. I couldna sleep, for I kent there was sair wark gaun on somewhere. Did ye no hear't, Thamas?"

"Hoot, mother, hoo should I fash

mysel' wi' the yowlin' o' a dug? That black cratur is aye yaummerin' aboot something. Nae doot the youngsters were tryin' tae get intil the kail-yard; but she is such a dour thing, she wad bark at her ain shadow."

"Na, na, dinna tell me that, Thamas," said the old woman, shaking her head gravely. "Dinna tell me that; it was nae ordinar' bark. I am no come tae this time o' day withoot kennin' what like an ordinar' bark is. I hae heard owre mony 'warnings' in my time no to ken ane when I hear it; and I'm thinkin' if I had been as young and as soople as you are, I wadna had my claes tae put on when the knock cam' till the door."

"I'm no muckle fashed wi' midnicht noises," said the Smith. "Thank God, I'm a guid sleeper, and dinna hear every hen kecklin'."

"Dinna speak sae lichtly, Thamas," remonstrated his wife. "For the sake o' the weans, dinna rin in the face o' Providence that gate. Ye ken He can speak as weel through a dug as through a man."

"I'm speakin' nane lichtly, Janet, nane lichtly ava. I'm simply thankfu' that I dinna row and tum'le on my bed at nicht, listenin' tae mice cheepin' and dugs barkin', an' gien 'warnings' that are no minded till the thing they are supposed to warn ye o' has happened. I'm thinkin' twal hoors in a smiddy wad cure a wheen o' ye."

Mrs. Elderson, senior, was deeply grieved at what she considered her son's irreverence. "Just tae think he has been an elder i' the Kirk for the last fifteen years, and tae hear him jibin' at sacred things like a Hottentot or an infidel"—this is what she thought to herself, and what she said to

her daughter-in-law afterwards while speaking about her son's backsliding—"but he's just like his faither; it is nae guid tryin' tae turn him, for he's as dour as a north-east wind: when he gets a notion in his head there's nae drivin't oot." But she did not answer him so severely. "Ye'll maybe no sleep sae soun' at seventy-five, Thamas," she said, administering a mild rebuke. "Ye'll ken things better then. Young folk think everything maun gie in till a strong airm, but at my age ye'll ken there are other augencies than flesh and bluid. Is he clean droont?"

Thomas, who had returned home with the first report, feared there was "nae room for hope."

"Eh me!" continued Mrs. Elderson, senior. "What will the puir wife dae? She'll never get owre't; just tae think o' twa droont in ae family. It's real strange, twa Philips tae. The auldest

son, and the head o' the hoose; but it was a queer merriage that," said the old woman, mysteriously, as if she had suddenly come upon a packet in which was bound up a solution of this sad mystery of misfortune. "A curious marriage; ae brither imprisoned for strikin' anither. I aye thocht Philip Dawson should have withdrawn the chairge against Allan. Tae strike is no a britherly thing, but tae revenge in cool bluid what has been dune in a passion is no the pairt o' a Christian man."

"But it wasna in Philip's power to withdraw the charge," said the Smith; "the thing was in the grip o' the law, and ye canna play fast and loose wi' it. Philip was bound to appear again Allan."

"Weel, maybe; but it was real droll. Nae doot it was just tae be, and that's maybe a' we should say aboot it; they

were twa decent lads, and it's a sair pity o' Mrs. Dawson."

Mrs. Elderson was always prone to trace effects up to causes, particularly in instances of human misfortune. She held by the belief that judgment followed close on the heels of sin; but when she failed to find out even a supposed cause for any sad occurrence that came under her observation, there was always this convenient platform on which she might rest the exhausted pinions of her speculation—namely, *that it was just tae be.*

Every household that day had its own comments on the accident, and every new fact, as it became known, was carried about eagerly from door to door. The Beadle made much hay while the sun shone, especially amongst the farmhouses, where the calamity was listened to with the deepest regret. At night the turn-out in the kitchen of "The Bird-in-the-Hand"

Tavern was unusually large. Daniel M'Nee the cartwright, had been down at the Mill with the Smith late in the afternoon to look after repairing the dam, and he brought back word that Mr. Dawson had recovered consciousness, and now seemed in a very hopeful way. This was a welcome piece of information, which secured for the bearer of it a warm reception at the meeting. Dr. Calder, however, was the hero of the evening.

"I'm told it was the bravest jump that was ever made in watter," said M'Nee. "Naebody ever expected to see either o' them again. Where's Herbertson?—Ye hae saved twa'r three lives in yer time, Robert; ye ken what it is to soom in a spate like yon."

"I can tell ye it's no canny, lads," replied Herbertson, modestly. "I'm sure there's no anither man in Glenara wad ha' dune the same thing. He maun be a powerful soomer."

"I heard, the day," continued the Cartwright, "that he had saved the life o' a lord's son somewhare in Englan', and that the lord had ta'en him be the han' and brought him through the college."

"Ay, ay," said the Baker; "no unlike. I thocht he was like a man that had risen by his ain merit."

"That's the man for me," said Wilson, the Beamer, shaking his head wisely. "The Doctor is a man that wad hae raised himsel' withoot savin' a lord's son. I think it's maist a pity he did it, for we hae owre mony o' thae cattle tae keep up already."

"That's true, Wilson, that's true," said several voices.

"Ay," resumed Wilson; "but what I admire about the man is this, that though it had been Danny Macfarlane or the Sweep's 'prentice, it wad hae been a' the same. It wasna because he was a lord's

son, but because somebody was in the watter, and likely tae be droont, that the Doctor jumpit in." This sentiment was loudly applauded.

The conversation proceeded with something of a rough vigour till it was interrupted by the hurried entrance of the Beadle, who looked about excitedly, as if in search of some one whose presence he missed.

"What's wrang, An'rew? Man, yer warm."

"Verra," replied the Beadle, taking off his broad bonnet and wiping the perspiration from his brow. "Whare's that Eerishman that looks after the horses?"

"He's no in," said Mrs. Jamieson, coming forward. "Has anything happened?"

"Ay, there's an accident at the road en'. The Doctor's horse has fa'en and hurt hissel', and the Doctor's hurt tae."

"The Doctor hurt!" cried all present, starting at once to their feet.

"Ay, he wants a new horse and a new machine as fast as ye can. He was in at Glasca' for a doctor body. They're gaun doun tae the Mill."

"That's a real pity," said the landlady, with much concern. "I don't know what's tae be dune, for the horses and machines are a' oot at Christina M'Nab's merriage. Is the Doctor sair hurt?"

"I think no; he compleens o' his leg awee; but it may be waur nor he let's on."

"'Od, we maunna stan' here, though," said the Beamer, buttoning his coat. "A man that's willin' tae help should be helped. I'll no stick at bein' the Doctor's pownie mysel'——"

"Ay, we'll a' be his pownie," interrupted half a dozen voices.

"Come on, M'Nee, we'll tak' a tram apiece. Noo, lads, first at the toll."

The challenge was eagerly taken up, and in a moment the cheery kitchen of the "Bird-in-the-Hand" Tavern was empty.

The accident at the road end was fortunately not of a very serious character. The horse had fallen and lamed itself, and Dr. Calder had been thrown out and sprained his foot, but that was all the damage that had been done. Dr. Abernethy, the other occupant of the gig, had escaped without injury. By the time the men arrived from the village, Dr. Calder was able to use his foot, and it was considered that the horse would be able to carry them to the Mill.

"We'll let nae lame horse draw him," said the Beamer. "A man that disna regard his ain life when anither man's life is in danger wunna be drawn by a lame horse when there's men here tae honour him. Come on, lads!"

The Doctor remonstrated, but the men were not to be turned aside from their purpose.

"Half a dizen on the tae side and half a dizen on the tither—that's the thing. Noo, M'Nee, you and I'll gang atween the trams—hurrah!" As the procession proceeded, the cheer was taken up again and again.

"Let them alone," said Dr. Abernethy, laughing. "You deserve it, Calder; you do indeed. It is a rare instance of a worthy man being honoured in his lifetime. Pull away, lads! Another cheer for the man whom you delight to honour."

CHAPTER IV.

FIRST STEPS.

Dr. Abernethy did not return to Glasgow till the following day. It was late before the fracture which the Miller had received, and which the Doctor most dreaded now, had been properly attended to. But they left him in a good way, and he had spent a quiet night. Dr. Calder's foot was pretty much swollen when he came down to breakfast next morning. In the excitement he had felt no pain, and, thinking it to be a simpler matter than it really was, he had gone to bed without attending to it. Dr. Abernethy volunteered to see the

Miller before leaving, in order to give his friend rest. He was curious also to see the Miller's daughter, of whom Dr. Calder had spoken. He had been informed that she was the intended wife of the man who was reported to be the unnatural father of Miss Grieve's child, and this heightened his desire to see her. He had reason to be much pleased with his visit; the Miller was progressing favourably, and he had an excellent opportunity of forming an opinion of Annie. When he arrived he found her already dressed, and quietly going about her household work. She wore a light, close-fitting morning wrapper, in which her graceful shape was admirably shown. Her cheeks were still flushed by the protracted excitement and anxiety of the last thirty-six hours. She met the Doctor at the door.

"He has had such a good night," she said, "so very quiet; and his sleep seemed

so natural and refreshing. I hope Dr. Calder is not any the worse for the accident."

"Only a trifling sprain in the foot. He will be all right again after a few hours' rest."

"It is such a pity," she said, with a look of deep regret. "The Doctor has been so kind. I am sure we never can repay him for what he has done for us." Annie's manner was simple and natural, and Abernethy was greatly charmed with it.

"It is a pity that girl should be thrown away," said he, when he returned. "Upon my word, Calder, she's as nice a girl as I have seen for a long time."

Dr. Calder laughed.

"Do you think the fellow's intentions are honest? He's a scoundrel, you know. The fact is, if I had had sufficient proof I'd have handed him over to the police. I am convinced that that case in Bell's

Wynd was one of intended infanticide. Do you think the family are aware of his slip in Glasgow ?"

"I don't think they are. His name here has been improving of late. But from what you tell me, he must be a downright hypocrite. I believe, whether rightly or wrongly, Mr. Dawson has a very high opinion of him."

"I'll tell you what," remarked Abernethy, impulsively; "when he is sufficiently recovered, you must open his eyes. Just to think of Rodger promising to marry that poor victim in Glasgow in order to do away with the child, and all the time making love, I suppose, to the Miller's daughter. Upon my word, Calder, you are a cool fellow to take the thing so easy; it makes my blood boil to think of it. I could forgive an erring, repentant man; but a persistent, hypocritical scoundrel—by jingo, I could kick him!"

"Good!" said Doctor Calder, approvingly. "How long is it since the child was given to the people in Bell's Wynd?"

"Over six weeks now; another week would have settled it, I do believe."

"Ah! I remember meeting Rodger in High Street about six weeks ago," said Calder, thoughtfully. "I thought he looked uneasy at the time, and, now that you speak of it, he did leave me at Bell's Wynd. That must have been his message."

"I shouldn't like to trust that girl in his hands. Has she money?"

"That's just what I'm thinking about," remarked the Doctor, pensively. "I don't see how the Miller can be rich; but that brings to my remembrance something my shop-boy told me some months ago. He was passing the garden wall of Blair Farm one day, and overheard Rodger saying that he must have money, and

would 'go in' for the Miller's daughter. The little chap was quite alarmed lest he should mean to steal her purse or something. I didn't think of it at the time, but under the light of the new revelation it looks curious. I shouldn't be astonished if the fellow is going about the Mill for money."

"Has he any of his own?"

"I don't know; he has a good farm, but I can't say anything about the money. He does things in a big way—subscribes to a lot of charities, and all that."

"Ay; and to think he would kill his child for the purpose of getting rid of the burden of paying for it. I'll see what my law agent will advise. He'll not get off if I can help it. But, Calder, I think you should open their eyes at the Mill."

"Well, now that you have drawn my attention to the matter, I'll at least be on my guard."

That afternoon Herbert Rodger called at the Mill to say that he was going from home for a week, and that he was very desirous that the marriage should take place as soon as possible after his return. His mother was not in good health, and he considered it would be better that it should come off before her death. Of course, she might live long enough; but he would be much happier to have Annie near him, and he hoped her father would have sufficiently recovered when he returned to allow of immediate arrangements being made. Annie felt very proud and happy. The dread of her father's safety had passed away. And now had come the invitation to go into that strange, new, and mysterious life of which every girl was so proud, all alone with one of whose presence she never tired, and of whose love she was so well assured. It was surely pardonable pride

and allowable happiness, for he was so wise and good; and then it was so pleasing to be mistress in one's own house, to have one's own furniture, one's own napery; everything one's own, and above all else, one's own husband. Poor Annie! The darkest hour is said to be before the dawn; but is it not also true that the *ignis fatuus* always burns brightest where the pitfalls are most deceptive and most deadly?

Before leaving, Herbert pressed her to his bosom and called her "his own"—a week would soon pass.

"Ah! to you," she said, with a sweet sad smile. "Your world is so big and beautiful, and, under the continuous sunshine, everything goes so fast. But mine is a little, slow, monotonous world, in which there will not be a bit of sunshine till you return." He kissed her and went away, . . . and in due time the sun set.

Nelly Lee was wonderfully busy with preparations for her marriage. She had such a world of things to do, and only two months in which to do them. Her aunt had already purchased twenty pairs of blankets for her, ten of which were woven in Glenara by Angus Simpson, the blanket weaver; but the rest were English blankets of the very finest make.

"There is naething like a guid English blanket next ye in a winter nicht," said Miss Mackenzie; "but then it should aye hae a Scotch ane abune it to keep oot the wind; for, though thae blankets are saft and oozie and kindly tae the skin, they are naething for substance compared tae the hame'ard-made blanket."

Nelly had also a good supply of bed and table linen. But the items dearest of all to her heart were the china tea-set and the silver spoons. The china was such a love of a pattern—nobody had ever

seen the like of it before. Mrs. M'Ilwham thought they were ever so much nicer than hers, though she had got them from the late Dowager Duchess, "and she was a leddy o' fine taste, being edicated at the French Coort, and trained to a' the fineries o' high life. But, then, Miss Lee, they never were a sweet pattern like that, for they made them clumsier i' the flower then than noo. Eh, and just you see what a fine finish they hae got by the addition o' thae gold and green lines roon the lip. I can tell ye, my lass, yer aunt hasna affrontet ye wi' cheenie."

"Weel, I hope no," said Miss Mackenzie, somewhat flattered by Mrs. M'Ilwham's remarks. "Mrs. Clydesdale is weel pleased tae; and she's a guid deal oot at tea-parties, but I think Miss Dawson and Nelly are sairest in love wi' the spoons."

"But I'm no surprised at that," said Mrs. M'Ilwham. "No ae bit, Miss

Mackenzie, for young folks hae aye a weakness for them. I believe though ye was tae mak' a lassie a queen, wi' a' the grandeur that money was able to buy, she wadna be happy if ye didna gie her the siller spoons."

But after all, there was such a lot of things to get ready yet—antimacassars, cushions, tidies, two dozen towels to hem; not to speak of a dozen table-covers and eighteen sets of pillow-cases to make clean out. She was quite sure she never would get through all the work in the time.

"I don't wonder at it," said Miss Mackenzie, one day, as Nelly expressed herself in this way—"I don't wonder at it, for that's nae less than the fifth time ye hae had doon that box wi' the spoons; and I'm perfect sure ye hae opened and refolded the linen table-covers nae less than a dizen times."

Poor thing, they were all her own. It

was the beginning of the newness of the new life, and how could she help it? This was Miss Mackenzie's inward reflection. The thought of the early separation was already giving herself pain, but she would not cast a shadow over her niece's happiness by referring to it; and the only way in which the suppressed feeling found expression was in increased acts of tenderness and devotion.

"Though, tae speak seriously," continued Miss Mackenzie, "I don't see ony mair than yersel' hoo we are to get through the wark before us. Between sewing and knitting, we hae as much as we could set oor faces tae for the next six weeks, let abee the dress and ither necessary odds and ends. But we'll get in thae twa Broon lasses tae help us wi' the white-seams; for there's nae use makin' a toil o' a pleasure."

Next morning's post brought a letter which somewhat altered the aspect of

affairs; the announcement which it contained was as unexpected as it was joyous. Nelly kissed her aunt as she came in to breakfast that morning.

"Wonnerfu' news the day, surely," said Miss Mackenzie, smiling curiously at her niece's apparent elevation of spirit. "Is he gaun tae marry ye before the time?"

"No, indeed, aunt; it is far more wonderful than that, and far better, too. He is coming to Glasgow."

"Tae Glasgow!" responded Miss Mackenzie.

"Yes; they are going to open a branch there, and he is to manage it."

Miss Mackenzie looked hopefully doubtful, but did not reply.

"It is quite true, auntie dear. He says they have been meditating this for some time, but now they have resolved to carry it out. Glasgow is a splendid market."

"Then ye'll no need to go to London?"

"No; he talks of a house somewhere in the neighbourhood of Glenara. He says he is charmed with it, from what I have said in my letters. He could drive out and in."

"Brawly," said the aunt, mechanically, as if the whole thing were a dream which she could never quite realize.

"He is coming down immediately to look after an office, and he says he has written Dr. Calder by the same post to make all necessary inquiry in the neighbourhood regarding a house."

"Then ye will be near me, after a'."

"So it seems, auntie," said Nelly, as the tears filled her large eyes and rolled down her cheeks.

"Weel, that's the best news I've heard this guid wheen years, for I may tell ye I meant tae laugh at yer wedding wi' a sair heart. Tak' yer breakfast and then read me the letter. Eh! lass, but I'm gled."

Dr. Calder was equally gratified by the letter which he received, and came down immediately to congratulate Miss Lee and her aunt on the happy tidings which it brought.

"I'm quite sure ye wad have had a job wi' me, Doctor, after she had gane," said Miss Mackenzie, as they talked the matter over. "Quite sure, for I felt a touch o' palpitation beginnin' aboot my hairt every time I thocht serious on't; and nae wonder, for it's no a canny thing for man, or woman either, tae be left in this warld a' by their lane."

"So saith the Scripture," replied the Doctor, smiling. "Doubtless my friend M'Whannel has been studying the same passage, Miss Mackenzie, and possibly with a slight flutter of palpitation too. You know two negatives are equal to an affirmative," the Doctor continued, looking slyly in the spinster's face.

"Ay, ay," said Miss Mackenzie, with a deprecating wave of the hand, "but twa broken hearts winna mak' a hale ane. Na, na, Dr. Calder, ye maunna even the like o' that tae me. Hae ye ony notion o' a suitable hoose?"

"No, not yet."

"I hear Berry Lodge is for sale."

"Berry Lodge! A most beautiful spot," said the Doctor. "How did you hear of it?"

"Through Mr. Wishart, the late Grieve at Blair Farm. He kens every inch o' grun' from this tae Dychmont Fa'."

"Ah!" said the Doctor, "I want to have a talk with Wishart, at any rate. I'll see if he'll drive out with me this evening to look at the place. Sheffield is fond of the gun and the rod, and I know of no other part where these weapons can be plied with such practical effect."

"It is very fortunate," soliloquized he,

on his way home; "I shall be able to get all the information I want about Rodger from Wishart, without the appearance of going specially to obtain it."

CHAPTER V.

DISCOURAGEMENT.

For the last two days active operations had been going on at the Mill in order to repair the damage that had been done by the spate. From early morning a thick drizzle of rain had continued to fall, but it was not of such a character as to interfere materially with the work, or to cause any apprehension as to its effect upon the river. The barrier which the Smith had extemporized did its work well in preventing the destruction of the Mill, and in keeping out the water while the embankment of the dam was under repair. Although Philip had not recovered sufficiently to be consulted

about business, it was well enough known that the grinding of the grain from the Castle was urgent, and that it was desirable the work of repair should be carried forward with all speed. Mr. Sanderson, the Duke's Grieve, came down and had a consultation with David M'Phun, the foreman Miller, on the subject, and sent half a dozen men to lend a hand at the work.

"I am exceedingly sorry to bring any pressure on you just now," he said; "but you must let me have as much as you can at the end of next week, otherwise I shall lose a good market."

"We will dae our best, sir; you may trust to that, for though we hae a large stock o' work before us, we'll no put a stane on ony other body's stuff till yours is dune."

While they were talking a stranger came down the loaning and inquired for Mr. Dawson.

"He has met wi' an accident," said M'Phun; "but Mrs. Dawson can be seen: though, if it's business, maybe I can ser' ye."

"Well, I suppose it is business. You have some stock in hand belonging to Mr. Rodger of Blair Farm?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"Aboot thirty bags. I think there is twenty wheat and ten corn, if my memory ser's me."

"Ah! I thought there was more. However, what you have belongs to me now," said the stranger, handing M'Phun a letter. "That will satisfy you."

"Glasgow, Thursday.

"Please grind or hand over to the bearer, as he may desire, whatever grain of mine you have at present in the store, as he has purchased it.

"In haste,

"HERBERT RODGER."

"Can you grind it at once?"

"I maun see the mistress, sir," said M'Phun, "if ye will pardon me a minute."

Annie and her mother were sitting together in the front parlour as M'Phun entered.

"Is that Mr. Rodger's hand of write?" he inquired, handing the note to Mrs. Dawson. "The gentleman is waitin' for an answer."

Mrs. Dawson put on her glasses. "I think it is," she said, reading it over deliberately. "What do you say, Annie?" Annie was somewhat nervous as she took the missive in her hand and read it hurriedly over.

"Yes, that is Mr. Rodger's."

"It is strange he did not come down himself," said Mr. Dawson, "or let us know the last time he was here."

"Perhaps he did not know about this when he was here, mother," replied Annie;

"and he may have made a good sale, you know."

"He will nae doubt explain the thing himsel'," said the foreman, impatiently. "What am I tae say?"

"You know best, David. When does the gentleman want it ground?"

"At once."

"But you can't do it till the dam is repaired."

"Not even then, for I hae promised to gie Mr. Sanderson what we hae in hand o' his before the end o' next week, and it'll tak' us workin' nicht and day tae man' that."

"Then, David, if the gentleman cannot wait he must just take it away, for we cannot risk naming anything to Mr. Dawson yet."

"That is a very strange note," said Mrs. Dawson to Annie, after M'Phun had gone; "it was addressed from Glas-

gow, too. Did you know he was going there?"

"I was just about to tell you," said Annie, "that he had gone from home for a week. He told me so, yesterday afternoon. I think he has gone to London on some important business, but he did not say what it was. Very likely he met a buyer at Glasgow on his way."

"Ah! to London?" said the mother, meditatively.

"Yes; and he would like our marriage to take place as soon as possible after he comes back."

"Not till your father recovers, dear."

"Oh no! but he hopes father will be sufficiently well to allow of arrangements being made."

"I hope so; we shall see," the mother said, mechanically, without any light of enthusiasm in her face. Annie felt this coldness very bitterly. She had been

thinking over Herbert's words ever since he spoke them. The thought of her marriage had grown so big that it had shut everything else out of her mind, but itself and him. She had longed for an opportunity of breaking the matter to her mother. She felt sure that her mother loved her; and though the latter at first, and indeed all through their courtship, evinced no strong feelings of approbation, yet she believed her prejudices had been pretty well overcome, and now that the grand consummation of her desires was in view, Annie had believed her mother's heart would yearn out toward her in sympathy and affection. Oh! if she only knew him. If she could only look with unbiased eyes, as her father had done, she would understand him, would respect him, and rejoice at the choice he had made. Her father, she knew, would be proud to learn what had transpired. It was from

his independent advocacy of Herbert's integrity, that she had been drawn to him at first, and now she loved him all the keener, and considered him all the nobler, that he had been misrepresented and wronged by people who were incapable of forming an opinion for themselves. Annie's whole soul went out with her words, but there was no joyous light in her mother's eye, no animation in her manner, and no motherly tenderness in her voice; the words came back to her like so many poisoned arrows, and carried pain and vexation to her heart. How could she ever marry if her mother remained so unsympathetic, and yet how could she refuse Herbert when he came to her with those earnest eyes, and said he was happier when she was near him? How could she deny him that happiness? Annie was grieved to death. A little storm of petulancy and vexation was brew-

ing during the few moments' pause which ensued. At length it burst, and Annie began to cry bitterly.

"What is wrong, child?" said the mother, startled out of her indifference by the tears. Annie did not reply, but wept the louder.

"What is wrong?"

"Nothing, mother; but you are—you are not so kind to me as you used to be."

"Not kind, Annie?" said the mother, wincing keenly under her daughter's words.

"No, mother, you are not so kind as I expected you would be. You know my heart is set upon Mr. Rodger, and yet when he proposes to make me his wife—when he offers to complete the happiness which has been the fondest dream of my life—you treat me coldly, and hold out to me no word of comfort or congratulation. Oh! mother, when it came to this I expected you would have been my kindest and best friend."

Though there was much bitterness and injustice in this outburst of feeling, Mrs. Dawson felt deeply grieved that she had given her daughter any cause to form such harsh ideas regarding her. She certainly was not gratified at the thought of her daughter's marriage with Mr. Rodger. She could not tell how. During all these months she had been trying to like him, trying to appreciate her husband's good opinion of him, but the effort had been an unsuccessful one. She felt now that she ought to have set down a firm foot earlier, but she trusted to some unknown, indefinable accident coming about which should frustrate the courtship and prevent what now appeared to be inevitable. Her husband had been very wayward in giving so strong a countenance to the match, but her feelings grew tender when she thought of him, and she could not utter a word of blame. Though her heart ached at the

thought of giving her daughter over to the arms of a man whom she could not regard, yet she felt the proper season for opposing the proposed marriage had gone by. The bitter, passionate words that had just been wrung from her daughter's heart showed that *her* affection, at least, was too true and deep to be safely tampered with. Mrs. Dawson knew the unreasonableness of love, and saw it would not be wisdom now to aggravate her daughter's feelings by a candid expression of what she thought. She understood the deep significance of Annie's own words, "My heart is set upon Mr. Rodger;" and who does not know the fruitlessness of the task of interfering with a heart that is *set?* Mrs. Dawson's icy indifference had somewhat melted before she replied.

"I did not mean to treat you coldly, Annie dear," said the mother, rising and putting her hand gently on Annie's

shoulder. "You must not think so, for I had no thought of being unkind to you." Annie still hid her face and cried; she felt her mother must say more than this before it was time to speak.

"We have only been a little time out of sympathy," continued Mrs. Dawson, "that is all. You most likely expected too much, and I gave perhaps too little——"

"No, mother, I did not expect too much. I only wanted you to speak kindly to me, to take an interest in what I thought was a matter of congratulation to us all, and to speak friendly of him; that was all, and that was surely not too much."

"Well, dear," said her mother very tenderly, "there is nothing in this world I value more than your happiness, but you know I thought you might have made a better match."

"Oh, mother, do not forget that I am but a poor girl," Annie said, with a mild

reproach. "I have no fortune, no education. I know nothing of the world, and have had no training to fit me for a high place in society. What would it be to make a good match in the eyes of one's neighbours, and be neglected and heart-broken in secret? I do not care for money, mother: what I want is somebody to be kind to me and love me beyond everything else."

There was much animation in Annie's tone and manner while she spoke. Her mother's meaning was not quite understood. Had Mrs. Dawson been asked to explain what she meant by a good match, she could not well have done so. She certainly did not wish that money should ever take the place of affection: she had no ambition to see her daughter occupying a place in society above her own sphere; what she did mean was rather this, that Annie might marry

somebody who would have loved her as sincerely, and who could have been respected by herself and well thought of by her neighbours. These were Mrs. Dawson's feelings in the rough, but she was philosophical enough to see that it would not do to put them into words.

"Oh, mother! you should not think unkindly of Mr. Rodger," Annie resumed. "If you only knew how wise and good he is, you would never think ill of him any more."

"Very likely I should not," said Mrs. Dawson. "One does form prejudices, you know, my dear, without being able to account for them very well. You doubtless know him better than anybody else. As far as I am concerned, I shall not object to the marriage." Mrs. Dawson saw that, in the circumstances, this was the only course to adopt. In the family councils she would be overruled, and she believed

it would only be heaping up unavailing bitterness to show any further opposition to the inevitable. Though Annie was somewhat chagrined at the way in which the first announcement of her marriage had been received, she did not expect much more of a concession than had now been made. She had seldom felt free to speak of Herbert before her mother, and, indeed, his name was rarely mentioned in the household unless when her father was present. Mrs. Dawson would fain have discontinued the conversation. *She* had little heart in the subject, but she saw her daughter's heart would break if she did not get an opportunity of speaking about it.

"When does he wish the marriage to come off?" inquired she, adjusting the antimacassar which had fallen from the back of her daughter's chair.

"As soon as father is well enough to

allow arrangements to be made," said Annie: "he mentioned Christmas, but of course nothing definite has yet been settled."

"I fear that would be too early, Annie dear," said the mother, in a kindly tone, fearing lest she might be misunderstood. "The doctor says it may yet be a month before your father is able to leave the house, and you know we would require to get you such a lot of things."

"I spoke of that to him," said Annie, her eye brightening as if she had got a strong argument to show how unselfish Herbert was, "but he said I need not trouble myself about that, as I should find everything I required at Blair Farm."

"Yes, no doubt; but though that is true, there are many things which you will require to get, and which, for the sake of our good name, we must have ready for you before you go. Did

you tell him you had no fortune to speak of?"

"Yes, mother, he knows; but he does not want money. He says, with the farm, he has quite sufficient; besides, at his mother's death he gets all her money, which ought to make us very comfortable."

While they were speaking, Dr. Calder passed the window and came in.

"How is the patient to-day?" he said, shaking hands with Mrs. Dawson and bowing to Annie.

"He has been rather quiet all morning," replied Mrs. Dawson; "I think he has slept most of the time. I hope your foot is better, Doctor."

"Thank you, yes, it is quite well to-day. I am glad to see you doing so well yourself. You feel strong now?"

"Oh yes, thank God. It was a sore shock, but I am thankful it has fallen so

lightly, and that it is not so bad as it seemed."

"To be sure, it might have been much worse," said the Doctor. "By the way, I have not had an opportunity of complimenting your daughter since the accident. I must say she is a capital nurse; she was of more value to me that night than all in the house." Under the double gaze of her mother and the Doctor, Annie held down her head and was conscious of a blush. She trembled lest the Doctor's quick eye might be able to detect the evidence of her tears. "She seems, however," he continued, "not to have suffered much from the anxiety and labour." The Doctor passed out of the parlour, and Annie felt relieved.

Her father was lying with his face to the wall when the Doctor entered his bedroom. He was very pale, and his eyes were shut as if he were sleeping.

"How are you to-day?"

This was said in a pretty loud tone of voice, and Philip opened his eyes and looked up in the Doctor's face without immediate recognition.

"You know me," said the Doctor, taking the Miller's hand in his. Gradually his features assumed a pleased expression, and he said, faintly—

"Oh yes."

"And you know who this is," said the Doctor, taking Mrs. Dawson's arm, and leading her forward. Philip smiled more intelligibly, while his wife leant over and kissed him.

"Yes, I hope so."

"I suppose you can't describe how the accident occurred," continued the Doctor.

"What accident?" said the Miller, sharply.

"The accident to the dam." Philip seemed puzzled. There was an effort of

memory, but the face gave evidence that the effort had not been successful.

"The broken sluice, you know."

"Ah, the broken sluice," repeated Philip. But immediately the face assumed a blank, meaningless expression.

The Doctor shook hands with him and bade him "good day."

"He catches the faces, you see," said the Doctor to Mrs. Dawson; "but the memory is not yet able to sustain any effort. He is sharper, however, to-day, and as he regains strength, I think memory will return."

The conversation which was broken off when the Doctor entered was not resumed when he left. Annie remained in the parlour for a while with the hope that she should have an opportunity of reopening the question of her marriage, but her mother as usual went about the house careful and bustling, and the chance she

hoped for did not occur. She had no mind for work. Putting on her hat, she went out into the Priory Wood. The drizzling, soaking cloud had been blown off by a brisk wind, and the day was fair. The trees were all stripped of their foliage, and made no longer a mystery of bank and glen. The water in the river was still high on the banks, and passed with a seething and stately flow. Everything was very different from what it was that evening when she heard the mysterious words and felt the first pressure of love at the stile. She had never seen the banks look so dreary. The Priory, too, though it could not be affected by the seasons, seemed haggard. The lichens and the ferns were as green as ever under the damp walls and in the dull crevices of the rock; the ivy and woodbine still clung to the dank frontage overlooking the Ara; but the beech and the flowering

currant and the shrubbery inside the walls were all leafless. Annie approached the margin of the precipice, and looked out upon the landscape. It was fearful to gaze down upon that rapid stately river as its coloured waters flashed off the rocky embankment beneath. The height seemed very much greater now that she could see distinctly without the obstruction of leaf and bough, and she thought of the poor creature which, six months ago, pursued by Herbert's dog, had found instant death by leaping from the very spot where she now stood. The Castle on the opposite bank was not much changed, unless in its surroundings. The banks were all sodden and bare, and the lawns, stretching far away to right and left, seemed hampered by the Castle wall. The woods, shorn of all romance, stood up in their stark uncomeliness, and fancy held back aghast, without daring to furnish a leaf or flower.

Annie was not much comforted by the walk. When she returned, the carts of the stranger were removing Mr. Rodger's grain from the store. Her heart was breaking for an ear that should not weary of her love. But it was yet almost a whole week till his return. Oh, it was such a dreary time!

CHAPTER VI.

A SCOTCH WASHING.

It is a prevalent opinion that the poetry of common life, like the Red Indian, is fast disappearing before the growing utilitarianism of our time. It is averred that Romance, ashamed of its own tardiness, quitted the fields as the reaping machine came in. And if it be true, as some would have it, that the great god Pan cast away his whistle of reeds, and betook himself finally to Olympus, on hearing the bagpipes, it is not less a fact that the other rural divinities were scared to death by the sight of the railway contractor and the skirl of

the steam whistle. Though the bagpipes had often wailed down the valleys of Glenara, waking the echoes and stirring the hearts of the inhabitants, the locomotive and the washing machine were equally unknown in the village, and few places were so suggestive of happy associations to the village maidens as the pretty public washing green, belonging to Bob Sapples of Glenfoot. Here on any day of the week, if you had had the privilege of admission, you might have seen half a dozen pretty plump maidens, with "coats kilted a bit abune the knee," dancing to some merry air amongst the white suds; but this sight you were not likely to witness, unless, as was sometimes done by inquisitive swains, you went round by the back of the burn and climbed into one of the overhanging trees; for Bob Sapples had a due respect for female modesty, and during the process of the "tramping o'

the claes" the notice which he had caused to be painted above the gate, "For Females Only," was rigorously attended to. Bob had not a watch-dog, but he had a goose which served his purpose equally well, and performed the double function of laying eggs and nibbling the heels "o' a body in breeks."

Bob Sapples' goose was as famous as himself. A story was told of a laird's son who, disregarding the notice above the door and the winged Cerberus behind it, went over the threshold to gratify a curiosity which he ought to have crucified, and was attacked and very badly bitten. Bob and the goose were summoned before the Sheriff to answer for their misdeeds, and medical evidence was brought to show that the youth had been seriously injured; but justice ruled that he had paid the penalty of an unlicensed curiosity, and that he had no right to venture on ground

which ought to have been in his eyes a morally as well as a physically protected place.

Bob Sapples' green was beautifully situated. On three sides it had a natural fence of wood and rock, and on the fourth a high wooden paling, which formed a sufficient barrier against all who had no right to go in. A clear burn, with water fresh from the neighbouring hills, ran through the enclosure, cutting it into two parts, the larger of which was appropriated to bleaching and drying purposes, the smaller being occupied by the boilers, tubs, and other necessary utensils. Bob was, of course, manager in his own green, and was there during the "tramping," as well as at all other times of the day; but his presence did not signify, as the girls cared no more for him than they did for the six upright posts around which he twisted the lines whereon they

suspended the clothes. Altogether there were six boilers in use on the day in question, for the grass was good in that beautiful little glen all the year through, and, as it was well sheltered from the north and north-east winds, the burn was seldom frozen.

The subject of conversation to-day was Christina M'Nab's marriage. Christina had been housekeeper to old Willie Waddell the dyer, at the foot of the brae, and had made what was considered a good match in marrying John Galbraith, the book-keeper at Cantyre Mill.

"I suppose it was a grand affair," said Mrs. M'Farlane, who washed at the next tub to Jeanie Morris—Jeanie had had the honour of being present on the occasion.

"Splendid," said Jeanie, pausing while she lifted the steaming clothes out of the boiler. "It was the best wedding ever I was at. I never saw Christina lookin'

better than she did that nicht. She had on a white dress trimmed wi' pink, and wore a beautiful wreath o' orange-blossoms in her hair. Old Mr. Waddell gave her away as if she had been his ain dauchter. I heard he had bocht the braws."

"What sort o' a chiel is he?"

"Her husband?"

"Ay."

"A real nice lad. I didna like him sae weel at first, he lookit stiff awee; but ye warm tae him the better ye ken him. He seems mortal fond o' her."

"Ay, of course—of course," said Mrs. M'Farlane, commencing to rub vigorously at the wristbands of a shirt. "He'll be like the rest o' them, mortal fond o' her for six months, or maybe a year, but it sune wears aff. It taks a fine lowe tae keep love warm for a lifetime; but she may be comfortable enough for a' that, if she manages him."

"What do you mean by managing, Mrs. M'Farlane?" inquired Jeanie, with some curiosity.

"Ye ken hoo Jamie Elderson shapes the airn when it's warm," replied Mrs. M'Farlane, raising her eyes from the wristbands to have a look in Jeanie's face; "that's what I mean by managin'." Jeanie blushed. Jamie had been her partner at the marriage, and the recollection of some trifles he had whispered in her ear during the evening was still tinkling in her memory.

"Ye will hear women compleening o' ill men," continued Mrs. M'Farlane, "but, my lass, it's no the men's faut, for they're just as they're made; an' if ye want tae mak' a guid man o' Jamie when ye get him, just you gie him the richt set afore he cools. I suppose Galbraith has a guid place i' the mill?"

"Ay, he keeps the books and pays the workers, and is very weel likit, I believe."

"I wonner if he could mak' onything o' oor callant?" said Mrs. M'Farlane, looking at the young scapegrace, who had come into the green during the time this conversation was going on, and was now occupied in throwing stones at Bob Sapples' cat which sat blinking slyly at the sparrows from a high perch on a neighbouring wall. "I think he wad settle if he had a guid place, puir thing, though it's sune enough yet to put him tae wark. Here, Danny, lad, ye'll maybe hit somebody firing stanes that gate. Bring me a stoup o' water; ye maun dae something for yer meat, ye ken, but tak' care and dinna fa' i' the burn, for it's gey big the day. Ay, that's clever noo—hoo did ye get by the guiss?"

"I slippit in on the aff side o' Teenie Wilkie," replied Danny, with a roguish shake of the head, "an' it never saw me till I was past, but then Johnny M'Nee

was stan'in' at the gate, an' it had its e'e on him."

"Ay, ay, tae get a sicht o' Mary Speirs, nae doubt, for she's a bonny tramper. Thae lads are aye hankerin' aboot the gate, as if the place was a fair or a keek-show; they canna be wantin' ony guid. If they wad gie a wheen o' them mair tae dae, they wadna be sae keen o' spyin' ferlies. Put a peat on the fire, Danny, it'll save me fylin' my hands. Ay, Jeanie Morris, if ever ye get young Elderson, keep you mind o' the het airn. Eh me! there's that M'Ilree lad glowerin' straicht in frae behint the rock abune the burn, and M'Nee's sure no to be far awa. Bob Sapples, do ye see yon? But it's you, Teenie Wilkie and Mary Speirs, that's bringin' thae trash aboot the green."

"Ye needna be sae desperate particular, Mrs. M'Farlane," said Sapples, as he came round by the boilers, after having shaken

his "neive" at the trespasser. "I dinna think mony folk wad climb the dyke to see you tramping claes."

"Ye wad wonner, Bob."

"Ay, certies! I wad wonner, for ony auld body that micht be fulish enough to think o't wadna be able tae clim' the tree tae see ye. Ye keep a' men at a safe enough distance frae you by the length o' yer tongue. Ye maun keep min' yer ain son's growing, Mrs. M'Farlane, and shouldna been here the day. I doot the guiss's e'esicht's failin' when he got by. Though I dae a' I can to screen legs that are worth screenin', I canna hae my bonnet on every keekhole."

Mrs. M'Farlane was a person whom few women cared to interfere with. She had washed for many families in the village, but her habits and her tongue together had driven her out of the most respectable of them, so that Bob Sapples had

no compunction in speaking out plain to her.

"I am glad ye did it, Bob," said Mary Speirs, when Mrs. M'Farlane had gone over to the green to put down her clothes. "I'm real glad ye did it, for she's a meddlin' woman. Tae think o' her blaming us for bringing the lads about the green!"

"Ay," said Teenie Wilkie, full to the lips with righteous indignation, "and ca'ing them 'trash' tae; I'm vext I didna tell her that she was the trash hersel'."

"Never mind her," said Bob, soothingly. "The mair a body fechts wi' pots the mair they'll fyle themsel's."

"I wish she wad keep that big wild callant o' hers at hame," resumed Mary Speirs. "He's owre auld-fashioned noo to be gaun gaping and glowering aboot the green. I wish ye wad put a stop to it, Bob."

"Ay, I maun tak' the guiss owre the

coals for that," replied Bob. "He shouldna been here the day ava."

"It wasna the guiss's fault," said Teenie Wilkie; "the laddie jinked in by my side like a keelie, and the creatur' didna ken he was there; but the next time he does that again I'll tak' him by the shouthers and put him oot mysel'."

"Ay, just dae."

The occupant of the sixth "byne" was the lame servant of Blair Farm, whom Betty Broon had charged to mind her P's and Q's—"for," said the housekeeper, "if ye listen tae stories ye maun tell stories back again, and ye ken you hevna the wisdom tae talk much without doing somebody harm. But, in particular, dinna say a word about Hobbs bein' in jail, for though I jaloused frae the beginnin' that he wasna the gentleman the Maister seemed tae tak' him tae be, yet ye ken it wadna dae tae tell everybody that. Ye

maun aye think o' the credit o' the hoose, for if the hoose loses credit we a' lose credit wi' it; an' mair nor that, Jeen," continued Betty, impressively, "it wad be a very serious matter for a lame lassock like you tae be putten oot o' a guid place."

Jeen, at best, was not a very bright colloquist, but she had the convenient and safe habit of speaking to herself, which sometimes gave her a deal of relief, especially when she felt an impulse to join in promiscuous conversation, of which Betty Broon had so often warned her to beware in consequence of her limited wisdom. In this case she had been appealed to by Mary Speirs, "if it wasna a great shame o' Mrs. M'Farlane to blame her and Teenie Wilkie for bringing the lads about the green."

"What could ye expect?" replied Jeen with a readiness which led Mary Speirs to think there was something else behind

it; but the conversation ended there, for the lame servant said the rest to herself.

"For," continued she, "a woman that could tell Betty Broon that I was settin' my feathers for auld An'rew Watson is surely able for onything ava, but I maunna say that tae Mary Speirs, for it wad tak' a guid while tae tell a' the oots an' ins o't, an' the mistress being ill, I hae nae time tae spare." Jeen ground her wrists vigorously together over a linen table-cover.

"But I don't think I hae dune bad," she resumed, after a pause. "I don't think I hae dune bad ava, for I hae these heavy things weel through the last sapple, an' the fine things a' biled an' on the gress for the last two hours. I aye like tae gie the fine things plenty o' the gress, for though ye scoor them till yer tired an' sine them never sae weel, they're no like washed claes unless they hae the caller smell o' the gress." Jeen paused again, and poured

a can of water into the boiler, for, like the shorthand writer, she was in the habit of marking her paragraphs by a blank.

"I'm thinkin' Betty needna been sae gleg," she said, tossing her head saucily, "in tellin' me I wasna tae speak aboot Hobbs, as if I hadna sense tae keep my thoom on that; but she aye talks tae me as if I was a wean, an' as if she had a' the wisdom o' Proverbs under her black mutch; but I'll open on her some day when she's no thinkin' on't, an' let her ken I'm no siccan a diffy as she taks me tae be; for though I'm lame I'm no lazy, an' though I dinna speak muckle tae onybody, I'm maybe no sae desperate senseless as a' that; but I think it was a peety the Maister alloo't him tae stay aboot the hoose sae lang, for, let it be keepit never sae quate, it's sure tae come oot that thae twa offishers cam' last night an' took him awa' tae jail." Jeen's period this time was

to straighten herself up, put her right hand on her "hinch" and her left over her eyes to shade off the sun—for though it was a November day, there was a strong sunshine—to see if there was anybody coming.

"I expected Betty before this," she said, "for she kens fine I'm no able to wring out these blankets mysel', nor I winna try't, though they should never be wrung, for if I did it they wad aye hae the smell o' sape, an' I wad need to throw them owre my shouther an' tak' them in my teeth, an' be tell't, after a', that I had spoilt the hail washin' by my cleverness; forby, I hinna a bit o' blue, an' she kent fine there was hardly as muckle in the cloot as wad dae the Maister's shirts." While Jeen soliloquized, a neighbour servant came running into the green, all out of breath.

"Oh, Jeen, Jeen, rin hame fast, for Mrs.

Rodger is deein'. She taen a real sair turn about an hour sin', and though Doctor Calder was there when I left, she was awfu' bad, and canna last long if she disna get relief. I was gaun owre tae Willie Watson's, at ony rate, and promised to come in and let ye ken; but rin you hame as fast as ye can." Jeen slipped her shoes on her bare feet.

"Eh me!" she thought, "an' the Maister no at hame. But, puir body, she has had an ill time o't 'tween ae thing an' anither. I hope Betty hasna neglected tae gie her the poothers, but it's no like, for although she is peppery enough tae me whiles, she has aye been respectfu' an' kin' tae her, an' that is very richt, for she is the Mistress an' I am only a servant. But what'll Betty an' me dae if she should dee?" muttered Jeen, as she limped past the goose at the gate. "What'll we dae if that should happen?

for we ken wha we hae, but we dinna ken wha we may get. There's Miss Dawson, nae doot, o' the Mill, that Betty tell't me the Maister wad likely marry some day soon, but a woman that's guid as a miss is no aye guid as a mistress, an' it wad bother baith o' us tae get as nice a place as we hae, an' maybe it wad bother Betty as muckle as me for a' her talk, for though I'm lame I'm no lazy, and though I dinna speak muckle, I'm no sae desperate senseless as she thinks."

Thus meditating, Jeen reached the farm. Several people stood about the door as she entered, with unusually grave faces. She only spoke to Martin Simpson, the ploughman, but he stood stockstill, looking at the ground without speaking a word. Jeen went direct to the kitchen, but Betty was not there. Throwing off her wet apron and her shoes, she hurried up to Mrs. Rodger's bedroom. She knew

several people were in the house, but there was dead stillness everywhere. The bedroom door was open. The Doctor was standing between her and the bed, in a half-stooping posture, as if looking into Mrs. Rodger's face. Simpson's wife stood near the fire, looking also in the direction of the bed; and Betty stood with her face to the wall, holding her white apron up to her eyes with both hands. She stole quietly forward to get a look at the Mistress's face. Horror, what a change! It was rigid and ghastly. At that moment the Doctor moved and said gently, but in an audible tone, that went like a bullet to her heart, "It is all over—she is dead!"

CHAPTER VII.

DEATH AT BLAIR FARM.

"DINNA stan' greetin' there, Jeen; it's no tears frae you nor me that'll bring the Mistress back tae life again," said Betty Brown, drying her eyes, after the first great shock had passed. "Gang ye an' finish yer washin', for we'll hae need o' clean claes, an' it's no muckle use ye can be i' the hoose o' the deed, greetin' an' roarin' that way; though it's nae wonner, for it has been awfu' sudden, an' yer but a young stupid lassock, that hasna seen muckle trouble. Come, Mrs. Simpson, you an' me'll need to lay oot the corp, an'

if the Minister comes we'll hae her decent tae look at—though whatever will the Maister think when he hears o't I dinna ken. Just tae think o' her awa' without haein' time tae see her ain son, or say a kindly word at partin', which micht hae dune him guid, an' him sae desperate particular about thae poothers. Oh, dear! oh, dear! But come, Mrs. Simpson, we maunna greet till we hae gotten oor wark by. There'll be time enough for that when the corp is i' the grun'. Rin awa', Jeen, like a leddy, an' min' yer washin', but dinna put aff yer time haverin' wi' everybody, for ill news travels fast enough."

As Betty predicted, the news was not long in spreading through the village. It was known that Mrs. Rodger had been for some time in failing health, but she was like a woman that might have lived for many years, and the announcement which

went from door to door was received with much surprise.

"Puir body," said the Smith, pausing with a horse's foot between his legs, which he had shod and was dressing with the file, "puir body, she has had a short end at the last. Janet, tell mother that Mrs. Rodger's dead." The Smith's wife was not long in obeying her husband's command.

"Dead! preserve us!" exclaimed the old woman, when the news was communicated to her. "Eh, Janet, my time canna be far awa' noo; they are drapping aff ane by ane like owre ripe apples; though I am twa year aulder nor her, we were bairns at the schule thegether. There is only auld John M'Cormick and Martha Deans left o' a' them that started the race wi' me, an' I can hardly expect tae be the hindmost. Eh me! and Marion Rodger's dead. Puir woman, she has had

a heap o' trouble in her time, but it a' comes o' a' graceless man."

Mrs. Elderson shook her head ominously. "I'm whiles feart for Thamas, Janet," she continued, "but though he's ootspoken an' headstrong, he has aye a respect for the Lord's Hoose an' a reverence for the Sabbath-day; but there was naething in her man's hairt but siller, naething but siller. He was feart the worl' wad gang dune afore him, an' could barely put his horses i' the stable at the end o' the week for fear the hairst shouldna be gotten in. It was said he stappit his fields on the Sabbath tae count what they would bring. But what has it a' come tae? The Lord winna bless siller that's stol'n frae Himsel'. Janet, aye min' an' put the grace o' God in the hairts o' your weans, and let them mak' siller for themsel's."

Mrs. Elderson paused.

"Puir Marion, I min' when she was a bit wean: that was before she marriet Davie Rodger, ye ken, an' I was only a lassock mysel'. We gaed tae Habby M'Clymont's schule. Ye'll no min' Habby, Janet, because he was dead afore ye were born, or Thamas either; but he wasna a bad man, though he was stern wi' the weans, and had a gey big cane that he didna spare. He aye insisted on us bringin' a peat every second morning to keep up the schule fire, an' was mair particular wi' the Shorter Catechism nor wi' ony ither exerceese; an' I min' before I was ten I had it a' clear on my tongue frae 'Man's Chief En',' to what we pray for i' the 'Petitions.' Marion was dour at the Catechism, though she wasna ill at the Psalms; but a Smith wasna thocht sae guid as a Farmer, an' it was said she had marriet better nor me, though I was marriet before her for five year, an'

Thamas was just takin' the fit (foot) at the time, an' toddlin' by the grip, for he was aye a donsie wean till after he had the measles ; but auld M'Clymont didna heed aboot the Psalms, for he said ye could be saved withoot the Psalms, but no withoot the Shorter Catechism, which was guid teachin', Janet, an' true, but Thamas had his Catechism learnt at twelve, an' was made an elder o' the Kirk at twenty-five, three year after his faither's death, which was a sair stroke tae us a' ; though Thamas took his faither's place, an' there was niver a horse the less shod i' the parish or a pleuch the less i' the fiel's. But they're a' dead noo, Janet, an' puir Marion Rodger's the last o' them ; an', eh me ! a' that's left is auld John M'Cormick, Martha Deans, an' mysel'."

Mr. Clydesdale was in the midst of his preparation for the following Sunday when the news reached him, but he was a kindly

man, and ever ready to respond to the call of duty, however hard or however much out of consonance with his own desires that call might be.

"It is dreadfully sudden," he said to his wife when he came downstairs. "I must contrive to break it in some way to Herbert when he returns; but it is doubtless meant to deepen the good impressions which have recently been made on his mind."

Mr. Clydesdale was received by Mrs. Simpson, and handed into the front parlour. They had got the "laying out" completed, and Betty, to use her own words, had gone "tae mak' hersel' up a wee bit an' put on a clean mutch, for what did ministers ken aboot hoosewark or the cares o' washing day, no tae speak o' the corp i' the upper room."

Mr. Clydesdale rose and shook her solemnly by the hand.

"I am exceedingly sorry to hear of the sad affair which has happened to-day," he said, looking earnestly at Betty, whose eyes were swollen with crying, notwithstanding her determination to be firm.

"Ay, sir, it has been a sad affair, an' me a' by my lane i' the hoose, it's like tae gar me gie aff at the head; an' what is the Maister tae say when he comes?" Betty, finding herself in the presence of true sympathy, began to cry.

"No doubt it is very hard, Betty, but you have been most faithful in your services to the family, and you must just do your best in this sore trial—you will, no doubt, be borne through the difficult work. When did she take seriously ill?"

"Aboot ten o'clock," said Betty, drying her tears, "an' there wasna a body in the hoose but me, for Jeen Armour had gane to the green wi' some claes that needed

washin', an' I had naebody tae send for the Doctor till Mrs. Simpson came in at twelve; but he didna come till near ane, an' she dee't at half-past ane. Oh, Maister Clydesdale, it was dreadfu', it was dreadfu'."

"Had she much pain?"

"Ay, sair, sair pain, an' she was sensible tae the last, for when I took her han' an' tell't her I was vext she was suffering sae much, she turned roon an' gied me such a look, as much as tae say, 'Oh, Betty, can ye no help me?' but, puir dear, I couldna help her, although I was daeing a' I could."

"That is true, Betty; it is often very painful for loving hearts to stand by the bedside of dear ones and see them suffering, without the power to ease a single pang—very painful; but it is the will of our Father, who ordereth all things well, and who, we are assured, will not

ask us to bear a single pain more than is necessary. When we come to enter the Dark Valley we must say good-bye to all human friends, for no one, however dear, can go in there with us; but there is a Friend, Betty, whom I trust Mrs. Rodger knew as well as you and I, who sticketh closer than a brother, and who, when all other friendships fail us, is the great Friend of our need."

While the Minister spoke Betty sat crimping the border of her white apron between her fingers, her eyes the while closely superintending the task.

"She has had a long lease of life," continued the clergyman; "she was what is called in the Bible 'well stricken in years.' We are not promised more than threescore and ten——"

"But she was seeventy-three come the time," interrupted Betty, without raising her eyes.

"Well, you see, that was a long journey, and considering the trials through which she had to pass, it was ample to show her that this is not our Rest; that here we have no continuing city, that we are but strangers and pilgrims seeking something far more enduring and substantial in the way of happiness than this world can afford. Death is always a solemn thing when it comes, whether it visits young or old, for it is no respecter of persons—it may be my turn to-day and your turn to-morrow. It stalketh in darkness, and who can trace its approach or foretell its coming; but, Betty, the solemn words which such events ought to impress on our hearts are, 'Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye know not the Son of Man cometh!'"

There was much earnestness in the Minister's voice; the good man was zealous in his Master's work, and took

every opportunity of improving the occasion. He was instant in season, and, as Betty thought to herself, out of season too.

"For," she said to Mrs. Simpson afterwards, "it's an easy enough thing for him tae preach aboot being aye ready, as if there wasna a hoose tae clean, or a bite o' meat tae cook, or the victuals tae order frae the shops, an' thae books tae check; for to see that everything is charged at the ordinar' price, and that naething is put doon but what we get, wad tak' the half o' a body's time, no tae speak o' the worry o' makin' wark for that lame creatur i' the kitchen. Ready, indeed! I wad like tae see hoo the maister wad look if he cam' in some day wi' the hoose meetin' him at the door, and nae denner for him, and me stannin' wi' my han's clasped an' my een turned up frae the disorder an' dirt, an' tellin' him I was gettin'

'ready.' I'm thinking he wad 'ready' me, Mrs. Simpson. 'Ready' me! ay, certes, but it wad be tae lea' the hoose. He kens naething aboot the weight o' a dead woman on his min', or he wadna speak that way tae *me*."

Poor Betty! As if the Great Master could not be served in the dressing of a corpse, in the cooking of a dinner, or in the performance of the humblest duty. Betty made no response, but went on more vigorously with the crimping.

"The news will be a great blow to Mr. Rodger," continued the Minister, after a pause. He had now come down to the level of Betty's sympathies, and she dropped the apron with a sigh of relief.

"Ay, it will be a sair stroke, for though he fashed her a wee whiles, it'll be nane the lichter o' that, when he kens he can never say a kind word again—for it's a

desperate thing to hae to be vext for a thing for ever that ye canna mend."

"No doubt, Betty, no doubt; but you don't mean to infer that Mr. Rodger was unkind to his mother?"

"No, I don't say he was unkind," replied Betty, "but ye ken a man o' forty an' a woman o' seeventy-three canna be expected tae look at things exactly in the same way, and there micht be wee bits o' errors that a body wadna like tae own, or ask forgiveness for, tae the last meenit; but, puir man, she has been ta'en away, an' he hasna had the chance."

"Yes, it is very sad," Mr. Clydesdale said, rising; "perhaps you would like me to break the news to him when he comes. I believe he is at London, and I can easily intercept him by watching the coaches day by day till he arrives."

"I think it wad be best," said Betty, "for it wad be better for him tae show his

grief before ane o' his ain kind than tae a woman body like me; but ye maun see her before ye gang."

Mr. Clydesdale did not reply, but Betty led the way to the Mistress's bedroom, and he followed in silence, while Mrs. Simpson slipped after them on her tiptoes, and also went in.

It was a solemn little apartment that chamber of death. It always is so. You have often seen the heavy-footed man stealing with noiseless step towards that melancholy corner, and you have as frequently observed the cloth removed from the face, and the whispered comment or the sad turning away in silence. Ah! it is not mere custom that inspires this feeling of silent reverence and awe, nor is it from the wish that the beloved one may Rest in Peace—of this there can be little fear—for if there be a place on earth where we feel an impulse to take our

shoes from off our feet, or where we are conscious of the immediate hand of the Almighty, it is surely in the presence of the dead.

Betty did not speak, but removed the covering from the face. It was not much changed; it was the same sad, melancholy face of the Mistress of Blair Farm—but the wrinkles were almost all rubbed out now. The Minister turned away, and Betty covered the face again. Then followed a short, earnest prayer—a prayer not for the dead, but for the living—that God would bless to them the solemn lessons of His Providence; that they might keep their lamps burning and their garments unspotted from the world; so that when the Bridegroom came they might be found ready to go in with Him, and enjoy for ever the blessedness of His presence. They returned downstairs as quietly as they had come up. Mr.

Clydesdale shook Betty kindly by the hand.

"I shall be sure to see Mr. Rodger before he comes home," he said, as he was leaving, "and if there is anything else that I can help you with, be sure to let me know."

Betty thanked him, and returned to the kitchen to think. She could always think best in the kitchen. There were so many things pressing themselves upon her mind that she had little room for the solemn impressions which the good Mr. Clydesdale intended his visit to make. Jeen Armour had not yet returned from the green. The house had not been dusted that day, and there was another matter troubling her of which she had not yet spoken to anybody.

"But the first thing we maun hae is a coffin," she said to Mrs. Simpson. "It's a pity but I had asked Maister Clydesdale

to look after that, though maybe it's as weel no, for I ken M'Nee has a grudge again' the Maister, an' it wadna dae tae let everybody ken that. Look ye tae the hoose an' I'll rin ower tae the village, for we maunna hae the coffin tae seek when the Maister comes hame."

Betty found M'Nee in the workshop, but he was disinclined to comply with her request.

"An' what am I tae dae wi' the corp i' the hoose, and him no at hame," urged Betty. "Just think o' twa lone women under the same roof wi' an uncoffined corp—na, na, ye maun mak' me the coffin, an' I'se warrant ye it'll be paid."

"It's no a Christian thing arguin' owre a corp, Betty," replied the Cartwright, "and for your sake, and her's that's awa', I wadna grudge the price o' a coffin; but when I think o' thae carts, and thae ax'-trees that he refused tae pay, because they were

ordered by the Grieve, it mak's me sweert awee tae put the brods thegether and gie him the chance o' throwin' the job on my han'. Forby, ye ken, he hasna notions like common folk; he may gie owre the whole work o' the beerial tae some o' thae Glasga bodies that provide everything."

"He'll no gang tae Glasga nane, when he can get it sae weel dune here," said Betty, "for a'body kens that there's nae coffins made like yours; an' considerin' that she has dee't i' the parish where she was born, bred, an' brocht up, there should be naebody aboot her but them that hae kent her an' that can put tenderness intae their han's, even when dealin' wi' the dead. Na, Maister M'Nee, naebody but you will ever mak' the Mistress's coffin."

So M'Nee consented, and the coffin was made.

CHAPTER VIII.

BREAKING THE NEWS.

It was a splendid sight to stand at the bend of the hill above Glenara and witness the arrival of the Scotch mail-coach from London. Far off, amongst the Cantyre avenues, were heard the sharp, clear notes of the conductor's horn, announcing the approach, and warning all meaner vehicles to stand clear; then came the serried flash of the driver's livery amongst the bare trees, and his eager "Whi-t—whit—whit," as the horses took the brae; and in a minute after the glorious equipage, revealing a couple of scarlet coats and a number

of muffled passengers, swung gallantly round the bending of the road, while the driver fingered his handful of reins, and cracked his long whip proudly, preparatory to drawing up at the door of the Bird-in-the-Hand Tavern. As the coach stopped a couple of gentleman alighted. The one was Herbert Roger, of Blair Farm, and the other was a tall, smart, gentlemanly person, with dark eyes and bushy whiskers. They had evidently been in conversation.

"I hope I am not taking you out of your way," said the stranger, apologetically, as they marched through the village.

"Not in the least," replied Herbert. "I pass the Doctor's house on my way home. Unless he is engaged professionally, I think this is an hour at which you are very likely to find him."

They walked smartly, for it was very cold.

"It seems a beautiful village," resumed the stranger, after a pause, looking around him with much interest.

"Yes; I suppose you have not seen it before?"

"I have not, though I have heard a great deal about it. Where is the famous Castle?"

"It is down in the hollow immediately before us. You may observe the higher points of the ruin amongst the tops of these trees."

"Yes; I see. There is some place also called the Priory Wood."

"Ah! there is indeed," said Herbert, pleasantly; "a most beautiful place, though in this season it is not quite so charming; it is situated on the bank of the Ara, immediately opposite the Castle. This is your destination, and observe, yonder is the Doctor at the window."

"Indeed, so it is," said the stranger,

stopping at the gate; "I am much indebted to you for your attention."

They shook hands and parted, and Herbert walked moodily on. There was an anxious expression on his face which he seemed desirous to conceal. He looked jaded and worn, and the lines about his eyes were darker and deeper than usual, and it seemed as if he had recently been in the fire of some intense feeling. Though he was beloved of very few in the village, his sad position drew forth the commiseration and sympathy of all who saw him that afternoon, as he hurried home; but no one cared to be the harbinger of news which was so distressing and sad. He had not gone far from the Doctor's gate when a gentle hand was laid on his shoulder, and he looked round.

"Oh, Mr. Clydesdale! How do you do?"

"I am very well," the good-hearted

Minister said, seizing him by the hand, and giving it a kindly shake. "You seem cold."

"Yes, very likely; I have just come off the coach, and I confess I do feel somewhat chilled. It's a long ride."

"Have you come all the way from London?" the Minister inquired, with innocent duplicity.

"I have."

"Dear me! no wonder, then, you should feel cold and tired too. You will step in and have a warm cup of tea with me. It is no trouble in the world; Mrs. Clydesdale is just getting it ready, and she will be delighted to see you."

Mr. Clydesdale took him by the arm and led him into the manse. It was a beautifully secluded spot that clergyman's manse—a spot in which many men would have folded their hands, bridled their aspirations, and settled down. But with this generous, self-denying, simple-hearted

man it was not so. There was to him a richer inheritance, a more real and a more beautiful home beyond the present, after which he strove. What were the anxious effort and self-abnegation of a few fleeting years to him, if he and those over whom he had been appointed spiritual guide should be found well represented at that great home-gathering of the future? Though he had this high ideal, he was none the less thankful that his lot had been so pleasantly cast. Few people came to Glenara without stopping to look in by the gate at that plain, ivy-covered house, with its pretty roses and knots of honeysuckle drooping from the windows, and its clean-cut lawn, touched here and there with the choicest flowers, that, like the man within, had a smile for all seasons of the year. Mrs. Clydesdale saw Herbert coming up the gravel walk and met him at the door.

"I have brought Mr. Rodger to have a cup of tea with us, my dear. He has just come off the coach, and it's perishing work travelling at this season of the year."

And so they led him into the cosy parlour, while Herbert chatted pleasantly about the journey. "There was only another gentleman and myself for Glenara: by the way, a friend of Dr. Calder's. I directed him to the house as I came along."

"Ah, indeed," said the Minister, with some interest; "that will doubtless be Miss Lee's intended husband. What do you call him, dear?"

"Mr. Sheffeld, I believe."

"Sheffeld!" cried Herbert, with ill-disguised alarm and astonishment.

"Yes, of course you have heard of him. Did you not inquire his name?"

"I did not," Herbert said, recovering

himself; "though now, when you speak of it, I remember seeing the initials 'E. S.' on his travelling-case."

"Mr. Sheffeld and the Doctor are great friends, I understand. I suppose you have heard that he is engaged to be married to Miss Lee?"

"Yes, I did hear something of it," Herbert replied, with apparent indifference. "When does the marriage take place?"

"At the New Year. But he is coming to settle here, I believe."

"In Glenara?" Herbert cried, eagerly.

"Yes. The firm with which he is connected are about to open a branch in Glasgow. The Doctor has been looking after Berry Lodge for him."

There was a considerable pause.

Herbert did not pursue the subject further, and it was allowed to lapse. After tea, Mrs. Clydesdale withdrew, in order to allow her husband an opportunity to per-

form his solemn task. It is a thankless work, the bearing of ill news, and he is a heartless person who is ever repaid by the gratification of the performance of such a task. To Mr. Clydesdale it was exceedingly painful, and though he had a good deal of preparatory conversation, he felt it must be done bluntly after all.

"I am sorry I have bad news for you, Mr. Rodger."

"Bad news!" repeated Herbert, starting to his feet in alarm. The man who has many reasons to fear is always a coward.

"Yes, but I hope the Lord will help you to bear it, for it is to Him we must look in all our trials——"

"For Heaven's sake, Mr. Clydesdale, what is it?".

"Your mother is dead."

"Dead!"

For a moment he stood still, without uttering a word or moving a feature.

The Minister looked at him tenderly: for the time he was himself suffering half the pain of the bereavement.

"You must be strong."

The first word of consolation loosened the grief.

"Dead!" he repeated, raising his hand to his brow. "Can it be possible? . . . Oh, God! my poor mother."

Mr. Clydesdale took his friend by the arm and led him to a seat. For a short time he left him to the undisturbed power of his own grief, repeating to himself the text, "The heart knoweth its own bitterness." Herbert soon recovered from the stun of the first shock, and questioned his informant eagerly as to the circumstances of the death. The Minister told him honestly all he knew, administering, at the same time, such consolation as he thought would be safe and profitable.

"Perhaps you would like me to accom-

pany you?" Mr. Clydesdale said, as Herbert rose to go.

"Oh, thank you, the first blow is over. I have a great deal to do, and I think I shall now be able to bear it calmly."

Herbert took his departure; and the Minister thanked God that his painful task was done, and prayed that this loss might be more than made up by the blessings that should follow, and that he who had been so suddenly bereaved of a beloved parent might be drawn more closely to Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, and in whom all shall yet be united together in one.

Daniel M'Nee had lost no time in making Mrs. Rodger's coffin; indeed, he and one of his apprentices had sat up the most part of the previous night so as to get it ready, for, as Betty said, "The corp winna keep," so that when Herbert reached the Farm he found the body already

coffined. Betty explained to him the arrangements she had made, of which he quite approved.

"The only grudge I hae," said Betty, while talking over the question of Mrs. Rodger's illness with her master, "is that I only gied her the half a' that eighth poother; but as she was aye waur after the ithers, I thocht they were, maybe, owre strong for her. I feel as if I shouldna ha' dune it, but it was a' meant for the best."

"Did you tell the Doctor?"

"No; I was feart he wad be angry wi' me for no keepin' tae his instructions."

"Ay, possibly he would," said Herbert. "It is a pity, but I believe you meant well, Betty, and I don't think the fact of halving the powder could do much harm. Where is the part of the powder that was not taken?"

"I destroyed it," Betty said, "for I didna mean to tell onybody aboot it ava,

but the secret turned oot owre heavy for me tae keep tae mysel'."

Now that Betty had got this matter off her mind she felt relieved, for, to tell the truth, it had been giving her very great concern, and it had increased in intensity until she could bear it no longer.

Herbert spent all that afternoon and evening in his own room, doing nobody knew what, though Betty conjectured he was "writin' the invitations."

Next morning it was known that the burial would take place on the following day. Mrs. Jamieson's best hearse was ordered to be at Blair Farm at one o'clock, and the Beadle was commissioned to open the family lair and toll the bell. It was Herbert's desire that everything connected with the performance of the last sad ceremony should bear the impress of the deepest respect.

He rose very early, for there was much

to do, and he had to ride in to Glasgow to see the family solicitor about his father's will. He looked very anxious and worn, as he sat at his desk, with his head on his hand, and his papers all around him. The cares and pains of the last week had left their marks upon him. His monetary difficulties were now dispelled by his mother's sudden demise, but the thought did not bring him that satisfaction and comfort which he had expected it would have brought. He felt as if the anchor of his life had now slipped, and as if he were drifting without ballast into dangerous winds and heavy currents that might yet be perilous to him. He had but once ventured into that chamber where his dead mother lay; he was then, however, so much overcome that Betty had to lead him quietly away and cover up the poor ghastly face. For once a vivid remembrance of a mother's

tenderness and a mother's toils arose in his mind, but it was followed by keen regrets which he did not care to foster. In the midst of these reflections Betty opened the door and handed him a letter. It was in an unknown hand, and he eagerly broke the seal and read as follows:—

"Canterbury, Sunday, 20th Nov., ——.

"My dear Rodger,

"I was very sorry I had not the pleasure of meeting you when you were in London, and renewing an old friendship so long broken off. Indeed, for some months back I have been most of my time at our office here, running down, of course, occasionally to London to consult my governors when anything special occurred. Your letter, however, reached me in due course. The matter relating to Miss Dawson of Glenara, about which you

inquire, is perfectly correct, and stands just as Hobbs seems to have related it to you—though, of course, the whole thing is under the bann of the strictest secrecy. I am sorry to hear our old friend has broken down again. First time I am North, I shall certainly avail myself of your kind invitation, and look in upon you at Blair Farm.

"I am, most sincerely yours,

"RICHARD WILLIAMSON."

The letter was written in a cramped hand, and Herbert went over it but slowly.

"So my journey has not been wholly fruitless," he said, laying down the letter with a pleased expression on his face. "Hobbs, after all, is not such a bad fellow as I feared, though he is just as well where he is in the meantime, until matters are squared. I can give him a

small sum of money afterwards, and send him out of the way."

Herbert read the letter again, and rose and put it in the fire, then resumed his seat, and relapsed into silent meditation. Now that his way was clear, he had strong desires after reformation. After his marriage he should wipe out all the past, and settle down to the enjoyment of a quiet, easy life. He was sure Annie would make him happy, she was so beautiful in her innocence, so charming in her simplicity; he could not fail to settle, with the essence of peace and happiness in his own home. Then a new phase of reflection arose, and he placed his head in the palms of both hands, with his elbows on the table, and sat in that posture for a few minutes. In this train of thought the disclosures which Mr. Clydesdale had made regarding his fellow-passenger on the previous afternoon

occupied an important place. At last he started to his feet. "Speculation is fruitless," he said; "time only can tell."

For a short time he paced the room uneasily, but the disturbed spirit would not settle. He locked his desk, put on his hat, and went out. Everything was in harmony with his own uneasiness. There was no comfort in the cold sodden fields. A heavy leaden cloud was driven overhead before a keen wind, and flakes of half-melted snow were blown at brief intervals in his face. Nature had no comfort for him, and he returned again to his desk. The happiness and the oblivion on the margin of which a few minutes ago he stood again receded, and for the moment they seemed a long and painful march ahead.

CHAPTER IX.

BEFORE THE FUNERAL.

It was a busy time with Betty Brown that day before the funeral.

"Ye ken, Jeen, there's naebody tae look tae but you an' me," she said, encouragingly, to the lame servant. "The Maister is sair enough fashed wi' his ain thochts, an' we maunna look for ony help frae him. I'm perfect affronted that thae white blinds are no up yet. Ye ken, Jeen, it's nae beerial ava wantin' white blinds. I stopt the clock an' covered up the lookin'-glasses mysel', but I lippen't tae you putting up the blinds; though, puir thing, ye hae never

seen much in yer time, an' ken naething aboot trouble." Jeen felt a strong inclination to speak back, but she waited till Betty had gone out of the kitchen.

"I kent fine aboot the white blinds," she said to herself; "I'm no sae desperate senseless as that; but I couldna dae everything at ance. Betty's ane o' thae kind that maun hae everything dune at ance as if a body had twenty han's, an' e'en that could see roun' corners, an' as if ye were aye ready tae flee when she cries bizz; but I'll flee nane, for I couldna scrub oot that big parlour an' put up white blinds at the same time."

"I'm glad the Maister is as ignorant as yersel', Jeen," said Betty, when she returned, "for, if he had kent as much aboot trouble as his faither, there wad hae been a bonny soogh before this time; but of course ye couldna be expected tae dae't when ye didna ken ony better, and the only thing

that can be dune noo is tae airn them and put them up as fast as ye can. Then, Jeen, I want ye tae rin owre tae Maister M'Whannel's an' get the len' o' his big prent Bible wi' the black claith on't; for the best Bible we hae i' the hoose is that ane wantin' the batters (boards), but it wadna be decent tae set doon a batterless Bible before a company o' folk wi' their black claes—no that that wad mak' ony differs i' the Word, for it's aye the Word o' the Almighty, whether it is in black brods or green brods or nae brods ava, but it wad be thocht desperate strange if we hadna a decenter Bible nor that."

Betty proceeded to scald the decanters with boiling water.

"Ye might ask M'Whannel tae, if he could send me twa forms, for they're far better nor chairs when ye want tae squeeze a lot o' folk intae a room; but I'm sure that parlour winna haud the half o' the folk

that the Maister has invited, though I'm thinkin' it'll haud plenty for the decanters, for when every ane gets a gless ye'll find it'll tak' a guid sup o' whisky tae gang roun' them a'. Eh! an' that puts me in mind that we maun hae biscuits tae, Jeen; it wad be daft-like if we hadna them—for it's no nice to hear a hoosefu' o' folk a' hosting tae death wi' the kitlin' i' their throats for the want o' a biscuit after the dram; but, as it needs somebody wi' sense, I'll order them mysel', for mair nor likely ye wad bring the common brown water-biscuit wi' the hole i' the middle, an' I wad need tae go back wi' them, after a'."

Betty filled the decanters and began to wipe the glasses.

"I wad like tae get the parlour a' put in order the nicht," she resumed, "for though the hearse is no tae be here till ane o'clock, there's John Thamson o' Braefit, an' Jamie Howatson o' Fernlea,

an' twa're three ithers wha dinna dae a han's turn o' wark the day they gang tae a beerial, an' winna rest at hame a minute after they get on their black claes—as if it was ony compliment tae hae them i' the hoose an hour before the time, sittin' wi' their elbows on their knees and their chins on their thooms, lookin' as glum as if they were bluid frien's o' them that's awa'; besides, Jeen, we maun try an' mak' oorsel's decent, tae show that everything else is dune, for a body can sit doon comfortably, an' greet wi' some hairt when they ken they hae naething else tae dae." Betty was interrupted in her remarks by the appearance of a gentleman at the front door.

"Is Mr. Rodger at home?"

"He is, sir; but there's trouble i' the hoose: I doot ye canna see him. Is it onything particular?"

"Yes; I am sorry I should have come

just now, but since I am here I must see him. Please hand him my card."

Betty took the card and carried it to her master's room. On looking at it, Herbert paced the apartment twice before making any reply.

"Is he alone?"

"Yes."

He made another passage across the room.

"Ah, well, just show him in."

When the visitor entered, Herbert was sitting at his desk writing with apparent earnestness.

"I suppose you are disappointed that you did not hear from me, Mr. Robb," Herbert said, when his visitor was seated.

"Yes; I certainly did expect you would keep your word, more particularly as you are aware that I suspended action against you on the faith of it."

"Well, I expected to have been able to

settle your claim at the time I promised, but a sad blow has fallen upon me since I last saw you. I have lost my mother."

"I regret to hear it."

"Yes; she was taken away very suddenly. It has given me a great shock. Indeed, it has put everything else out of my head. Did you get the grain at the mill?"

"Yes; I sent for it, but there were only thirty bags. I could not get it ground, so I had to sell it as it stood. You have still ninety-eight pounds seventeen shillings and sixpence of the claim to pay."

"I consider that is very hard for keeping a child," said Herbert, bitterly.

"The question is a more serious matter than the mere keep of a child; but I presume we need not discuss it further now," replied Mr. Robb. "We went over it fully enough at our last interview, and I had some difficulty in bringing Dr.

Abernethy to accept the compromise. If the balance is not paid, I must let the law take its course."

Herbert did not reply immediately.

"You will take a bill at three months?"

"No; I agreed to accept this sum simply on the understanding that it be a cash payment."

"But the bill is perfectly safe."

"It may be so."

"You will not accept of it?"

"No."

Herbert paused again.

"My object in asking you to accept of a bill," explained Herbert, "is this. I have no immediate funds, but by my mother's death I am entitled to a considerable sum of money, though meantime it is not at my command, and will not be for some little time yet."

"Ah, then, it is in legal hands?"

"Yes."

"Who is your solicitor?"

"Mr. Fleming, in Candleriggs Street."

"Yes. Well, give me an order on Mr. Fleming for the amount, and I will give you a full settlement of the claim."

"But I don't want him to know anything about this affair."

"There is no necessity that he should know. Give me a sheet of paper." The lawyer sat in to the table and drew out a form. "Sign that."

Herbert read it carefully over, while Mr. Robb proceeded to make out a discharge. The order was simple and explicit, revealing nothing, and he signed it.

"Now, I am very sorry," said the lawyer, putting the discharge into Herbert's hands, "that I have had to press this matter under such painful circumstances, but the Doctor was inexorable, and I had no option."

When the lawyer had gone, Herbert looked at the discharge.

"£150.

"Received from Mr. Herbert Rodger, of Blair Farm, the sum of One Hundred and Fifty Pounds Sterling, being payment in full of claim made by Miss Isabella Grieve, of Glasgow, against said Mr. Herbert Rodger.

"JOHN ROBB, Solicitor.

"25th November."

"That is one voice stilled," he said, folding the paper and putting it in the secret drawer of his desk. "I'll get them all hushed up by-and-by, though it is a costly way of buying respectability." When the lawyer came Herbert was engaged in making out a statement of his assets and liabilities, which he now proceeded to finish. He had been informed by Mr. Fleming that the sum which fell to him

by his mother's death would amount to nearly three thousand pounds, but the long list of liabilities, including a sum which he considered sufficient to seal Hobbs's lips and send him out of the country, left him but a slender balance.

"Well, I shall at least have my hands clear of embarrassments," he said. "Very likely she may be able to keep the house cheaper than it has been kept, for she has been used to slight means and a quiet style of living, and I can look after the farm for a year or two myself, now that I have disposed of Wishart; and when the money comes we shall both know the good of it, and, having acquired frugal habits, will be able to turn it to some good use." With this remark he put on his hat and walked down to the Mill.

* * * * *

Miss Mackenzie and her niece were

very busy that day preparing to receive Mr. Sheffeld, who, with Dr. Calder, was expected in the afternoon for tea. The "Broon lassocks" had got half a day's relief from the white seams in order to allow time for this new and more urgent task. Miss Dawson had been invited, but her excuse was considered quite satisfactory. She had written Herbert a short kindly note of sympathy, and asked him to spend the afternoon before the funeral quietly at the Mill; so that, of course, she could not possibly attend. It had been a matter of discussion whether Mr. M'Whannel should not be invited.

"Eh, ye maunna think o' that," said Miss Mackenzie, with a pleasant frown.

"Well," said Nelly, "you know, aunt, he has been up here several times of late on the most slender excuses. I believe he would be delighted to come."

"Of course, of course, but if folk are

honest they should never be ashamed to say oot what they mean. I winna gie him an excuse for coming the day."

"I intend to have him at the marriage, at all events," Nelly said, laughing.

"Ay, very weel, ye may dae as ye like wi' that, but it maunna be said *I'm* coortin' the man."

It was late in the afternoon before Mr. Sheffeld arrived; he had been to Glasgow, and had spent the most of the day without being able to discover suitable offices. Nelly was delighted, because it would prolong his stay, which was limited to a few days. Dr. Calder had been specially called away on an important matter, which prevented him being present. This was very vexing to Miss Mackenzie, who had the neatest little complimentary speech prepared for him, with reference to his care of her niece, which she meant to deliver before Mr. Sheffeld. Nelly,

however, did not share in her aunt's regrets, for it would leave but one luminary shining in the evening sky.

"Some o' us were beginning to think ye wad never come," said Miss Mackenzie, with a side glance at Nelly, as the young couple sat together before the tea was brought in.

"You needn't have been afraid of that, Miss Mackenzie," Sheffeld said. "I left too heavy a pledge not to return for it." This boldly complimentary speech brought down on the speaker the gentle chastisement which it was designed to provoke.

"Then your friend the Doctor'll no be here?"

"I fear not. He was called off to Glasgow this afternoon on some important errand, and he was not quite sure whether he might return to-night."

"That's a pity." Miss Mackenzie went

off to superintend the preparations in the kitchen.

"I am so glad you have taken Berry Lodge, Edward," Nelly said, after her aunt left; "it is such a charming spot."

"Yes, this is very fortunate. It had not properly got into the market, you know. I believe Wishart told the Doctor that your friend Rodger had an eye after it."

"Rodger!"

"Yes, he meant to tack it on to the farm and live there—a very good notion, showing more taste and refinement than you will generally find in a farmer."

"But he is well educated."

"So I should suppose, at least from what I saw of him on my way down. It was very singular, that meeting; we should have known each other, no doubt, if we had mentioned our names. I had always heard that a Scotchman would talk long enough without telling you anything about

himself, and that the last thing he would divulge to you would be his name. I remarked this characteristic in Rodger, and I confess I tried to be a Scotchman also in this respect, so that when we parted we knew no more about each other personally than when we first met. I was rather astonished when the Doctor told me who he was."

"Yes, it was strange. What did you think of him?"

"Well, for my own part, I thought him a very gentlemanly fellow, and exceedingly well informed; but the Doctor has a sorry opinion of him."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, if all be true, he is not a person whose friendship is quite desirable."

"He used to have that name, but I think he is improving—at least as far as we can judge from appearances."

Sheffeld laughed a sceptical laugh.

"Does the Doctor know of anything wrong?"

"Well, I believe he has heard of something."

"What is it?"

Nelly was too precipitate in her inquisitiveness.

"I shall tell you by-and-by," said he, smiling at her eagerness; "meantime, my dear, let us be thankful we have got Berry Lodge. Here is Miss Mackenzie with the steaming tea."

"Ay, indeed, I think ye'll be in need o't noo. Nelly, set in Mr. Sheffeld's chair."

"Thank you, Miss Mackenzie, I'll manage that," Sheffeld said, rising and lifting his chair to the table. "Can I do anything else for you?"

"Sit doon if ye please," said the spinster, with a humorous smile, as she proceeded to put the sugar into the cups. "Jenny, see wha's at the door."

"It's somebody for you, mem," said Jenny.

"For me! Wha is't?"

"A gentleman," said the girl, with an ill-concealed *smirk* on her face. "I have ta'en him into the front parlour."

"What gentleman?"

"Maister M'Whannel."

Nelly clapped her hands, while her aunt tried to look composed.

"It's auntie's beau," exclaimed Nelly in an undertone, when the girl had shut the door.

"Naething o' the kin', Mr. Sheffeld; never mind her."

"It is, indeed; he is ever so deeply in love with her."

Miss Mackenzie blushed and felt pleasantly confused; for what woman is there that does not feel flattered when she is told that she is beloved by a person of the opposite sex?

"He maun just wait till we're dune," said Miss Mackenzie.

"Let me go and see him," Nelly said, rising.

"I'm sure you may dae what ye like wi' him for me."

In a few moments Nelly returned.

"I have just prevailed on Mr. M'Whannel to join us," she said, introducing the Schoolmaster. "Jenny, bring another cup and saucer." Sheffeld shook him warmly by the hand; Miss Mackenzie bowed over the tea things.

"I hope I am not disturbing your arrangements," remarked M'Whannel, with a nervousness in his voice which could not be concealed.

"Not in the slightest. We expected Dr. Calder, but he has not come, and we will be glad to have you to take his place. Won't we, aunt?"

"Of course; we are aye pleased to see

Mr. M'Whannel. Ye tak' cream, I think, Mr. M'Whannel!"

"Yes, please; at least, when I can get it."

"Is that the way o't? It wadna be hard tae get as much cream as wad ser' you, I think."

"I suppose it is one of the penalties of bachelorhood," said M'Whannel; "but I think we lone creatures miss the cream of most things. Landlady affection is all very well," continued the Schoolmaster, "but it never gets beyond so much a week, and then it has one eye to your comforts and two to its own interests."

Sheffeld declared M'Whannel was right.

"I fear you are too severe on land-ladies," Nelly said, laughing. "I don't think they are quite so bad as you represent them."

"It is like the moth and the candle,'

said Miss Mackenzie, "the keener it burns the closer they keep tae't. I canna see the sense o' a man aye grumbling against a bondage that he's free to gie up when he likes."

"Bravo!"

They all agreed that Miss Mackenzie had the best of it; and this conclusion having been come to, they proceeded with the more important work before them.

After tea, amongst other topics, the conversation turned on the late occurrence at Blair Farm.

"There are some headshakings in the village over that death," said M'Whannel gravely.

"Headshakings! What dae ye mean by that?" inquired Miss Mackenzie, eagerly.

"You don't mean to say there has been unfair play," remarked Sheffeld.

"The suspicion of such a thing has been muttered."

"Eh, it canna be possible!" Miss Mackenzie said, raising her hands.

"I can assure you I have heard it."

"You remember, auntie, you remarked how sudden it was," said Nelly, with a grave face.

"Ay, ay, but I had nae thocht o' that."

"Is there any good reason for supposing such a thing?" Sheffeld inquired.

"I don't think there is," said M'Whannel. "The fact is, I don't put the slightest belief in it myself. For a thing of that sort there must be a strong motive."

"No doubt. Is anybody suspected?"

"Hobbs's name is mentioned. I understand he did not get on well with Mrs. Rodger; but there can be nothing in that, for I heard to-night that he had got two months' imprisonment for some misde-

meanour in Glasgow ; besides, he was not in the house for some time before her death. When this comes to be known, I believe it will allay all suspicion."

"It is a great pity of Herbert," remarked Nelly, "for if any suspicion like that is hinted to him it will add pain to his grief."

"Ay, and from what the Minister says, it was a sair blow to him. Do ye think he has any suspicion himsel' ?"

"I have not heard, though I should think he would inquire fully into the circumstances of the sudden illness and satisfy himself."

"There's little fear o' that."

And so the matter was dismissed as circumstantially "not proven," and the colloquy turned on the approaching marriage, under which head the colour of Nelly's wedding dress was fully discussed, the purchase of this article having

been deferred until Mr. Sheffeld should arrive, in consequence of a difference of opinion between Miss Mackenzie and her niece on that special point. At the end of the discussion the matter stood thus —Miss Mackenzie and Mr. Sheffeld, lavender; Miss Lee and Mr. M'Whannel, blue.

"I have two reasons," said M'Whannel, "to urge why the colour we have fixed upon should be accepted."

"What are they?"

"Because, first of all, I hold that this colour is best suited to a dark complexion, and, secondly, that as a lady is only expected to be a bride once in her lifetime, she should have the choice of her own marriage dress."

After this M'Whannel was allowed to give the casting vote, and it was fixed that the colour of the wedding garment should be blue.

When Miss Mackenzie reached her bedroom that night she was visibly agitated.

"What is wrong, auntie dear?" inquired Nelly with some anxiety, as she observed her aunt's unusual nervousness. "I hope you are not ill."

"No, there's no muckle wrang wi' me; it was that man M'Whannel."

"M'Whannel!" said Nelly, with astonishment. "What did he do, auntie?"

"What did he do? He had the impidence to put his airms aboot my neck and kiss me ahint the door."

"Oh! the villain! but he's no worse than his neighbours, aunt," said Nelly, laughing, "for Edward did the same to me in the parlour."

"Eh, I wadna hae cared sae muckle if it hadna been that Jenny was glow'ring straicht oot the kitchen."

"It is such a pity," said Nelly, with a

serio-comic expression on her face; "but you must just tell him to be more careful the next time."

"Eh, get awa' wi' ye!"

CHAPTER X.

THE ARREST.

"Noo, Daniel, lad, I'll gie the rape owre tae you, for I maun rin doon tae the yaird an' put thae planks on the grave. It's half-past twelve enoo, an' they'll be here in nae time; but min' ye dinna swing't ony quicker, Daniel, for I wadna hae them saying that I'm glad tae get the puir body under the grun', even though it's the first beerial I have had for the last ten days."

The Beadle handed the rope to the Shoemaker's Apprentice, and the bell, which was set somewhere about the key of A, wailed its melancholy message down through the neighbouring valleys.

"Eh, Daniel, lad, they're naething like the Novembers I used to hae," said the Beadle when he returned. "I've seen the time when I was able tae keep a man a' through the winter, but things are sair changed noo. Yer weel aff that learnt the shaemakin', Daniel; there's naething like a guid trade, for at the grave-diggin' a body can scarce mak' as much as keeps them in spades. Canny, Daniel, canny; dinna just toll sae fast, or they'll be thinkin' it's a marriage instead o' a beerial, for it's a kittle thing tae please everybody. It's no like the shuin, for when a steek gies way, or the sole comes awa' a wee faster nor it should, ye hae only ae body tae face; but if I should sneeze owre lood, or gie an extraordinar' host on the Sabbath day, it's kent at the farest en' o' the parish, an' I'm commanded by at least a dizzen folk tae be a wee mair reverenter i' the Lord's Hoose. It's a kittle thing, Daniel,

bein' a public man. Just you keep yer e'e on that pend'lum, an' gie a stroke for every swing; that's hoo I regulate beerials till the corp comes tae the gate; then ye gie a stroke at every eighth swing o' the pend'lum after that, till the hearse leaves the yaird. It's a big beerial, and we maun be extra partic'lar the day, lad."

The Minister of Glenara had little need to preach of Death; for though the Beadle complained so bitterly of the paucity of the grim messenger's visits, the fact, when he did come, was known in every household, and the solemn lessons which his awful presence is calculated to teach, reached many hearts that were beyond the earnest tones of the good clergyman's voice. There was always a keen sympathy with death. On this point, if on no other, there was a perfect brotherhood in the parish. Such intelligence was usually communicated first of all to the little workshop of the

Cartwright, thence to the Bird-in-the-Hand Tavern, then from door to door by the telegraphy of gossip' tongue; but if by any possibility any one should still remain in ignorance of the fact that a footstep had been suspended, or a familiar voice hushed, the solemn tones from the steeple on the day of burial could not be misunderstood.

It was a beautiful day for November weather. The morning had been cold and hazy, but the haze had disappeared, and the bright sunshine came out towards mid-day, as one black-garbed mourner after another passed out of the village towards Blair Farm.

Mrs. Elderson's last words before her son left were—

"Happy the corpse the rain rains on."

Thomas smiled sceptically at his mother's words.

"Tak' care, Thamas, ye dinna deny the faith," she said. "The deevil disna mak unbelievers in a day. Just think o' puir Marion's man, and pray the Lord tae keep ye frae the sma' beginnin's o' doubt that lead on to a seared conscience and a reprobate heart. I'm wae to think on't, Thamas, but yer aye ready tae scoff at onything guid."

"I'll scoff nane at the true Word," said Thomas, as he brushed his black hat with the sleeve of his coat, "but I dinna like ye tae ask me tae treat as gospel the nonsensical traditions o' men. What differs can a guid day mak' tae a corp? There's neither rain nor sunshine in a coffin. A guid day's better for the black claes than ony harm it'll dae tae the dead."

The Smith smiled grimly, and walked out of the house without waiting for a reply.

"I hope the Lord'll preserve that man

frae bein' an infidel, Janet," said Mrs. Elderson, senior, with deep earnestness in her voice. "It grieves me tae think on't. It's no for want o' knowledge i' the head; but, Janet, the head's naething ava wantin' the heart, for if the heart's wrang yer a' wrang thegether; but Thamas has a thraw i' the head just like his faither, for his faither was aye argue arguing wi' everybody that wad argue wi' him, and when he could meet naebody binna them that was on his ain side he was that thrawn that he wad gang owre tae the ither side just for the sake o' argument. But that winna profit i' the end, Janet, for it's no by arguing that we're saved, but by believing; an' the road that was guid enough for our faithers is surely no bad for us; but the Lord help him that thinks he can mak' a better ane for himsel'. See ye tae the weans, Janet, an' lea' him tae the Hand that can break

the flinty heart." Mrs. Elderson paused. "Ay, ay, Janet, so this is puir Marion Rodger's beerial day, an' the sun is as warm as if the victual was i' the field. Eh me, an' it was a wet day she got marriet on. I doot that was the ae wrang step o' her life, for Davie Rodger was never onything but a graceless man."

It was ten minutes to one o'clock when Thomas Elderson reached Blair Farm. A number of men in their black clothes, principally labourers, lounged about the door, and engaged in promiscuous conversation. As the Smith approached they opened up a way for him, and he went in.

The parlour was pretty well filled, but the Minister had not yet arrived. Herbert and M'Whannel occupied chairs together near the fire. There was a vacant seat beside M'Ilwham, who sat immediately behind the Minister's chair, to which Thomas was beckoned by M'Nee, who

acted as master of ceremonies: this seat was taken by the Smith in silence. By-and-by M'Ilwham, who sat with his elbows on his thighs, and his hands clasped between his legs, looking earnestly on a faded rosebud on the carpet, gave slight evidence of a motion towards the Smith, who by this time had settled down into the same posture, and picked out a rosebud for himself. On observing this the Smith made a reciprocal motion.

"It's a guid day," said M'Ilwham.

Thomas paused, as if searching for a suitable reply, and said—

"No bad;" after which they both settled back into their natural equipoise.

"Ye'll be weel on wi' the threshin'," said the Smith, five minutes after, making a similar inclination towards his friend, without at all interfering with his observation of the rosebud. After another pause—

"Ay, tolerable;" then followed the gradual recovery of the equilibrium, and the silence remained unbroken till Mr. Clydesdale came. Herbert rose and took the clergyman's hand, but being too much overcome to speak, he resumed his seat immediately without saying a word.

The Minister beckoned M'Nee and whispered something in his ear, at which he retired, but returned in a few minutes, and said—

"If onybody wants tae see the corp, noo's the time, before it's screwed doon."

Of course nobody, if left to his own choice, would have gone to see the corpse; but since M'Nee had made the announcement, and since it was considered an act of respect both to the dead and the living to take this last parting look, a considerable number obeyed the summons.

"It's a bonny corp," said M'Ilwham.

"An' no muckle altered ava," said the Grocer.

And so, one by one, they took a stealthy glance at the placid face, and returned downstairs.

The funeral service was simple and solemn. Reverently and quietly the Minister read the 90th Psalm without comment. Then followed the prayer—a long, pathetic, earnest appeal, now to God and now to man, the refrain of which was—"Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am." There was no ambiguity about Mr. Clydesdale's God; in that clergyman's prayer you felt He was as really present as were the men on whose behalf he prayed.

"Art Thou not present with us, oh our God—closely, awfully present with us in this solemn dispensation of Thy providence? But Thou hast not called us to

judgment yet. Thou hast come in Thy great love and pity to remind us what we are. Yea, we are like the grass—in the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth. Thou hast come to raise us from the broken cisterns of this world, in which there is no water, to drink at those full fountains of blessing at Thy right hand. Yet we stand here in doubt, as if Thou didst not love us, whereas Thou hast loved us with an infinite love. Hast Thou not put this great love into human likeness? Hast Thou not come into this world and dwelt among us, that Thou mightest bear our griefs and carry our sorrows; that Thou mightest bring heaven near to us, and Thy love down to our very hearts? Still we look upon Thee as if Thou wert a God afar off; as if there was no Father's heart in the heavens; as if there was no purpose in our affliction; as if there was

no blessing in our cup of trials. O God! open our eyes that we may see Thee, and our hearts that we may know Thy love. For Thou art here even now, pointing by the finger of death to the higher destiny which Thou hast in store for us. By the severance of these earthly ties Thou art leading us within the veil; Thou art carrying us above the things that are seen and temporal, and setting us in heavenly places. Thou art confirming our title to those mansions where death cannot enter, where there can be no more parting, and where sorrow and sighing cannot be known. So teach us, O God, to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

During the prayer the coffin had been carried downstairs and deposited in the hearse, and M'Nee and his senior apprentice, who assisted him at burials, returned to the parlour door to await the

conclusion of the service. Betty Brown and the lame servant, doubtless having their day's work well done, stood at the outside listening to the earnest words of the clergyman, and cried bitterly. In a few minutes there was a momentary noise inside, similar to that which is made by the passage of a heavy wind through a summer wood, and M'Nee knew the prayer was ended.

"Be savin' on the whisky," said Betty, as the Cartwright put his hand upon the latch; "and mind ye dinna insist on onybody tae drink."

When M'Nee and his apprentice had served round the whisky and the biscuits, the company filed out slowly into the yard, where there was a large number of people in their black clothes waiting to join in the funeral procession. Last of all came Herbert, Mr. Clydesdale, and M'Whannel, with broad "weepers" on their sleeves

and heavy knots of crape on their hats. These took up their places immediately behind the hearse; and the large party having fallen in "three deep," the solemn *cortége* began to move slowly away.

This movement was the signal for a fresh outburst of crying from the three women who were now left behind, each one vying with the other to show the depth of her grief by the copiousness of her tears.

A disinterested onlooker would doubtless have awarded the palm to Betty Brown, who, feeling that she was the chief actor in this little drama of sorrow, gave herself up to the performance of the part with much singleness of aim. Indeed, so deep and bitter was the housekeeper's grief, that she did not observe the approach of a couple of horsemen, who, with heavy spring, galloped along the road past the "Black Plantin'," and pulled up their foaming steeds at the gate of Blair Farm

as the funeral procession entered the village. Throwing his foot out of the stirrup, one of the men dismounted.

"You may bring her along to Mrs. Jamieson's Tavern," said the rider who still retained his seat. "I'll push on, interdict the burial, and seize him." So saying, he plunged heavy spurs into his horse's sides, and dashed off again at a springing gallop.

All this time the death-bell rang slowly and melancholily down through the glen, echoed from the broken walls of the old Priory, and touched a chord of the tenderest sympathy in at least one heart in the Miller's household. Annie had been deeply grieved to hear of Mrs. Rodger's death; but the grief was very much deeper when she found that Herbert had been so sorely touched by her sudden removal. All morning her heart had been with him. She knew how bitter

the cup of his grief would be when it came to the dregs, which fell to be drunk that day in following the remains of that dear one to its last resting-place. She knew he would be all alone in his great sorrow; for in great sorrows, as in all other supreme feelings, the heart which is most affected must stand alone.

"Dear, dear Herbert," she said, as they parted the night before the funeral, "I will be with you in spirit to-morrow, although you cannot have my bodily presence; but you must try and bear up; and though few can sympathize with you in the full depth of your sorrow, remember that there is one heart which would fain bear the burden for you, and which will be with you through the sad labours of the last ceremony."

Annie could have wished for a presence which to all but him would have been invisible, that she might have administered

the consolation and comfort which her deep, tender love for him prompted her to offer. The first toll of the bell, though she expected it and was thinking of it, went to her heart like a knife, and loosened her tears, and then she fancied the gathering of the mourners, the removal of the coffin, the solemn procession, Herbert the while standing all alone on his solitary perch of grief. By-and-by the regular peal gave place to the dull heavy stroke of the funeral knell, and she knew the *cortége* had arrived in sight of the gate.

Mrs. Dawson had invited Herbert to dinner after the funeral, and she and her daughter were busy making preparations for his reception. She had observed Annie's tears, but knew the cause, and sympathized deeply with her.

"The farm will be very cheerless to him for some time," said Mrs. Dawson, setting down a large tureen on the table.

"Yes," said Annie; "though she was not much company for him, on account of her illness, now that she is away he will miss her very much. He told me he was going to do without a Grieve."

"I am glad to hear of that," said the mother, "for everybody thought he should have done the farming himself. He was well trained to it, you know, and with his skill there should not be better-farmed land in the county."

"It appears that Wishart was robbing him."

"Was he?"

"At least, he was neglecting the work, which is very much the same thing."

"To be sure; but a master-superintendent can always get more work out of his servants than a paid man; and you know if Herbert was careless, and left too much in Wishart's power, there was a strong temptation for the Grieve to go astray."

"He is so apt to trust people," said the daughter. "He believes that Wishart has been wronging him for a long time; but he thought it was better just to part with him quietly, and take the management into his own hands."

"Yes, it was far better."

Annie stopped her work, and paused as if to listen.

"Surely the Beadle has not stopped tolling the bell already," said Mrs. Dawson.

Annie still stood listening. There had been time for at least two strokes, but no sound came.

"They can't have buried already," said Annie.

"You would think not."

"Oh no; he would never allow such unseemly haste."

"But the Beadle may have put some stupid body to the bell."

"Oh, very likely, and Herbert will be

so angry. He was quite anxious last night that everything should go right to-day. I am sure there could not be more than a dozen strokes."

But Mrs. Dawson comforted her daughter with the thought that Herbert would soon arrive, and they should hear from his own lips if anything had gone wrong. In half an hour they had everything set in the front parlour, and Annie was anxiously awaiting his arrival.

"He might have been here by this time," said Annie, with some nervousness.

"But did he promise to come direct from the graveyard? You know, if he has to go home, we needn't expect him for a short time yet."

"Oh, he promised to come over direct; he said he should have no heart to go home after the funeral."

"Well, I'll see that Girzie keeps these

potatoes warm; but he cannot be long now."

Annie went to the door, and her heart leapt within her. A couple of men in black, with white ties and crape bows on their hats, came down the little loaning. It was he, and she ran in to tell her mother that Herbert was coming. Poor Annie! In the impetuosity of her joy, the conclusion that Herbert was at hand was too rapidly formed, for a minute after, when she and her mother were waiting in the parlour to receive him, Mr. Clydesdale and M'Whannel entered. They were both pale, and visibly excited.

"Is there anything wrong?" inquired Mrs. Dawson hastily.

"I am sorry to say there is," said Mr. Clydesdale.

"With Herbert?" cried Annie, trembling from head to foot with nervous apprehension.

"Only a slight misunderstanding, I hope," said M'Whannel; "but please to sit down."

"Is he hurt?"

"Oh no! But you must take the matter calmly, Miss Dawson," said Mr. Clydesdale; "we expect all will be right again in a day or two. A stupid suspicion has got abroad that Mrs. Rodger has been poisoned, and the authorities have only detained him for a little while until inquiry is made."

For a moment Annie sat pale and motionless. Her brain was in a terrible whirl, and a sickening feeling of suffocation came over her heart.

"Mr. Rodger himself told me," resumed the clergyman, "that there was nothing in it. I believe, so soon as he explains that he was in London for a week before the death, he will at once be discharged. There is nothing at all disgraceful in such an incident."

But Annie heard nothing after the first communication. Mr. Clydesdale, who was observing her carefully, put his arm gently around her.

"Bring some water, M'Whannel," he said quietly; then, turning to her mother, "Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Dawson; it is only a feeling of faintness—that is all."

CHAPTER XI.

SUSPENSE.

ANNIE was not long in recovering from the shock occasioned by the announcement of Herbert's apprehension. On looking up she found the quiet calm eyes of the clergyman gazing tenderly upon her.

"You have been faint," he said, gently rubbing her brow with a white pocket-handkerchief partly saturated in water.

"Yes. Oh, it is nothing," she replied, with slight confusion. "I am better now, thank you. Mother!"

"Yes, Annie dear, I am here." Mr. Clydesdale stepped back, and Mrs. Daw-

son stooped down and took her daughter's hand.

"Will he be here to-night?" inquired Annie in an undertone.

"He may, dear. Mr. Clydesdale thinks it is all a misunderstanding. You know he was in London at the time; but of course the authorities were not to know that."

"If he is not here to-night," said Mr. Clydesdale, "I shall ride in to Glasgow to-morrow morning and do what I can to clear up the matter."

Annie sat and held her mother's hand without speaking a word. There was a momentary struggle going on in her mind, but love and faith rose in the omnipotence of their power and stamped out the rebel fears. A tear started to her eyes. Poor dear Herbert! it was so cruel of them to aggravate the bitterness of his grief by this wicked suspicion. And then she

thought of him being questioned and cross-questioned before cold and heartless men who did not know him, and who would have no more sympathy with him than if he were a hardened criminal. But when he tells them all, they will not dare to detain him, she thought. They will be so sorry for the mistake, and he will come home fast to allay this anxiety. Annie felt sure they would at once set him at liberty, and she felt equally sure that the first place he would come to would be the Mill.

"Did he not tell them he was innocent?" she inquired, after a pause.

"Yes; but you know they had no power to release him. Their instructions were simply to arrest. I can assure you we all regretted it very much, and the deepest sympathy was felt for him in the distressing circumstances."

"But did no one go with him to help him to get off?"

"No. The authorities will take their own time and way of finding the matter out; but you know they will examine the body; and if their suspicions are groundless, as I should think they are, they will set him free at once. Meantime the matter is in good hands, and we must leave it there. If he does not return to-night, you may trust to my riding in to-morrow morning, and I will be sure to let you know how the case stands. At the present stage, however, I think you had better not tell Mr. Dawson. It will only give him an unnecessary shock. You know all will likely come right again in a few hours, and it would be a pity to mar his recovery."

"Oh, yes," said the mother, "he is quite unable to bear it. I think the news that Mrs. Rodger was dead made him very much worse."

"Ah, very likely; he is quite unable for

any mental strain. Then you will take care that it is not mentioned in his presence. Now, Miss Dawson, you will bear up. You must do so for your father's sake, and all will come right shortly."

Annie was herself perfectly assured of Herbert's innocence; but the reassurance of Mr. Clydesdale's manner, and the thought that nobody had spoken ill of him because of this sudden suspicion, gave her much comfort and strength. He should return from the ordeal to find a friendship and sympathy greater, perhaps, than he had ever dreamed of, and which might have remained unknown but for this keen trial. Annie felt she was able to bear up now, at least till he arrived. It was barely half-past two o'clock—Herbert could not reach Glasgow for another hour yet. It would take some time before an explanation could be given, and at soonest he could not return before eight o'clock.

She believed he would not remain a night in Glasgow to keep her and his other friends in suspense. By-and-by Nellie Lee came down to the Mill, and for a little time the two girls wept together.

"But no one will think the less of him for it," said Nelly, drying her tears. "If Mrs. Rodger has been poisoned, the matter will be thoroughly investigated, and no doubt the proper party will be found out."

"But surely Mrs. Rodger could not have been poisoned?"

"It is feared she was," said Nelly, who knew more than she considered it prudent to tell.

"Did any one say so?"

"It is thought so in the village."

"But how can they tell?"

Annie paused without seeming to expect a reply to this perplexing question.

"Oh dear, dear! surely this cannot be

true ; surely no one could be so heartless, so wicked ! "

" But, Annie, don't trouble yourself ; nobody thinks it was Herbert. You know the housekeeper has been taken up too."

" The housekeeper ? "

" Yes. And Hobbs's name is also mentioned."

" Has Hobbs been taken ? " inquired Annie, eagerly.

" He is already in prison."

" On suspicion ? "

" No ; on another charge. He has been guilty of some crime in Glasgow."

This new information presented the whole case to Annie in a different light. Mrs. Rodger might be poisoned, after all. She had always feared that man Hobbs. She had told Herbert that she did not like him ; but he smiled at her fears, and said he would send him off some day just to please her. She had formed a bad

opinion of him the first time she saw him. Was it not a likely thing that he and the housekeeper were in league to do away with Mrs. Rodger in Herbert's absence? Yes, it was a most probable supposition. Very likely they meant to take away her money, but Hobbs had been imprisoned, and the plan had been frustrated. This, of course, could not be known to Herbert; and oh! she longed so much to see him, and tell her suspicions. By-and-by the candles were lighted, and she took her knitting and sat down by her mother in the cosy front parlour. The hours passed, oh! so slowly—five, six, seven, eight. Yet, although she did not expect him before this hour, she had been at the door several times during the evening to listen for the sound of approaching footsteps or the fall of distant hoofs. Viewed in the light of her earlier information, the death of Mrs. Rodger by foul means seemed an impossi-

bility ; but the more she thought of it now, the suspicion she had formed grew the more deeply upon her. Ten o'clock came, but there was no word of Herbert. Mrs. Dawson marked her daughter's growing anxiety with much tenderness.

"You must not be alarmed though he should not come to-night, Annie," she said. "There are many things that might detain him. You know it would be late before they could get to Glasgow, and then the body was to examine after that."

"Yes, but Mr. Clydesdale said they would let him free when he explained that he was in London."

"He thought so, dear ; but it is quite possible somebody might need to prove that, or he might stay in Glasgow all night—there's no saying what may detain him ; but if any proof is needed you know Mr. Clydesdale has promised to ride to Glasgow to-morrow morning. His word ought to go a great way."

Annie did not reply, but took her candle, and, after bidding her mother good night, went upstairs to her little bedroom. There was no fire, and the air was very cold compared with that of the cosy parlour below. Annie shivered on entering, but the feeling soon passed away. She set down the candle and looked at herself in the glass. She was surprised at the anxious expression on her own face; at the first glance she was struck with the thought that the years were beginning to leave their impress upon her, but continuing to look, she smiled away the suspicion. It was simply a fancy begot in an anxious brain. Hush! was that the sound of footsteps? She paused to listen. There was some noise; it passed the door; ah! it was only the heavy chestnut leaves driven by the wind. Her hair was carefully braided on her forehead, and fell gracefully behind her

ears, then was gathered up in innumerable plaitings, and fastened in a beautiful honeycomb cluster at the back of the head. Annie stooped to examine this neatly executed artistic work of the toilet. She knew the arrangement would please Herbert—indeed, he had more than once complimented her on her taste in this respect, and she was herself satisfied with the appearance of it. For some time she continued to gaze in the glass. No; she would not undo her hair. Herbert might yet come. He might even now be on his way; and what would he think of her love for him if she should be asleep when he came? Annie sat down on the bedside to listen and think. Mentally she followed Herbert all the way into the city, through the cruel inquisitorial hall of justice; heard the unpleasant questions, the clear and direct answers, and finally the manly explanation of his position, with the offer

of the fullest substantiation regarding his statements. Then she thought of the apologies and the dismissal; of Herbert on his way home; of the long dreary ride, or perhaps walk, over the bleak lonely road, through the cold night; of how his first thoughts would fly to her, and of how anxious he would be to tell her that the suspicion was groundless. By-and-by the more active exercise of thought was suspended, and she sat looking out of the dark window, listening intently for approaching footsteps.

The night was now perfectly still, the wind had gone down, and there was not even the movement of a withered leaf to break the silence. Annie felt a sense of loneliness creeping over her; a strange superstitious fear came upon her, and she felt as if Herbert were in the room beside her, not physically, but spiritually, as if he might appear at any moment in

some new presence unfamiliar to her. The candle had burned down, and the apartment was but dimly lighted. All this added to her apprehensions, and she almost feared to turn her head or look up, lest the unfamiliar presence should appear. At length she rose and cast herself upon her knees. She was numbed and cold. Burying her face in her hands, she prayed that God would protect her and help her to bear His will; then all her heart went out towards Herbert in overflowing pity. Oh! that He would save the innocent, that the wicked might be caught in their own snare and punished. Oh! that he might be sustained through the severe trial, and brought back to her, even while she waited for him.

When Annie arose from her knees she was calm, and her fears had gone. The room was still very cold, and the candle had burned out, but the darkness revealed

the fact that the moon was shining beautifully over the crisp white landscape outside. Wrapping herself in a heavy plaid, she sat down at the window. The house was all quiet, and no one would see her there. If Herbert came, she should be ready to receive him. He would see that she had expected him, and waited for him—that her faith in him had not been shaken —that, in fact, she was assured of his perfect innocence. The laurel arbour was not attractive now, the wicker arch was laced by bare boughs and leafless tendrils, and the moonlight streamed through on the dark-green seat beneath. The outlines of the peach and cherry trees might be traced on the garden wall, and in the middle of the garden, almost entirely stripped of its foliage, stood the large apple tree with the drooping bough, from the entanglement of which he had relieved her on that first evening of their intercourse

alone. Everything seemed in disorder and decay. The flowers, with the exception of a few withered dahlias, which it only required a strong wind or a heavy shower to beat down and destroy, were all dead; the diamonds, the crescents, and squares could not now be distinguished from the brown pathway, on which little heaps of withered leaves were strewn. Was the past, with its rich foliage and its beautiful flowers and its keen happiness, only a dream from which she had been stirred to enter upon the hard and cruel experiences of real life? Whether it was so or not, the present was very bitter to her. But, ah! there was a future, a future with a Herbert in it, and was not that worth much endurance? Was it not he who had given all the charm to the past? What would flower, or fruit, or tree be to her without him?—and did not all the joys and glories of the past

await her in the future, after this moment of bitter, bitter experience had been endured? Annie braced herself for the task of waiting. It was now one o'clock, but she had not yet lost hope. He might be detained till late, and then he would walk out.

Beyond the garden wall the river was glancing under the moonlight, and the white sand sparkled like snow. On the opposite bank the tall trees stood up coldly, and held out their leafless arms to catch the silver beams. But Annie did not observe the trees nor the river; her points of observation were the loaning which led down to the Mill, and a certain point of the highway which she could see distinctly over the intervening valley. If he came on horseback, she would be sure to observe him at the latter point, but in any case she could not miss seeing him approaching by the loaning. Two o'clock

came—and still she continued to watch and hope. Three o'clock—still Herbert did not come. Then the moon went under a cloud, and she shut her eyes to enable her the better to catch every sound. She folded her arms and put down her head. Oh, it was so weary waiting; would he not come, after all, till the distant morrow? Tired nature could hold out no longer. . . . She slept.

By-and-by she started to her feet, and throwing open the little window, she put her head out, and cried—

"Herbert! Herbert!"

But the voice was swallowed up in the wide, cold morning, and there was no reply. Was it possible he had not come? Ah! it was only a dream, and she staggered back frightened by the darkness and the sound of her own voice. It was now five o'clock. The moon was still under a cloud, and the room was dread-

fully cold. She tried to pace backward and forward to warm her frozen limbs, but she dreaded lest her mother might hear her footsteps, and come up and find her still undressed. She feared he could not now leave the distant city before daybreak. How could she wait so long?—how could she bridge over the weary intervening space? Ah! she would lay her down on the quiet car of sleep, and dart into to-morrow. Poor thing! forgetting that to-morrow had already come, and that there were to-morrows yet coming for which she should have as eagerly to long and weary.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HORIZON DARKENS.

The *post-mortem* examination of the body of Mrs. Rodger left no doubt as to the cause of death. It was discovered that considerable quantities of arsenic had been administered to the deceased, and that the poisoning must have been systematic and continued. The house at Blair Farm was now in the hands of the authorities. After a diligent search a small packet of arsenic had been discovered in the secret drawer of Herbert Rodger's desk, which, with some other important items and papers, was carried off and deposited in

the hands of the Fiscal. Meantime, public opinion was very busy shaping conclusions from the partial evidence before it. The prevailing notion was that Betty Brown and Hobbs had committed the deed.

"I see it as clear as I see that gill stoup," said the Beamer, to an unusually large meeting at the Bird-in-the-Hand Tavern that evening after it was made known that Mrs. Rodger had been poisoned. "The twa meant tae rin aff thegither after the woman was killed. It is said she had a guid pickle siller i' the hoose; very likely they intended to be on their way tae America before the Maister came back."

"Ay, ay," said the Nailer; "no unlike. I believe Betty Broon and Hobbs were thegither that nicht before Mrs. Rodger's death, makin' their plans, nae doot, for startin' the next day."

"Ay, an' don't ye see," said the Beamer,

elated by the thought of his superior discrimination, "that when he was ta'en up, Betty had jist tae stay an' brazen't oot." The speaker brought his fist down heavily on the table, as if he had now got the whole matter into a nutshell.

"Of course, of course," said several voices together.

"Did onybody ever hear what Hobbs was ta'en up for?" inquired the Shoemaker.

"No; I think that has never come oot," replied the Nailer. "Some debt, nae doot, for the Shirra offishers were aye at the heels o' him."

"It was a very fortunate thing that they cam' on him jist at that time," said the Grocer, "for they might baith hae been awa tae America—ay."

"It wad hae been better if he had been ta'en up before the plot was made ava, M'Auslane," said the Nailer; "it wad hae

saved the puir woman's life. What dae ye say, M'Nee? Ye made the coffin an' attended the beerial. We haena had yer opinion yet."

Several voices demanded M'Nee's views.

"My notion is that yer a' wrang thegither," said the Cartwright, removing his pipe to give freer utterance to this strong opinion.

"Hoo's that?" inquired the Beamer.

"Because I think it was the Maister that did it himsel'."

"I am inclined to think so, too," said Mrs. Jamieson, who was standing at the door listening to the discussion.

"It's no aften ye'll find a woman on the weak side," remarked the Shoemaker. "Hoo could that be, Sam'l, an' him in London?"

"I don't pretend tae say hoo it could be, but that is my belief. I ken this, that Rodger was desparate ill aff for siller, an'

he kent that everything wad come intil his hands at her death."

"Ay," said Mrs. Jamieson, "I mind Hobbs came in here ae night very much the worse o' drink, and he said Rodger had lost a thousand pounds by some race or other, and he was feared to go hame to face him; and he believed he could only be saved from ruin by his mother's death."

"He said that tae you, Mrs. Jamieson?" inquired the Beamer.

"He did."

"Ye see that," said the Cartwright: "that bears oot what I say. There could be naebody sae much interested in his mither's death as himsel'. It wad be but a trifle o' siller she could hae i' the hoose at the best, an' no sufficient tae mak' twa folk club thegither tae tak' her life for't. Min', I don't say that Hobbs didna ken o't, for frae what Mrs. Jamieson says it is possible he may have put it intil Rodger's

head, but my notion is that it was naebody but him that pushioned the auld woman."

These conclusions, however, were all upset when the Beadle arrived later in the evening, and told them that immediately after Mr. Rodger left for London, Hobbs had gone up to Mrs. Rodger's bedroom, and, presenting a pistol in her face, made her sign a cheque, payable to him, for all the money she had in the bank; and that, to prevent detection, he and Betty Brown, who was a party to the crime, agreed to poison her before her son's return.

"Eh! it's awfu'," said the Beadle, as he concluded his narrative amidst the eager stare of the horrified company.

"There's reason in what ye say, An'rew," remarked the Beamer, after the first surprise had slightly subsided. "I'll gie in tae that. Man, it's a likely story. Wha tell't ye?"

"A gentleman frae Hamilton," said the Beadle, limping over towards the bread and cheese. "I think he was ane o' thae official bodies."

"Ay, ay, verra like. What dae ye say tae that, M'Nee?"

"It's likelier nor the ither story," M'Nee replied, "though ye wad hae expected Betty Broon tae hae rin awa' when her mistress dee't."

"But whare wad she rin tae, Sam'l?" remarked the Beadle, who had commenced to mill his cake vigorously. "Ye maun min' Hobbs was ta'en up then: she could dae nothing else but stan' an' tak' her chance."

"Weel, it's true; it's true," said the Cartwright, in a puzzle; "but for a' that, I canna get rid o' my ain notion that Rodger had a han' in it tae."

The meeting broke up sooner than usual that evening, each one being eager

to carry this new version of the sad tragedy to his own family.

Next day, however, the aspect of things again changed, and the story of the previous night, which had found a wide currency, was partially exploded. Betty Brown was discharged. Hobbs also had been sent for, and was examined at considerable length, but no charge was made against him, and he was sent back to prison to undergo his term of punishment. Though nothing definite was allowed to reach the public ear, it was known that Herbert Rodger had been retained for further examination, and it was believed, moreover, that a serious case was beginning to thicken around him.

Mr. Clydesdale had spent a day of the deepest anxiety. The course of recent events had pained him exceedingly. While he feared Herbert might have been a party to the crime, he had been hopeful

that his part was not that of chief actor; but from what had become known that day the inference was too plain to leave room for further hope. The thought of so much duplicity and real villany grieved the good man's heart. "Miss Dawson must forget him," he said to himself, rising and walking to the window. "Whether this fearful crime be brought home to him or not, she must not think of him any more."

In the midst of this perturbation of spirit Dr. Calder came in, and the clergyman rose up to meet him, with an eager, questioning look on his face.

"There is nothing definitely done yet," he said; "but Rodger is sure to be committed."

"You think so?"

"No doubt of it. I believe the housekeeper's testimony is such as to leave him no chance."

"Oh dear!"

"As I expected, Hobbs's evidence went clearly to establish a motive for the crime. Are you aware they have both been discharged?"

"Yes, the news reached us to-day."

"They will be the chief witnesses against him at the trial."

"And your own examination?"

"Ah! it was a very trifling matter—only some twenty minutes or thereby—just a plain statement of the nature of Mrs. Rodger's illness; the number of times I visited her, with a pretty searching inquiry about the powders, whether I had given verbal instructions as to how and when they were to be taken; and then a few general questions regarding the character of the prisoner. Miss Grieve and Dr. Abernethy were also examined to-day."

"About the child?"

"Yes. I saw Abernethy afterwards, and he told me they were very keen on him about that matter in Bell's Wynd, but he gave them his opinion honestly."

"That will stand ill against him with the jury, even though the charge of murder should not be clearly proven. If the evidence is circumstantially heavy this fact will add severity to their verdict. I declare to you, Doctor, I never knew a case of such diabolic wickedness and deception."

"It is very bad," the Doctor said; "but I hope that other poor girl has escaped his villany."

"Miss Dawson?"

"Yes."

"God save us! I never thought of that. Surely his intentions were honest to her?"

"Oh, they may have been."

"Have you any reason to fear?"

"No, no special reason; indeed, her own

purity and innocence give me hope that he would not dare to do her injury, but a fellow who could do what he has already done is capable of anything."

"That is indeed true," said the Minister, shaking his head gravely. "That truly is a most serious aspect of the case which has not occurred to me before."

"It just crossed my mind since these other matters came out, but I sincerely hope our fears may be groundless. There is one calamity, however, which we must try to avert," the Doctor said, with much seriousness. "The Fiscal wishes to examine Miss Dawson."

Mr. Clydesdale started to his feet and walked over to the fire.

"You don't mean to say so?"

"I do. He spoke of it to-day."

The clergyman paused, and thrust his fingers nervously through his hair.

"We must by all means prevent this. Poor thing! she would never stand such an ordeal. Did you not tell him so?"

"I did, but he is anxious to leave no stone unturned. You must see him on her behalf. I don't believe her evidence could be of much value in the prosecution. I should say it would be more of an exculpatory character. She could not possibly know anything criminal about him."

"The only thing her evidence could establish is his heartless duplicity, but I fear the case is strong enough without that."

"She expects his return every day, and looks most anxiously for it. I told her at first that I believed his apprehension was altogether a misunderstanding—as indeed I then believed it to be—and that he would be set at liberty so soon as an investigation took place, and I have not

had the courage to tell her the truth since; but she must have it broken to her."

"Well, the sad news had better come from you, Mr. Clydesdale; or, perhaps, partly from you and partly from her mother. Since she has been kept so long in ignorance, it must not come too abruptly upon her. I presume you can speak freely enough to her mother about it?"

"Oh, perfectly. The fact is, she has not at all been a willing party to the match. It is Mr. Dawson who has been headstrong in the matter, and encouraged Rodger. It seems the mother is not at all astonished at what has happened. She had a prescience of evil regarding him from the first time he came about the house, but her voice was always silenced by the self-willed opinionativeness of her husband. It is curious what a keen instinctive knowledge some of these quiet, simple women possess."

While they talked Mr. Clydesdale was informed that a messenger had arrived and awaited him in the next room.

"Perhaps it is something on which I may require your advice, Doctor. If you will pardon me, I shall be with you in a minute."

In less than the time specified the clergyman returned. "It is a summons, you see," he said, handing the document to the Doctor; "they wish to examine me to-morrow. He has told them, it seems, that I was the first person to break the news of his mother's death to him, and I suppose they want to hear what I have to say on that point."

"Had the messenger any other papers than yours to deliver?"

"I did not ask; why?"

"It is just a possible thing he may have been asked to deliver one at the Mill; we cannot tell."

"That is true," Mr. Clydesdale said, rising to touch the bell. "I shall send after him."

"Never mind; he may not be at liberty to tell you. I am going to the Mill, at any rate, to see Mr. Dawson. I shall overtake him if he is going there. In case any such summons should come before you see the Fiscal to-morrow, I shall warn Mrs. Dawson to be on her guard."

CHAPTER XIII.

FEARS.

The day or two of which Mr. Clydesdale spoke to Annie went by, but Herbert did not return.

Annie was not quite satisfied with Mr. Clydesdale's manner. His reticence was puzzling to her, and there was an anxiety and a nervousness about his speech which were not at all natural to him. It was curious that Herbert had not sent by him a single word of remembrance or comfort to her. She had expected that he would have done so, but feared to ask for it, and when he had finished speaking, she always

felt as if there was something which he had omitted to say.

They were long, long and dreary, these November days, but the nights were longer and drearier, for in them there was less chance of his coming. She would not stir out of the house, lest Herbert should return and find her absent; indeed, her mother did not encourage her to do so, for fear of the truth being revealed too suddenly to her. Miss Mackenzie and her niece had been over to see her several times, and so also had Mrs. Clydesdale and Mrs. M'Ilwham. These visits all seemed strange to her, for it appeared as if there was a depth of solicitude and commiseration about them which was not quite warranted by her view of the circumstances; but she observed they all avoided speaking of the subject which was nearest to her own heart, and when she did ask for news the answers to her

inquiries were of such a uniform character that she began to fear there must be something wrong. What if Herbert should, in public estimation, be lying under this dreadful suspicion? What if the suspicion should be growing, and nobody take the trouble to say it was Hobbs and the housekeeper? This was now her daily increasing and overmastering belief; but it appeared not to strike anybody as it had struck her, and no one seemed bold enough to go forward and tell the authorities that they were punishing an innocent man. During all this time of anxiety, expectancy, and fear, her mother, while she exhibited the utmost regard for her daughter's condition and comfort, did not show that tender sympathy and pity for Herbert which Annie's deep love for him and the painfulness of his position demanded. For several days Annie had observed this with deep pain.

She was aware her mother never had much regard for Herbert, but it was not kind, in this his hour of deepest trial, to treat him with coolness and indifference.

On the morning of the fourth day of suspense Mrs. Dawson, with the kindest intentions, spoke out plainly and painfully. She had been marking, with much concern, the pale worn look which was day by day taking a deeper and deeper seat on her daughter's face, and she made up her mind to probe the sore, even although the immediate result should be pain.

"It is painful work this weary waiting for news," said the mother, as they sat together in the front parlour after breakfast.

Annie looked suddenly up and brushed away a tear. She had tried to hide the true depth of her suspense even from her mother.

"But, dear, you must not vex yourself

so much as you have done. I fear Herbert has not been so worthy of your love as you thought."

"Why, mother?" said Annie, with nervous eagerness. "Have you heard anything? Oh, tell me, tell me!"

"I only suspect there may have been something wrong," replied the mother, "when the authorities have him so long in hand."

"But you do not think him guilty, mother?"

"I will not say I think him guilty of the awful crime he is charged with, but I have heard of many things that make me believe you have been very wrong in loving him as you have done."

"Oh, mother, you are cruel!"

"No, dear, I am not cruel; at least I don't mean to be so; it is out of true kindness for you, it is because I love you that I speak thus."

"But how can you love me and speak so ill of Herbert?" Annie's tears fell thick and fast. "You never understood him—never sympathized with him; and now that he has most need of friends, you speak unkindly of him. Oh, mother, you are very, very hard!" The poor girl put her head down and sobbed aloud.

"You don't see as I see, or you would not think so of me," said the mother, quietly. "You may find mine has been the true kindness in the end."

Annie did not reply, but continued to sob and weep.

"My anxiety is that you should not wear yourself off your feet about one who is not worthy of you."

"I will not let anybody say that about him before me," said Annie, keenly hurt by her mother's words. "You have always judged him harshly, mother, always thought badly of him, because people

who did not understand him or like him brought you stories."

"Well, well, Annie, dear; God knows I have no wish to give you pain, but you will one day see how tenderly I love you, and how deeply I sympathize with your present trial."

Annie was not angry with her mother, for she felt that, under all this misunderstanding of Herbert's character, she loved her tenderly; but it seemed to her so selfish and unkind to take advantage of an apparent downfall to revive and urge an old prejudice. Annie was very uncomfortable.

Mrs. Dawson desired, amidst the furrows of present pain, to scatter seeds of doubt regarding Herbert's character which should grow up and prepare her for the sad truth that would shortly fall to be known. But Annie would not allow these doubts to take root in her mind. There were people

mean enough to strike a man when he was down, and her mother had always kept a too open ear for the cruel insinuations which came to her against Herbert. Doubtless some would be glorying in his apparent fall, but it was unkind of her mother to believe the wicked lies that were sure to circulate about him at the present juncture. Oh! that her father had been sufficiently recovered to know the truth. She felt the want of his manly, independent, and generous voice in the family to plead her cause and give her support through these days of darkness and trial. She was certain that he would not have held his peace while an innocent man was suffering. He would have given himself no rest till that cruel, bad man and his accomplice had been made to confess their wickedness, and till Herbert had been set free. Annie felt she had no need of this new item of discomfort.

Oh! that he would come and speak to her, and pat her on the face and kiss her, as he had done that afternoon before going to London; then all the world might say what they pleased, but she would be happy.

Annie's mind was disturbed and restless. She put on her plaid, and telling her mother that she was only going for a very short walk, went out into the clear crisp air. The day was fine, and she wandered into the Priory Wood; it was very cheerless and bare, but every footstep of the way spoke to her of Herbert. The dead leaves that rustled amongst the brown grass and danced over her path prattled of summer memories; the trees had their associations, and the gurgling of the rapid river at her side brought back the sweet melody of his voice. But there were no whisperings of doubt in all that multitude of eloquent objects, and there was not

one to suggest an unpleasant thought or an unhallowed recollection. She sat down by the river—it was cheerless, and weary, and restless like herself. For some time she watched the struggling waters breaking against a projecting rock, until she fancied there was an evidence of pain in the gurgling, plaintive voice of the river. It was cold and desolate; but was it not more friendly than the hard, cruel, whispering world? . . . .

An unhallowed impulse came upon her with this thought, but she bowed her head and prayed for forgiveness and strength. . . . . She started to her feet and turned her back on the terrible fascination. Then home and Herbert lay before her. In this brief interval he might have returned. On her way back she met Nelly Lee. Nelly had come over to spend an hour with her friend at the Mill.

"I thought I should find you here," she

said to Annie; "your mother told me you had gone out for an airing."

"Is there any word?" inquired Annie.

"Not that I have heard," said Nelly; "but I have longed so much for a walk. I am heartsick and weary to-day."

"How so, Nelly dear?"

"Edward went off to London this morning, and oh! I feel so lonely."

The two girls walked on sadly together.

"Let us go on leisurely to the Priory," said Nelly. "Notwithstanding he had such a desire to see it, we could not find time to get there."

"Miss Mackenzie told me he had taken Berry Lodge."

"Yes, isn't that charming? You remember last summer how you used to admire the large roses and rhododendrons in the avenue. Oh, Annie, we shall be so happy yet?" Annie's only answer was a sigh—notwithstanding, there was an

assurance in Nelly's quiet enthusiasm which did her good.

"Sorrow may last for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"But the night is so long sometimes," said Annie, sadly.

"That is true, Annie dear; but the morning is sure to come. This is my night now as well as yours; we must both be courageous, and we shall find the light all the sweeter for the continued darkness."

Annie walked on for a short distance without speaking, and then commenced to cry.

"Annie, Annie, dearest, what is the matter? I have not said anything to give you pain? Oh! tell me, Annie, tell me, for I did not mean to hurt you."

"I cannot help it," replied Annie; "I begin to think there is something wrong. You are all so queer, and speak so

strangely to me now, that I sometimes think I am not right in my mind. You don't think I am strange, Nelly?"

"Dearest Annie, do not speak so," said Nelly, much pained by the suspicion. "You know we all understand you are troubled about Herbert."

"Yes, but will he not be set free? Nobody thinks he is guilty, you know, and surely they will not bring him to trial for a crime which he could not do? Oh! Nelly, if there is anything which I must know, do not keep it from me."

"But, Annie dear, there is nothing that I can tell you; I believe everything is yet involved in the greatest uncertainty, and it may be a little time before the mystery is cleared up. It has given us all much pain, and we are all waiting anxiously for the result; but beyond this I can tell you nothing more."

Nelly could not be more explicit. She

had promised faithfully not to say anything to Annie unless in the most general way, and she dare not break her promise. It was clear that her companion was not quite satisfied with her reply.

"I believe," continued Nelly, "that Mr. Clydesdale went in to town to-day, and it is possible he may have some news to-night."

While they talked they came in sight of the Priory.

Annie shuddered as she looked up through the bare branches at the huge rock, with its terraces and broken walls.

"I can't think of the Priory to-day," she said, pausing, with a half-frightened look on her face.

"Well, then, let us go back. Are you ill, Annie?"

"Oh no, I am not ill, just a little chilly —that is all. I will take your arm, and you will tell me about your marriage."

Annie looked very pale and strange, but Nelly did not seem to take further notice of it. "You have got your white-sewing all done?"

"Not all," replied Nelly; "but I think it will be well forward by the end of next week. Aunt is most anxious to have everything done before we begin the dress."

"Oh yes, about the dress; what colour have you fixed on?"

"Got my own colour," Nelly said, blithely.

"Then Mr. Sheffeld agreed with your choice?"

"No, he sided with my aunt; but who do you think settled it in my favour?"

"I don't know."

"Nor could you guess. It was Mr. M'Whannel."

"Mr. M'Whannel!"

"Yes, he came in that night by an

accident—on purpose, you know—and had tea with us, and afterwards helped us to discuss the question of colour. He agreed with me, and made such a nice little speech that they all gave in, and I got my own way. Aunt and I went in to town with Edward and bought it, that day he arranged about the new offices."

"Mr. M'Whannel has a good taste," said Annie, carelessly.

"He has, indeed—I think a great deal of him now; I believe he is in love with my aunt."

"Do you think so?"

"I really do, indeed; there is not the slightest doubt of it; and, what is more, I believe she is in love with him."

"That is very funny."

Gossiping in this light fashion, they reached the Mill, and shortly after Nelly took her departure. It was dark before Mr. Clydesdale came, and Annie wearied

very much for him. His manner was still as unaccountable as ever, though there was more decision about him.

"I am sorry I must advise you to forget him," he said; and after some preliminary conversation—"I fear he has had something to do with this awful crime."

Annie did not speak, but held down her head and trembled. The sickening feeling about her heart again returned; but the announcement was only what she feared. Nobody would take his part. All the wicked rumours of his past life would be revived and come against him now; circumstances were in favour of his supposed guilt, because his mother's money fell to him at her death. All this passed through her mind in a moment; but that same moment witnessed the registration of a secret resolve—a resolve which dispelled all her faintness, and which gave her a

calmness that Mr. Clydesdale did not expect, but which he was greatly gratified to see.

"I think you may tell me the worst now," she said quietly, after the trembling had left her.

"I shall not go into particulars at present," replied the clergyman. "I thank God that He has enabled you to bear the great trial with such calmness. I have simply to ask you to ponder what I have said, and endeavour to shut him out from your memory."

When Annie came in to kiss her father and mother that night before going to her own bedroom, the look of weary anxiety and languor appeared to have passed away.

"You seem better to-night, dear," said the father.

"Yes, I am better now," she replied, calmly pressing his lips with unwonted affection.

"Good night, mother."

As she left the apartment, her mother's heart went up in thankfulness that the calamity for them at least was over, and that her daughter had been saved.

CHAPTER XIV.

A FRESH ALARM.

NEXT morning was cheerless and wet. Mr. Clydesdale had desired to have breakfast earlier than usual, as his pulpit preparation for the following Sunday had been neglected through the press of other duties, and he had a good day's work before him. There was a large fire burning in the parlour when he came down, and breakfast was almost ready. Mr. Clydesdale was a man of a very even temperament. He knew very little of the extremes of feeling. In his experience, as in the experience of most men, there

had been sharp and bitter points of suffering that for the moment went to his heart of hearts, but his earnest Christian faith soon mollified the wounds, and restored his quiet, cheerful equipoise of feeling. On the whole, his life was one of quiet contentment. But this morning he was more than usually contented and at peace—arising out of a combination of very trivial circumstances, for a contented mind does not require much to make it happy. The cheery fire, the comfortable breakfast, contrasted with the cold, wintry dreariness of the weather outside, had doubtless something to do in producing this frame of mind; but perhaps the first cause of all was the thought that he had performed a very difficult and painful duty in a politic and satisfactory manner. Annie Dawson was the first person he thought of that morning when he awoke, but there was that satisfaction in the thought which a

good man always feels when he is conscious of having done his duty ; and as he sat in his comfortable armchair, and held his slippered feet up to the fire, he could not but thank God that she had been delivered out of the hands of a wicked, deceitful, scheming man.

Having finished breakfast, he returned to his study. The rain was still coming down in torrents, and the garden underneath was soaking with water. A loose branch of a rosebush swung about in the breeze, and slapped frequently against the window. The thoughts that were uppermost in his meditations were concerning the depravity of the human heart. This was evidently forcing itself upon him as the subject for next Sunday's discourse ; and then came the text—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." But Mr. Clydesdale was not a sensational preacher. He feared lest he

should utter a word which might prejudice his hearers against a man whose guilt had not yet been thoroughly proved; so the text was rejected, and the phrase "Search me, and know my heart" was substituted, as allowing equal freedom and fervour of speech regarding the natural condition of the heart, without being open to the objection of personality. This he had committed to paper, and was proceeding to elaborate it, when the door-bell rang with great violence. It was a messenger from the Mill, in a state of the greatest excitement, but he would speak to no one except Mr. Clydesdale. The Minister heard the stir outside, and had turned his chair from the desk towards the fire when the messenger came in. His clothes were white with flour dust, and his face was flushed and nervous.

"Oh, sir, an awfu' thing has happened this morning."

"What is it, Robin? What is it?" inquired the clergyman, starting to his feet and looking eagerly into the messenger's face.

"Miss Dawson is a-missing, sir, and naebody kens what has come o' her."

The Minister clasped his hands and uttered a cry of horror.

"And they want ye doon as fast as ye can, for they are in an awfu' way."

"When did she leave?"

"They canna tell that, sir; they waited till ten o'clock, aye expecting her doon for breakfast, and when at last Mrs. Dawson gied up she wasna tae be seen. She must ha' gane out through the night, sir."

Mr. Clydesdale was staggered. What if the long anxiety, and at last, the sudden shock, had unhinged her mind? Might not the apparent indifference on the previous night be the beginning of this terrible calamity? It was fearful to think of it.

"Has any search been made?"

"Oh, they are searching every place, sir, but some o' us fear she is droont, for her black claith belt was found on the bank o' the river near the brig."

Mr. Clydesdale put on his hat and hurried out without further question. On his way he called at the school-house and took M'Whannel with him.

"You must direct the men as to what they are to do," said the clergyman. "I feel I am not able for rapid practical thought and work: the shock has quite unnerved me."

When they reached the Mill the greatest consternation prevailed. The Mill itself was stopped, and the men waited outside with sad faces, wishing to commence a search in the river and the dam, but fearing to show their suspicions.

Mrs. Dawson rehearsed minutely how they had waited breakfast for her, and

how she had gone up to awake her, but could not find her anywhere; how she had taken up a whole candle on the previous night, and how it was found on the dressing-glass, burned down to the socket.

"Did you observe any uneasiness about her after I left?" inquired Mr. Clydesdale.

"No; she seemed very calm. Indeed, there was a light in her face which I was astonished to see, considering the severe trial she had passed through."

"I observed it too," said the Miller, sadly; "but, my dear, that is just what makes me think there must have been something wrong."

While this conversation was going on inside, M'Whannel had sent for the Smith, and explained the situation of affairs.

"It looks bad," said Elderson, shaking his head gravely. "Where was the belt found?"

"On the path leading to the bridge, only a couple of yards from the water."

"Ay, there is a hole there; no an unlikely place, puir lassie. But I'll rin owre to the smiddy and forge twa or three hooks. I think ye had better search the dam, tae."

"Yes, I think so. I have sent a couple of men with the boat down to the weir. The water is low, and if the body did float down as far as that, I don't think it could get over there."

"No, unless it floated into the lade; but it wad be seen. Hae ye sent men through the wud and the Priory?"

"Yes, and all over the Castle grounds."

"Weel, that is a' that can be dune. In the meantime, I'll rin owre and get the hooks ready."

By this time the rain had slackened a little, but black, wispy clouds were being tossed about the sky by a gusty wind.

The day was very cold, and the paths on the river bank and through the woods were wet and slippery, making the task of the searchers both disagreeable and dangerous. About two o'clock the Smith returned with the necessary grapnels, and the search in the river and the dam was commenced.

During all this time there was the utmost anxiety at the Mill. Mr. Dawson, forgetting his own weakness, was restrained with difficulty from putting on his clothes and joining in the search.

"I know the river and the dam so much better than anybody else," he said.

"Of course you do, dear," remonstrated Mrs. Dawson, in a pacific tone; "but you know you are not able to sit up yet, and for my sake you must not think of it."

"Na, na," said Mrs. M'Ilwham, "ye maunna think o't, Maister Dawson, ye maunna think o't; for it's as muckle as

your ain life is worth. Ye may rest content that when Thamas Elderson is there everything will be dune that it is possible tae dae."

"Tell them no to forget the quarry," said Philip, "and one of the men might run up as far as the pool in the Woodrow Burn."

The Miller and his wife had now given themselves up to fear the worst. They were convinced that Annie's mind had given way, otherwise she would not have left her home so mysteriously. Mr. Clydesdale had suggested the possibility of her having gone to Glasgow; and, indeed, he had himself gone off early in the day to make inquiry; but they put little trust in that, for it was such a fearful morning for a journey, and the distance was too great for her to accomplish on foot. Now, however, that the darkness came on, and the men returned, wet and weary, from a fruit-

less search, the slight hope which still remained bound up in the clergyman's absence assumed a more radiant shape, and they waited with much eagerness for his return.

CHAPTER XV.

A JOURNEY IN DESPAIR.

THE secret resolve which was registered that evening, when Mr. Clydesdale broke the sad news to Annie Dawson, was the source of all the anxiety and alarm which ensued on the following day. That resolve was to go to Glasgow and learn for herself what every one seemed to conspire to keep from her. It was not the resolution of a mere impulse. She had been brooding over it ever since Nelly Lee had told her that Hobbs and the housekeeper were suspected. Herbert's guilt, to her, was an impossibility. Everybody thought so, too, at first, but of late they all seemed

to speak and act so mysteriously that she began to think there was a wicked purpose in it. Did they wish to tear her love and sympathy away from Herbert because he was falsely suspected of a great crime? Mr. Clydesdale's words confirmed this suspicion. This one thought swallowed up all other considerations, and the purpose to visit the city was formed regardless of consequences.

Annie did not heed the rain that morning, as she stole out into the darkness, and traced the little footpath down to the bridge. Her all-absorbing thought and cry were "Herbert, Herbert!" and every other consideration was set aside and unheeded: her dread was lest she should be seen, pursued, and brought back before her purpose was fulfilled. On crossing the bridge, she kept the path under the shadow of the Castle wall, and crept stealthily up into the village. There

was not a sound to be heard but that of her own footsteps and the heavy hissing of the rain. The first stroke of six o'clock rang from the steeple as she approached the churchyard gate, and she peered timidly in. There was a light in the watchhouse window, and the sound of human voices came to her ear somewhere out of the sacred acre of the dead. Might they not come after her? A helpless girl abroad, all alone, on such a morning—they would be sure to stop her, to ask her where she was going and what she meant to do, and ultimately take her back. Under the spur of this fear she quickened her footsteps; then she ran, this black dread the while keeping at her heels and pursuing her till she had passed the ducal gates. When she stopped to listen, she found herself exhausted and out of breath, and could hear no other sound for the beating of her own heart. She

had now passed beyond the high wall which surrounded the ducal grounds; the strong south-west wind dashed the rain against her face in chilly gusts, and brought back animation and courage. They were not coming. Perhaps they had not seen her. Although they had, they could not know who she was, for she had held down her umbrella over her face. They could not tell her mother, or Mr. Clydesdale, or the Doctor, or anybody, that she had gone that morning through the rain to see Herbert. Calming herself with these reflections, she walked quietly on.

Annie had been to Glasgow several times, but always in company with her father, who, of course, had driven there, and she had taken no notice of the road. Which way should she turn? Two paths were open before her, but she dare not go into the toll-house and ask, for they

might inquire her name, and they, too, might tell her that Herbert was unworthy of her, and try to persuade her to forget him; so she made her own choice, and walked on through the darkness and the rain. When daylight came she felt faint, and sat down on a large stone by the wayside. She must be some miles from home. The country was unfamiliar. Nobody would recognize her now. She had passed two labouring men, but they could not possibly see her, for she had hidden her face from them. The rain had ceased, but the wind played around her in strong gusts and dashed her bonnet-strings in her face. Then it disentangled a small lock of her hair, which it opened up and blew into her eyes. Annie resented this liberty. She had spent many precious hours that morning in plaiting and braiding her hair in the way Herbert liked it best. She did not think he would take

notice of her hair—the charge against him, and the circumstances, were too painful for him to take notice of such unimportant things as that; but would he not be pleased to see her, and would he not like to see her all the more in the way that pleased him best, even although he did not know what a very little thing had helped to complete the charm? Gathering up the fugitive lock, she reinstated it in its place. The faintness had now left her, and she pursued her journey.

Then she passed through a village that she did not remember seeing before. Had she taken the wrong road? No; she could not ask these strange, vulgar, inquisitive-looking women that came to the doors and stared at her. She felt sure they would all gather round her. As it was, their eyes were piercing her like burning coals, and she feared they might suspect her, follow her, and drag her into

their presence, and compel her to tell them that she had run away from her home, having made a sacrifice of everything to save the one man she loved. She felt sure they would not sympathize with her. How could these coarse, staring women ever love anybody? They would not understand her love for Herbert. They could only pity and laugh at her. She walked very fast; she would have run, but, then, they would be certain to follow her.

Annie was again on the open road, with nobody before and nobody behind her. The country was still strange; there were some points which she believed she would be able to recognize, but she had not seen any of them yet; she would ask somebody by-and-by—probably the next person she met. Then her thoughts flew away fast, fast to Herbert. He would surely be satisfied with her love when he knew she had given up everything for him. How

gratified he would look when he heard that she had walked all the way through the wind, and the rain, and the darkness to get to him! He would chide her in the old pleasant way, when he used to charge her to take care of herself, and that would more than make up for it all. He might wonder how she had been so long of coming, but she would tell him all—how she had expected him and waited for him; how they had all deceived her; and ultimately, how they had leagued together to urge her to give him up, to forget him. He would be so angry with them, he would never speak to one of them again. Then she remembered her father, and a tender light came into her face. Ah! *he* would not have deceived her. He understood Herbert; but she would tell him that also, and say it was not her father's fault. She wondered what he would say first when he saw her.

Would it be in the common prison, or in the nice little apartment specially furnished for himself, of which Mr. Clydesdale had told her? Surely they dare not put him in the common prison among cruel, wicked, heartless people. Oh no; they dare not do that. He was a gentleman, and she was sure they would see that, and treat him as such. Would they not be surprised to hear her intercede for him —she, a poor, helpless, inexperienced girl, when there were so many wise and influential men who were able to do so, if they would? Would they think her rude and bold? What if they did? It was truth, and justice, and—love that impelled her to act as she had done. She did not care what any one might think, if he were but set free. Slowly she became aware of a rumbling harsh noise somewhere near her, and on looking round she was walking side by side with a horse

and cart. It was a light spring cart, with a seat across, and she was startled to find the eyes of the man who was driving fixed steadily upon her. They were not unkindly eyes; she could bear to look at them, for they did not stare wickedly and vulgarly at her. Now she should be set right. Was she on the proper way to Glasgow? Yes. He was going to the outskirts of the city, and would give her a lift in if she would have it. Yes; she would.

The man drew up the horse, and leaping out of the cart, helped her up with much delicacy, and gave her his own cushion. This was so pleasant; for she had only now become aware that she was wet and weary.

"Did you come from Haycroft?"

"No."

"Farther than that?

"From Glenara."

"Glenara! Oh, you have taken the wrong way."

"Have I?"

"Bless your life, yes; you went wrong at the toll. You've had a walk, poor thing; you've had a walk."

There was much kindliness in the man's manner, but Annie hoped he would not talk. For a little while he drove on without speaking, though she was aware he was looking down at her.

"It is a pity you did not ask at the toll?"

"I did not think of it."

"Such a morning, too. You must have started early?"

"Yes."

There was another break in the conversation, but still she was aware that he watched her.

"A great many girls shift about at this time o' year."

"Indeed."

"Yes, it's always a hardship going to a new mistress and a new place. I have a daughter who shifted at this term too, but then she wasn't well treated by her last mistress—that makes all the difference; but it's hard in any case—like making new friends, you know." The driver paused for a moment, and then resumed, "You'll be in genteel service, I suppose."

"No, I am not in service."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss, but I meant no offence."

During the ride he only interrupted her meditations once after this, and that was to say that he knew several people in Glenara whom she might perhaps also know, amongst them the Smith, the Schoolmaster, and the Miller. Yes; she knew them all. Then he helped her down with as much care and respect as he had shown in assisting her up. She, no doubt, knew

the city; it was only one mile from where she was to the Cross; the path was quite direct. Annie thanked him and proceeded on her way. She was fresher and more able for the journey now, but her clothes were very heavy and wet. She was cold; well, that was because she had been sitting so long inactive. She would walk fast for the rest of the way. The clocks were striking two. There was such a drumming noise in the streets. Such crowds of people. Everybody going so fast. They had all doubtless something to do, and each one was in a hurry to do it. There was one relief—nobody seemed to take notice of her. To all these multitudes of people she seemed invisible, and she passed on with a feeling of thankfulness that her presence was so little regarded—for there is no light so searching or so hard to bear as the inquisitive light of human eyes. She again turned her thoughts to Herbert.

Would they believe her when she told them he was innocent? Would they let him away at once? Something attracted her eye and arrested her thoughts. She stopped. It was opposite a shop window. A sudden dizziness came upon her, but she seized the brass guard which protected the window, and looked again. There could be no mistake about it. The large letters grew larger, then they seemed to burn into her brain like molten lead—

"THE GLENARA POISONING CASE.—HERBERT RODGER COMMITTED FOR MURDER."

For five minutes she could do nothing but hold on by the brass rod. There was a sickening feeling about her heart, and the blood was leaping with heavy beat against her forehead. By a supreme effort she calmed herself. She had a mission

to perform; she must know more. At length she went in and purchased a paper. Would they allow her to sit down and look at it? Certainly. She opened it. The same hateful letters again caught her eye. She read on. Oh, the cruel, hard words! Deceiver . . . coward . . villain . . . murderer. . . .

She started from her seat and ran out. It was again raining. The pitiless crowds were still pouring through the streets, but she saw no one. She walked smartly—on—on—up one street, down another, heedless of the rain and the cold, and not asking whither she went. . . . Two hours' later she found her way to the Fiscal's Chambers. It was almost dark as she ascended the stair; she heard the sound of footsteps coming down. Then she was aware of her name being spoken gently by a kindly, familiar voice.

"Miss Dawson."

She started and looked up frightened, but the fear immediately vanished. It was a good, friendly, thoughtful face that looked at her in that twilight—the face of the man who had saved her father. All her boldness left her, and she stood there trembling, without saying a word. She had been found out!

"There is no need for explanations," continued the Doctor, gently. "My carriage is at the door, and your good friend Mr. Clydesdale is upstairs. If you will kindly take my arm, we shall all drive out together."

It was seven o'clock before the party reached the Mill. There was no evidence of the anxieties and labours of the day. The men had all gone home.

"You see, Mrs. Dawson, we are rather late," said the Doctor, cheerily, but with a quick glance deprecating all appearance of anxiety or solicitude. "Come, Mr.

Clydesdale, you and I will take Miss Dawson up to her own room. Is there a good fire?"

"Yes."

"That is well. Now, Mrs. M'Ilwham and Miss Mackenzie will see her to bed. Don't spare the blankets. I'll come again by-and-by."

Mrs. Dawson took the clergyman's offered arm, and followed the Doctor into her husband's bedroom.

"I am sorry you have had such a heavy day of it," said the Doctor, proceeding to examine the Miller's pulse. "I find you have just had as much excitement as you are able to bear; but now you must both be perfectly calm. The stroke is not so severe as you thought, though it is bad enough. She is in a burning fever, and must receive the utmost care."

"Did she walk to Glasgow through all the rain?" inquired Mr. Dawson, eagerly.

"Well, we found her there," replied the Doctor; "but at present there must be nothing further said on the subject, and there must not be the shadow of a hint of it breathed in her presence. See after plenty of blankets, Mrs. Dawson, and ask Miss Mackenzie to stay over the night with you. Meantime, I'll run across to the village and prepare some medicine for her. Don't be alarmed if she wanders a little in her speech."

As the Doctor went out he met Miss Mackenzie at the foot of the stair.

"Eh, Doctor, yon's peetifu; the puir thing's ravin' mad."

"Yes, yes," he said, hurriedly; "she may be even worse during the night than at present. But I want you to stay with Mrs. Dawson; they'll require somebody like you in the house, with firmness and composure."

When the Doctor returned he found

Annie had fallen into a quiet sleep; the visitors had all gone, and Miss Mackenzie and Mrs. Dawson sat together in the bedroom watching the sleeper.

"Will it be very serious, Doctor?" inquired Mrs. Dawson, anxiously, in an undertone.

"I cannot tell positively at present," he said; "the symptoms must develop themselves further——"

"Mother! mother! there is something wrong with that bell; one—two—three—poisoned—yes, and by her own son. Oh, the cruel lie! You did not think me unkind, Herbert. I could not come to you, for they barred me in with ever such strong bars; but now I am free. Oh, Herbert, Herbert, we shall yet be so happy!"

The last words died faintly away on the speaker's lips, and she was again calm.

"You will, most likely, have a good deal

of that during the night," said the Doctor; "perhaps even something more violent; but the case is nothing the worse for that. Apply the vinegar pretty freely, and watch that these sedatives are given at the time stated. I shall be able definitely to say in the morning what course to pursue."

Mrs. Dawson went downstairs with the Doctor and locked the door after him, then, bidding her husband "Good night," she returned again to her daughter's bedroom. There was a large, cheery fire burning in the grate, and a wax candle was placed on the little work-table at Miss Mackenzie's side, so that the light might not disturb the sleeper's eyes. Mrs. Dawson took Annie's wet dress, and spread it out on a couple of chairs before the fire. On doing so something fell on the floor. She picked it up. It was the newspaper which Annie had bought in the city. Putting on her glasses, she

found the notice ready to her hand, read it eagerly, and then handed the paper to Miss Mackenzie.

"It must have been that," said Miss Mackenzie, as she reached the last sentence, "that set the puir thing wrang, and I don't wonder at it. Eh me, but he has been a bad man. Did ye ever hear onything about that wean in Glasgow before?"

"Not a word. That would be a terrible shock to her. I wonder who would give her the paper?"

"Yes, they all deceived me, and told me such bitter, bitter lies; but, Herbert, I have been true, I did not believe them—they barred me in like a little frightened bird, and I fluttered and fluttered ever so hard. . . . Herbert! Herbert! oh, save me from these vulgar women! No, no, I will not tell you my name. Let me go. Father! Herbert!"

The sufferer struggled piteously with

her imaginary assailants, then, as if soothed by the gentle hand and the tender word of her mother, which she neither felt nor heard, she settled into a calmer strain.

"Blue, blue, blue, the birds are whistling everywhere. Marriage is such a happy thing—we all like to be married. It is so pleasant he is coming to Glasgow; you will be so near us all, and we can have our old walks in the Priory Wood and round the Castle. What is it to be married? A blue dress and orange blossoms—that is all. I was to have been married once, and they made my dress of the purest white, but I think it must have been a shroud."

Miss Mackenzie passed a significant glane to Mrs. Dawson.

"It is Nelly's marriage," she whispered.

By-and-by the medicine was prepared for her. Annie opened her eyes, looked

wildly at her mother, then at the glass, and in a fierce tone cried—

"Poison! Yes, and by her own son, too. Whom can we trust after that? Father, father, you are not drowned? Say you are not drowned. Did anybody put you into that cruel, cold water? Who was it saved you? Ah! it was He who saves us all. Oh, God! Thy ways are unsearchable." Having taken the medicine, she laid down her head and fell into a quiet sleep.

"I will run down and shut the door at the foot o' the stair," said Miss Mackenzie; "we maunna allow Mr. Dawson to hear what's gaun on."

"Yes, do; but he promised me he would try to sleep. He has had a sore, sore day of it."

Poor man! he was at that moment in an unutterable agony of crying and tears.

"Oh, God! let not her suffer for my sins. I have been self-willed, proud, cruel; I have trusted to my own wisdom. But is there not forgiveness with Thee? Wilt Thou not come over this mountain of sin? Wilt Thou not cast it behind Thee, and remember it no more? If not, oh, let the punishment fall on me, but spare her!"

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.