THE

DAWSONS OF GLENARA.

A Story of Scottish Life.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CHAPTER I.

BEFORE THE TRIAL.

It was a dull, grey morning, three days before the trial; the ground was white with hoar-frost; the woods, the river, and the neighbouring hills were shrouded in mist; the air was vapoury and cold. Mr. Clydesdale was more than usually grave when he came down to breakfast.

For some time after the committal of Herbert Rodger on the charge of murder, there had been little pity either felt or expressed for him in the Clergyman's house;

indeed, Mr. Clydesdale's own feelings were those of utter dismay at the daring wickedness and hypocrisy of the man and of pious satisfaction that his sins had found him out. These thoughts were the natural reaction of an honest mind which had been grossly deceived, but Mr. Clydesdale was too good a Christian to allow such hard feelings a permanent place in his breast. Who was he, to glory even in the righteous overthrow of a wicked man? Was there not a solemn duty for him yet to perform? Might he not be plucked as a brand from the burning? These considerations began to press themselves heavily upon him, as one sad fact after another came out and rendered the chance of the unfortunate prisoner's acquittal more and more hopeless. The subject of his meditations this morning had reference to the most effective way of performing this duty.

"It seems Rodger does not fully realize

the seriousness of his position," he said to his wife, as they talked over the matter at breakfast. "He has written a letter to Miss Dawson, which was opened by her mother, and which I saw yesterday. In the course of this letter he says he will soon be relieved from his cruel bondage. He solemnly denies all knowledge of the crime, and hopes she will not be so unkind as to allow his good name to suffer in her estimation in consequence of the suspicions that have fallen upon him. He says he believes some designing person has entrapped him into a snare, from which he shall be liberated after a full and fair investigation in an open Court, when he hopes to return and claim her as all that she was to him before this sad misfortune occurred. I fear it is the old hypocrisy based on a false hope. He does not yet seem to know the heavy testimonies that have been lifted up against him."

"Would you think it wise to see him before the trial?"

"I feel I must do so; no one of his friends has yet visited him to show the least interest in his case, and it may be my best course, in order to gain influence with him afterwards, if the trial should go against him. He will not allow the chaplain to see him. But I don't wonder at that, for though the chaplain is a good enough man, still, you know, in such men there is frequently a want of that earnest friendly sympathy which gains one admittance into a human heart. He may have been too abrupt and professional with him, and that, of course, Rodger would not bear."

"Not while he has hopes of getting off."

"Of course not—none of us would like it; but I have a communication from his agents desiring me to meet them to-day regarding what I am to say about him at the trial; there is next to no evidence at all in his favour except mine."

While Mr. Clydesdale was in the stable seeing his horse prepared for the journey, a messenger arrived with a letter, the seal of which he broke hurriedly, and read as follows :—

"Glasgow, Tuesday.

"REV. DEAR SIR,

"I write only a line in great haste to say that I am exceedingly anxious to see you at your earliest possible convenience. From past experience of your kindness I am led to hope that you will not refuse me this favour.

"I am, Rev. dear Sir,

"Very respectfully yours,

"HERBERT RODGER."

Mr. Clydesdale before starting put the letter into his wife's hand.

"The way is opening up," he said. "What do you think of that?"

Mrs. Clydesdale read it over slowly.

"There are unmistakable evidences of fear in it," she said, looking earnestly into her husband's face as she finished the letter. "Do you not think so, dear?"

"There is a nervousness about it, certainly, but I am glad he has asked me to visit him. I shall be able to speak to him with more confidence, and doubtless he will be in a better humour to hear."

Mr. Clydesdale went first of all to the office of Messrs. Fleming and Deas, the agents for the defence, where he found Mr. Fleming waiting for him. The lawyer's object was to get an idea of the evidence which the clergyman was prepared to give in favour of his client, but was disappointed that it was so slight and unsatisfactory.

"I fear mere references to past good character will have little effect on the jury," said Mr. Fleming, when Mr. Clydesdale had given an outline of all he

could conscientiously say in favour of the prisoner.

"Did his mother and he live on good terms?"

"I think they did—at least so far as I know."

"You must also refer to that, if it is not brought out in the evidence of the housekeeper. You broke the news to him, I understand?"

"I did."

"How did he take it?"

"He seemed greatly overcome."

"Had you any reason to suppose that it was feigned grief—I mean at the time?"

"Not the slightest. I never remember seeing a man so much shocked, apparently."

"Yes, my dear sir; but it is your impressions at the time we must deal with. Be good enough to put these as vividly before the Court as you possibly can."

"Is the case very hopeless?" inquired

Mr. Clydesdale, before leaving the office, forgetting that there never was a lawyer without hope.

"The prosecution has a good case," replied Mr. Fleming, ambiguously, "but it depends altogether on how the evidence is evolved. There is one thing, however—he has spoiled his case very much by denying that he ever gave any written directions about the powders."

"Has he denied that?"

"Oh yes—out and out; and the unfortunate thing is that they have got one or two of the papers in which the powders were folded, with his own handwriting on the back of them. If he had only admitted that he put these directions on for the sake of guiding the housekeeper, I believe we could have put the question of tampering with the powders—which is the vital one—before the jury in such a light as to have insured a verdict of not proven."

"Is he aware of how the case stands?"

"We have been keeping him up as well as possible all through, though yesterday afternoon I was compelled to express my fears to him. He had no idea that the Fiscal had such an array of witnesses against him."

"Are you aware that he was anxious to see me?"

"No, though I should not have been surprised at it, for I told him yesterday that you were our principal witness, and he seemed hopeful that you would be able to do something for him. Did he communicate with you?"

"Yes. I got a brief note from him this morning desiring me to call upon him."

"Ah, he is doubtless anxious, but you must put in as strong a word for him as you possibly can, though I have more hope of saving him by tattering the evidence for the prosecution than by anything that can be said in his favour."

It was just five minutes past two on the Cross clock when Mr. Clydesdale reached the old Tolbooth at the foot of High Street, and the chimes high overhead were tinkling out the cheery music of "The Girl I left behind me." There was a large concourse of people promenading anxiously under the piazzas in front of the Tontine Coffee-room, and on the flags outside, discussing probabilities. These probabilities had reference to a victory which it was rumoured the "Iron Duke" had gained over Soult in the Peninsula; but beyond the firing of three shots by the guard of the approaching Mail Coach, which was the prearranged signal of victory, nothing definite could be ascertained until the newspapers arrived. Mr. Clydesdale, however, did not wait to inquire the meaning of the stir, but at once ascended the dingy stair of the prison, and in a few moments was ushered into Herbert Rodger's presence, when a heavy

bolt was shot into its socket behind him. Herbert, who was sitting on a wooden bench, at once stepped forward and seized the Clergyman's outstretched hand. He was very haggard and pale. His brief imprisonment had told powerfully upon him. His eyes were sunken and dark.

"You see this sad business is longer of being cleared up than I expected," Herbert said, with a faint smile.

From the tone in which he spoke it was evident he intended to convey the impression that he was a martyr to misapprehension, but there was a nervous anxiety about his manner which did not accord well with it.

"I am sorry our present meeting should be under such painful circumstances," said the Clergyman quietly. "I received your letter this morning, but at the time I was resolved to see you."

"You were?" said Herbert quickly.

"Is there anything—I mean, has anything important transpired?"

"Nothing; I wished to see if I could be of any service to you."

"Oh, you are very kind."

"I have just seen your agent," said Mr. Clydesdale, desiring to lead him on to the point at issue with as much delicacy as possible.

"My agent, Mr. Fleming?"

"Yes, he wrote desiring me to come in and see him."

The prisoner remained silent for a moment, and then said eagerly—"Did he tell you how the matter stands?"

"Yes; I know it all."

"About the poison and everything?"

"Yes."

Herbert's face was very pale and his lips were closely set; he was evidently endeavouring to suppress some strong inward feeling before he spoke.

"I was astonished when Mr. Fleming informed me that they had seized the arsenic in my desk," he said by-and-by, trying again to smile. "It is a most unfortunate circumstance for me, no doubt, but surely they cannot fail to remember that there is no farmer without poison, who has any desire at all to preserve his property. We should have been eaten up at Blair Farm if I had not used it."

"Certainly," said Mr. Clydesdale, snatching at this new view of the matter. "I did not think of that before. We must get the jury to see the question in this light. Did you name it to Mr. Fleming?"

"Oh yes; indeed, he saw it himself before I explained it to him."

"I am glad of that; because my evidence in conjunction with that view of the case may be valuable, whereas by itself it would go for very little."

The Minister stood with his eyes fixed

on the ground, reflecting on this new item of hope, when Herbert turned abruptly and said—

"Do you remember the gentleman who came from London with me that afternoon on which you told me the sad news?"

"Mr. Sheffeld? Yes."

"I believe he has been summoned as a witness in my favour?"

"Indeed! He was much struck when he heard of your apprehension."

"Has he returned from London yet?"

"No; he is expected to-morrow. Would you like to see him before the trial?"

"Thank you, I would rather not." After a short pause—"He is getting married to Miss Lee?"

"Yes."

"And the firm with which he is connected is opening a branch in Glasgow?"

"So I understand."

"Do you know if he has any other reason for coming to Scotland?"

"I have not heard, but I should suppose the reason you have mentioned a sufficient one."

The prisoner paused again. To Mr. Clydesdale's mind this matter seemed altogether irrelevant; yet the questions had followed each other with such rapidity and with such apparent consistency of thought that it appeared as if a purpose lay at the root of it all. But while he waited and wondered what should follow, Herbert resumed, though with less eagerness—

"Is there nothing otherwise new about the village?"

"Nothing," said Mr. Clydesdale slowly, endeavouring to hide his surprise at the speaker's strangeness of manner.

"I suppose you heard of Miss Dawson's illness?"

"No, I did not hear," Herbert said eagerly. "What is the matter?"

"A violent brain fever. She has been laid up for the last three weeks. The doctor fears she will not recover."

"Is it possible?"

Rodger was silent for some time. The announcement had evidently given him deep pain.

"Is she quite unconscious?"

"She has lucid moments, but they are short and unfrequent. Your name is seldom off her lips."

"Poor Annie!" said Herbert meditatively. "This horrid misunderstanding has been the cause of it all." After a moment's reflection: "But when this cloud has passed I hope it will all be well."

The Clergyman was moved by the deep earnestness of his tone and manner. Could it be possible this man was guilty? A gleam of hope broke through the thick

and painful mystery which surrounded the sad case. There was doubtless much that was wrong in his life—much that would not square with the professions he had made; but how could such an earnest, confident spirit as he had shown be compatible with guilt? Before leaving, Mr. Clydesdale offered up a brief, earnest prayer that the true light might shine, that the crooked might be made straight, the rough places plain, and, above all, that these mysterious providences might work out eternal good.

"If there is anything I can do for you," said he, as he shook hands with the prisoner before leaving, "consider me freely at your service."

Herbert smiled; then, laying his hand on the Clergyman's shoulder, he said—

"There is only one request I have to make, and it is this—that you will drive out with me after the trial to the Mill, for

it will be better that we should go together than that I should go alone."

Was not that conclusive? Before this there was confusion and darkness in the good man's mental sky, but that afternoon as he rode home this new hope of Herbert's innocence grew into a steady light that invested the mysterious darkness with a silver radiance.

CHAPTER II.

THE VERDICT.

The trial, which extended over two days, was amongst the last that took place in the old Justiciary Court House, immediately adjoining the Tolbooth, at the Cross, before being transferred to the new Public Offices now situated at the west end of Glasgow Green. It was a fine old, well-finished pictorial hall, capable of accommodating perhaps three hundred people. The walls were decorated with various interesting trophies, and with full-size portraits of the Kings and Queens, from James VI. of Scotland to George III. There was also a beautiful portrait of Archibald Duke of

Argyll, in his robes as Lord Justice-General. The windows were closely hung with massive damask curtains, and the high coved ceiling, which the dim light tried vainly to display, was richly picked out and ornamented with various shades of green and gold. Immediately after the doors were opened the Court was filled to overflowing by an eager crowd, whose faces betokened a hard struggle, and spoke of many who, with less persistency or weaker muscles, were still outside.

At half-past ten, precisely, the prisoner took his place in the dock. His face was very pale, but his step was still firm and confident. He surveyed with much composure the vast multitude of human faces which were turned up to him with their eager, inquisitive eyes, and bowed to M'Whannel, whom he recognized in a prominent bench immediately beneath the small gallery occupied by the jury. His eyes,

however, were withdrawn from the audience when the Lord Justice-Clerk stood up and desired him to plead. He seemed somewhat startled by the first tones of that voice, but replied, promptly and with much clearness—

"Not guilty, my Lord."

So the case went to proof. The medical evidence regarding the cause of Mrs. Rodger's death was gone into at great length, but did not seem to possess much interest to the prisoner, who for most of the time was engaged in making notes and consulting with his agent. From the examination of the doctors it was clearly proved that a large quantity of arsenic had been discovered in the body of the deceased—far more, indeed, than could have been taken at one time, thus establishing the inference that the administration of the poison must have been systematic and continuous.

After this evidence there was a slight flutter of eagerness in Court. The next witness had been called, and the prisoner, roused out of his indifference by the mention of the name, stood erect, with his eyes fixed intently on the door opposite, by which the said person was expected to enter. By-and-by it opened, and Dr. Calder stepped into the box. The witness spoke in a clear, firm voice.

"My name is William Calder. I am a medical practitioner in the village of Glenara, where I have a large practice. The prisoner at the bar is well known to me. In the month of October last I was called to see the deceased. She was in a condition of severe prostration, arising from the effects of acute pain, but her general bodily strength was good. The prisoner explained to me that his mother had been in the habit of taking small quantities of Turkey rhubarb for her

stomach. The symptoms were not such as would be produced by this medicine. It did not occur to me at the time that she had taken poison. The effects were such as might have been produced by the administration of arsenic. I thought the prisoner was anxious about his mother's health. At his request I prescribed for her, but though the medicine I gave was intended to counteract the symptoms previously produced, it did not do so. I thought there was something wrong. Early in November the prisoner called to say he was going from home for a week or ten days. He was very sorry his mother was not recovering so fast as he would like. I advised him to call in another medical man, but he said he had the utmost confidence in me, and would not do so. At his request I gave him some powders for her—eight in all—stronger and more soothing than before. One powder was

to be taken each day, and he expressed a hope that these would be sufficient till he returned. If my services were required, he said the housekeeper would let me know. I understood from this that he did not wish me to see his mother unless I was specially asked to do so. I did not again see the deceased till the 19th of November. I was out visiting in the morning as usual, and did not return till one o'clock. My shop-boy informed me that I was wanted immediately at Blair Farm, as Mrs. Rodger was dangerously ill. On arriving at the farm I found her in a state of extreme exhaustion from severe suffering, and while I waited she died. The symptoms were precisely those of poisoning by arsenic. I might have been able to save her life if I had seen her earlier. The housekeeper informed me that she had administered the last powder that morning. I was then suspicious. While

the attendant was out I saw a paper lying on the bed-room floor. On lifting it I discovered it was a paper in which one of the powders had been folded. The writing on the back of it was not mine—it was marked 'No. 7, Monday,' in a clear, bold hand. The paper, which was sealed at the one end, still contained a small quantity of the medicine. The analysis which I afterwards made resulted in the discovery of strong traces of arsenic."

Cross-examined: "In dealing with Mrs. Rodger I had not occasion to meet John Hobbs. He never came to me for medicine, and I never met him in the house. The housekeeper I only met once, and that was when I made my last visit. She did not try to conceal anything from me, though I consider she ought to have sent for me earlier."

During the time this evidence was being given the prisoner evinced the deepest

interest, and seemed to watch every word that fell from the speaker's lips; though, when the witness had left the box, he resumed his scrutiny of the audience with his old look of composure and confidence. But he was again called to attention by the appearance of another witness.

"My name is Alexander Torrence. I am Procurator-Fiscal for the county of Lanarkshire. On the 21st of November I had my attention drawn to a case of sudden death at Blair Farm, near Glenara. On inquiry, I found it was a case calling for a searching investigation, and at once procured a warrant for the apprehension of the prisoner, together with John Hobbs, at present prisoner in the Tolbooth, and Elizabeth Brown, housekeeper at Blair Farm, both of whom were afterwards discharged. I also took possession of the house, and caused it to be searched. The small packet now shown to me was found

amongst some ashes at the bottom of an unused cupboard in the kitchen."

At this announcement the prisoner became visibly agitated, and held on by the rail in front of him; but the emotion only lasted for a moment, for immediately there was apparent composure and a faint smile on the pale face.

The witness continued: "It was marked 'No. 8, Tuesday,' and contained a white substance, which I afterwards found from chemical analysis to be composed almost entirely of arsenic. I also found the small parcel, containing over three ounces of arsenic, now produced, in the prisoner's private desk."

The next witness called was Wishart the ex-grieve of Blair Farm. This witness detailed at full length the prisoner's financial condition. In cross-examination he said—

"The prisoner was entitled by his father's will to all the money at Mrs.

Rodger's death. It is quite true that his mother gave him a third of all the money she had to keep him from bonding the farm. It is also true that two months before her death he demanded more, but was refused. I believe she did so on the advice of her agent. I had full charge of the farm. The vermin were not so plentiful as on some other farms I know. I kept them pretty well under, principally by the aid of traps. I sometimes used arsenic, but not often. I never knew of the prisoner using poison for this purpose. It is customary to name the matter to those about the farm when poison is laid down, in case of accident. I never got poison from the prisoner, having always bought it in the village when I required it."

After two or three unimportant witnesses had been examined, the Court rose, and the case was adjourned till next morning at ten o'clock.

Next day the interest was even more intense. Long before the doors opened the crowd began to gather, and before the Judge took his seat the hall was crowded in every part. M'Whannel secured his old seat beneath the jury's gallery; but this day he was accompanied by his friend Thomas Elderson, the smith. Every face bore the impress of deep interest, for it was pretty generally known that, as the Judge was desirous to close the Circuit, he would sit out the case that night.

"I doot this'll be a waur day wi' him," said the Smith, who had just been learning the history of the previous day's proceedings from M'Whannel, as they sat together in the crowded Court.

"Everybody is waiting for the housekeeper's evidence," replied the Schoolmaster. "That is the important link now."

"Man, it's a sair job a' through," said the Smith, striking his hand upon his short broad leg, with a reflective sigh.

"That's a fact. Guilty or not guilty, he has not been quite the thing. It is a great pity that others should have to suffer so keenly for his faults."

"Ay, that's true. Did ye hear how the puir lassie at the Mill was, as ye passed?"

"She appeared a little calmer last night, but she had a fearful day yesterday, worse than she has had yet. The Doctor spent the most of the afternoon with her. Hush!"

There was an expectant movement in the Court, the Judge had taken his seat, and the door of the dock opened and closed. The prisoner had arrived. For a short time there was a buzz of conversation, each one whispering his first impressions regarding the prisoner to his neighbour, until a peremptory voice cried, "Silence!" when it was known that the more serious work of the day was about to begin.

"Eh, but he's pale," whispered the Smith, in a tone which could not properly be considered a violation of the Crier's command.

"And shakier to-day," replied M'Whannel, "though he has still the old smile on his face."

"Look! did ye see that? He's noddin' tae ye, M'Whannel."

"Yes; he did the same yesterday."

"Dae ye see the folk lookin' at us? Man, M'Whannel, we're puir worms tae. Dae ye ken, I feel affrontit."

"The creatures of circumstance," was the Schoolmaster's reply. "Easy up, easy down. Poor fellow, I'm sorry for him after all."

"Wha's that in the box?"

"It's Hobbs; see how Rodger is watching him."

"Ay; he has, nae doot, got something tae say. I wish he wad speak oot."

After all, Hobbs had not got much to say. He said a great deal, no doubt, about gambling and losing money on behalf of the prisoner, but almost nothing having a direct bearing on the case in hand; and when he left the Court the prisoner, who had watched every word with the deepest interest, seemed relieved that he had said so little.

There was no need of the Crier's voice to command silence when the next witness came. On that sea of human faces there was an eager expectant calm. A whisper might have been heard, but the voice of the witness was sharp and distinct.

"My name is Elizabeth Brown. I was Housekeeper at Blair Farm when Mrs. Rodger died. Mrs. Rodger and the prisoner lived in the same house. They did not live very happily together. He was maybe a bit foolish. What I mean

by foolish is he was too fond o' company —spent a great deal o' money, and would not settle down to the farm. He was the only child. His younger brother was stolen away when he was a bairn. No trace of him was ever found. I mind the day the prisoner went to London. Mrs. Rodger had been complaining a while before this. He sent me to his own room. He told me he was going away, but had got as many powders from the Doctor as would serve his mother till he came back. I did not think she was so ill, but he seemed very anxious about her. I thought he was turning a new leaf. I never saw him so mindful of her before. He said there were eight powders in all, and that they were all different degrees of strength, the last one being the strongest. They were tied in a small parcel. The top one, he said, I was to give first; the

one under that next, and so on. Then he said he had better number them to prevent me making any mistake, so he sat down and numbered them one, two, three, four, on to eight, writing the day o' the week when the powder should be taken. The two papers now shown me are written in the prisoner's hand. My own opinion is that these powders made the mistress worse. She was always ill after them—getting gradually worse as she came near the last. She was so ill after the seventh one that I thought they were too strong for her, and only gave her the half of the eighth. Shortly after getting this powder she got so bad that I had to send for the Doctor. He was out when I sent for him, and very soon after he came, the mistress died. I did not tell the Doctor that I had only given the half of the powder. I was afraid to do so, lest he should blame me

with the mistress's death. The powder now shown to me is the one that I halved for the mistress. I put it away in the ash-box, for fear it should ever be seen again."

Cross-examined: "I did not send for the Doctor earlier, because the prisoner forbade me to do so. He said, 'Now mind you don't bring in the Doctor for every trifle. The powders are sufficient, and with everything to pay the Doctor's bill will be heavy enough.' He seemed very much concerned about his mother's death. I told him about halving the last powder. He did inquire about them before I spoke. He was afraid at first I had given the remaining half to Dr. Calder, but when I said it was destroyed he was satisfied. He did say I had better tell nobody about the powders, lest they should blame me. I had no suspicion that the mistress was poisoned at the

time. I never knew the master using poison for rats."

There was little need of further evidence after this; indeed, the prosecution seemed to think it sufficiently strong, for when the counsel for the prisoner objected to the evidence of Miss Grieve, the Misses Glendenning, and Dr. Abernethy as irrelevant to the case, their names were withdrawn without further discussion.

"God help him," said the Smith, earnestly, as the last witness left the Court.

"God help him, indeed," replied M'Whannel. "I fear he's a doomed man. There is Mr. Sheffeld in the box. Poor fellow, he has come all the way from London to bear testimony that can be of no value now."

During the examination of the Housekeeper, the look on the prisoner's face had completely changed. The conscious smile had given place to an unconscious

look of hopeless despair. His large beard rested on his breast, and he did not seem to observe that Mr. Clydesdale, with tears running down his cheeks, was in the witness-box, making a last earnest effort, not to avert a just judgment, but to induce the jury to temper their judgment with mercy.

It was felt that the summing up was not needed, though the Judge did it as deliberately and with as much verbosity as if it had been a necessity. When the jury retired, the prisoner took advantage of the permission accorded him, and also left the dock, but almost immediately returned, to await the solemn decision.

After half an hour's absence the jury came back. It was evident their task had been a serious one, for some of the elderly men amongst them bore the signs of weeping. For the moment every breath was suspended. The prisoner

raised his blank, hopeless eyes to the small gallery opposite, as if to see beyond the present, and know the worst.

"Guilty."

No one expected anything else, not even the prisoner himself; but the word found its way into every heart like a death knell. On hearing the verdict the prisoner seemed to become faint, but was supported by the officer who sat at his right hand, and after drinking a little water he revived, and stood up to receive sentence.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER THE TRIAL.

After being removed from the dock, the prisoner was stripped of his own clothing and attired in the prison garb. He was then conducted to the condemned cell, where, according to the custom of these hard times, he was chained by the feet to a strong iron rod fastened in a horizontal position to the floor. During these operations the wretched man was completely overcome, and fainted several times; but under the influence of stimulants, administered by the surgeon in attendance, he was restored to consciousness,

and to the realities of his awful position. At first his nights were sleepless ; during the day he continued in a state of the wildest excitement, and seemed as if he wished for the means and opportunity of self-destruction. By-and-by, however, the reaction caused by the extreme exhaustion of mind and body induced sleep ; he gradually became calm, and appeared to view the prospect of his dreadful punishment with resignation if not with composure.

During these long, momentous hours Mr. Clydesdale was daily by the prisoner's side, soothing and cheering him with the consolations of religion. The prison chaplain was also regular in his attendance, but he had not such a ready key to the unfortunate man's heart. At first he read the books that were put into his hands by his spiritual advisers, and listened to their warnings and entreaties without much

apparent interest; but as the time wore on, he began to evince the deepest concern about his condition. On the Monday previous to the day appointed for the execution he appeared to be in the utmost mental distress. When Mr. Clydesdale arrived he found him sitting with his face buried on his knees, engaged in ejaculatory prayer, but it was not definite prayer, presented to a known God; it was the broken fragments of a mind in despair, thrown into a darkness which it could only render more intense—the blind grasping of a drowning man for the straw on which he fancies he may buoy up his sinking head. The Clergyman saw his sad case, and approached quietly to where he sat. Then he spoke gently. The prisoner raised his head slowly. The dim light displayed a wild, haggard face, with dry, sunken eyes. For a moment he sat looking straight before him at the bare dank wall

of the cell; then, as if by a new impulse of despair, he stretched out his hands and raised his eyes to Mr. Clydesdale's face, and said—

"Oh! what must I do?"

The words at once suggested the case of the Philippian Jailer to the Clergyman's mind, and taking this subject for his text, he urged and entreated the prisoner to adopt the Jailer's remedy. For a while he listened with apparent eagerness, then a feeling of restlessness came over him, and he said—

"But is there no hope?"

"My dear friend, I fear not."

"Is no one doing anything for me?"

"It would be utterly unavailing. It is beyond the power of the Judge to give any recommendation to mercy, and you must not for a moment think of it; but there is another Judge with whom there is mercy, which, if sought, will be

found—a mercy which was extended to a cruel Jailer, a treacherous Judas, and which may be claimed by the chief of sinners."

When Mr. Clydesdale left him that day he was much quieter than he had yet been. He took some food, and during the night slept tolerably well. Next day he spent in reading the books which had been put into his hand for his guidance, and in listening to the ministrations of his spiritual advisers. The efforts of the clergymen had that day been directed towards getting him to confess whether he was guilty of the crime. While they were urging him thus he became very excited, and gave way to a paroxysm of feeling, from which he soon recovered, but his demeanour afterwards was dejected and sullen. Before leaving, Mr. Clydesdale asked him if he had anything to communicate, and he replied "No." This, however, he said

with such hesitancy that the Clergyman thought there was something on his mind, so he lingered before taking his departure. By-and-by Mr. Clydesdale took up his hat to leave, but the movement produced visible signs of agitation in the prisoner.

"Supposing I should know something of the murder," he said, speaking with difficulty and in an undertone, lest the warders, who were present, should hear him, "is it my duty to confess all I know?"

"It is."

After a brief pause, the prisoner said—

"I have been such a sinner. Must I confess all my faults to you in order that I may have forgiveness?"

"My brother, it is God only who can forgive sin, and it is to Him you must confess; but if you know anything of this awful crime, it is your duty to God and to society to tell what you know. This is all

the confession we are justified in asking you to make."

The prisoner seemed greatly relieved, but immediately relapsed into a state of silent meditation, from which he exhibited no inclination to rouse himself. When Mr. Clydesdale was taking his departure, he asked the time, and said—

"Twenty-four hours will end it all. Oh, come early to-morrow, and stand by me to the end. There is much I would like to say to you. I have yet a great burden to cast away before I can *float*."

When the Clergyman returned home that evening there was a peculiar light on his countenance, which even the coldness of the weather and the severe physical exhaustion under which he was suffering could not dispel. This light of satisfaction on the good man's face was not diminished by the sight of a cheery fire and the comforts of a warm meal. When

Dr. Calder looked in upon him after dinner, to inquire whether the prisoner had yet confessed, there was unusual buoyancy in his manner.

"Regarding the murder he has as yet said nothing," Mr. Clydesdale observed, "though I believe a full confession is imminent."

"But about Miss Dawson?" interrupted the Doctor, eagerly.

"She is pure as an angel of light," replied the Clergyman triumphantly.

"He said so?"

"Yes; these were his own words. He seemed horribly shocked at the suspicion, and said if ever any human being could have effected his reformation it would have been her."

"That will be joyous news for them at the Mill," said the Doctor; but the expression of his own face showed that the intelligence had been equally joyous to

himself. "I must run down and tell her father, for, poor man, he has been dreadfully anxious since the suspicion occurred to him. Did he make any further reference to her?"

"He was very much moved to think that she had loved him so deeply, but hoped she would now be able to forget him, and give her affection to some one more worthy of it."

"Does he know she is recovering?"

"Yes; I told him what a severe fight she had had for her life, but that she was now considered out of danger, and he was much relieved. He spoke of her with the profoundest respect, and with much feeling."

"Did he say anything about his motive for desiring the marriage?"

"Not a word. My own impression is that he loved her—loved her deeply and sincerely; but that the Devil had too

strong a hold of him to allow her goodness and purity to effect his regeneration."

"That certainly is the most generous way to look at it," said the Doctor, "and, under the circumstances, I dare say we had better give him the benefit of the doubt."

"Do you think she understands Rodger's position fully?"

"Oh, perfectly, but she seems to have undergone a very great change."

"Poor thing! it is well if the chaff has been destroyed in the fire."

"Yes; I understand she told her mother that her feeling for him was quite different now. She has invited Miss Grieve out to spend to-morrow with her."

"That is a very strange impulse."

"It does seem strange," said the Doctor, "but I think there is deep sympathy and genuine wisdom in it. I advised Doctor Abernethy to try to induce her to come; for however little regard the poor girl may

have for him now, it will be well for her to be out of town to-morrow."

It is not easy to conceive the joy which was infused into the Miller's heart when, shortly afterwards, the Doctor conveyed to him the news of his daughter's undoubted purity. He had charged himself with all her suffering, and if she had died he would have blamed himself also with her death; but even that thought was not so painful to him as was this other dreadful suspicion. His mental suffering during his daughter's illness had been most intense, but this new dread had heated the furnace of his suffering seven times. That night he engaged in family worship for the first time since the unfortunate Hallowe'en accident. Annie, well muffled with plaids and wrappers, was able to sit up in the rocking-chair near the fire. Her face was thin, and her cheeks and lips were very pale, but there was a calmness and a repose in every feature

which made her very pleasant to look upon. To her father she never had seemed so beautiful before, for to-night her face was invested with the sublime beauty of perfect innocence. But there was no heart so truly happy and grateful in that little circle around the bed-room fire as was that of Mrs. Dawson. She had prayed long and earnestly that her daughter might be hindered from marrying the man whose character, by a kind of superhuman prescience, she had long ago divined and dreaded, and now God had answered her prayer, though the answer had come in a terrible and mysterious way; but what she now cared to think of was that it had come, and she forgot all her toil, anxiety, and suffering in the calm happiness of this one joyous thought.

The portion of Scripture chosen in worship that night was the fifty-first Psalm, after which came the prayer. At first the

strong voice of the petitioner was low and plaintive, but it rose gradually, becoming louder and louder, quavering and trembling under every new impulse of feeling, till each heart beat in sympathy with the earnestness of the speaker, and every eye overflowed with tears. It was the first outburst of a repentant soul in the presence of those against whom it was conscious of having done a serious wrong.

Mrs. Dawson and her daughter were deeply touched by the unwonted earnestness and deep relf-reproach of that prayer. Drying their tears, they sat for some time after it was over in silence, afraid to lift their eyes to that large pale face which they knew was also covered with tears. These two loving hearts were more than satisfied with the confession he had made, and with the repentance he had shown, but Philip himself was not so. He felt he had yet a duty to perform, and for a

moment he sat in deep agitation at the prospect of hearing the sound of his own voice. At length it came, low and tremulous.

"Annie."

She raised her calm, clear eyes suddenly to her father's face.

"Annie, I have done you great wrong. You trusted me; I led you astray, and caused you great suffering; but I have prayed God that your life might be spared, and He has heard and answered me. I have also asked forgiveness for this great wrong. Will you forgive me, Annie?"

"Oh, father! I have nothing to forgive. I only am to blame."

"No, no, the fault is all mine. I encouraged you by my foolish words to take the path which led to all your suffering. Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, yes, father," said Annie sobbing; "but it is mother who has been injured:

she has been so wise, so forbearing, so patient."

"That is true," interrupted the Miller, now turning to his wife. "To you, my dear, the injury has been threefold. I have been very self-willed and harsh, I have despised your wisdom, and brought upon you this anxiety and labour, which you have borne through all these months with such patient, cheerful affection and tenderness." Pausing for a moment, he took his wife's hands in his, and pressing them, said, in a tone which was deeper and huskier—"I have not been so good a husband to you, Annie, as I ought to have been; but, God helping me, I will try and make amends for the past. Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, Philip." The poor mother's tears came and stopped all further utterance; but they were tears of satisfaction and comfort. She felt as if that one happy

moment was more than an ample reward for all her pains and toils. For a short time they sat in that little upper room weeping together: but out of that baptism of tears they all rose to the higher elevation of peace and joy.

CHAPTER IV.

LAST MOMENTS.

The last night in that cold and dreary dungeon afforded the unfortunate prisoner but little rest. The prison chaplain remained with him till twelve o'clock, and he continued to read and meditate for some time after. He appeared to be perfectly collected and calm. Before lying down he partook of a little tea, and on inquiry was informed that it was two o'clock. Then, counting the time on his fingers, he said—

"It will be five hours before Mr. Clydesdale arrives."

He did not undress when he lay down,

and had only slept for about half an hour when he started up, excitedly inquiring,

"What is that?"

"It is only the workmen outside," said the warder, with some hesitation. The unfortunate man groaned and lay down again, but started frequently during the morning as the sound of the hammers employed in the erection of the scaffold rang along the corridors, and brought forth dull echoes from the empty cells of the prison.

Outside, a heavy drizzling rain continued to fall all night, and as it wore on towards morning little knots of dissolute men and women, seldom housed at these hours, collected in the open space before the prison to watch the progress of the gloomy structure, and made merry in coarse and offensive jokes. Here, also, might be seen young men whose dress and manner indicated that they had not left off sowing

their wild oats, and who appeared resolved upon making a night of it in a manner peculiar to themselves. By daylight the workmen had completed their melancholy task. A strong beam projecting horizontally from the wall of the Tolbooth, and underneath a small platform connected by a narrow gangway with the outside stairs facing Trongate, on which the Lord Provost and Magistrates were wont to stand on the fourth of June and drink the health of their Sovereign, George III., was the simple but suggestive picture which thousands came to inspect before entering upon the duties of the day. Amongst that vast moving multitude there was one, however, who looked on with other feelings than those of indifference. John Hobbs had that morning been thrust out of prison after having satisfied the claims of justice, and now stood out in the rain, in the grey morning, looking up with

horror at the instrument of execution—which he himself had been the principal means of rearing. For some time he wandered about the crowd as if uncertain what to do; by-and-by he became aware of the presence of certain faces, which, in present circumstances, it was unpleasant for him to see, and he pulled his hat over his eyes, and making out of the crowd, disappeared down the intricate windings of a neighbouring lane.

When Mr. Clydesdale reached the prison that morning he found the unfortunate man in a state of great restlessness and anxiety. His eyes looked wild, and his features were rigid and pale. He had refused to have any food, and when one of his attendants offered him a little wine he pushed it aside, saying, "It is useless." The Clergyman at once entered into conversation with him regarding his religious conviction, and found that he was still in a state of spiritual darkness and doubt.

"After all, perhaps, there is no heaven," he said, looking sullenly in the Clergyman's face, "and no hell, and no after life? Why should there be this awful agony of fear?" The Clergyman met his doubts by appropriate passages of Scripture, and then spoke seriously with him.

"'If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me.' How can you expect the light of God to shine into your heart while you still keep it shut upon your sin? I beseech you as you value your own soul, to make full confession of what you know regarding this great crime. Lay it out in the presence of the Light, that we may implore forgiveness and peace ere it be too late." The Clergyman's tone was marked by deep earnestness, and the tears ran down his cheeks as he spoke. The prisoner was much agitated, but sat for some time staring straight before him at the prison wall.

"Oh, it is harder to-day," he said, pressing his hand upon his forehead. "I could have done it better yesterday. The time is so short. . . . I cannot think."

"Yes, my poor brother, the time is short, but forgiveness is not a work of time. While we yet ask, He hears, and pardons. Come, lay out your sin before Him, He knows it all."

After a moment's hesitation—

"But if I tell you you will go away and leave me in this darkness."

"No; I will love you all the more. I will then think of you as a brother in Christ. Did you commit this horrid crime?"

"I did."

"Unaided?"

"Yes; I put poison in the powders. . . . The Housekeeper did not know of it. . . . I did it for the money. . . . And went away in order that if it should come out no one might suspect me. I tried for

a long time to do the deed, by putting poison in her food and in her medicine, expecting she would die naturally and slowly; but difficulties came upon me, so I yielded at last to the wicked temptation, and did it boldly and deliberately. I knew it would be all over before I came back; but I had made up my mind to deceive everybody and become a hypocrite rather than that it should be known that I had killed her."

The poor wretch paused for a few moments, and then, looking helplessly in Mr. Clydesdale's face, he said—

"You did not think I was so wicked, but you said there was pardon for the chief of sinners. . . . Oh, tell me, have I been too wicked to be forgiven?"

The Clergyman was much shocked by this awful confession. He had supposed, from the prisoner's manner on the day previous, that he was not the sole actor in the sad tragedy.

"Your sin has indeed been very great," he said; "but come and let us kneel together. I will help you. Open your whole heart to Him. He is present with us. He has forgiven greater sinners than you. Plead, plead as for your life."

* * * * *

When the prisoner rose from his knees his face was wet with tears. They were the first tears he had shed, but his features had now a softened and composed look. For a little while he sat with his head resting on the palm of his right hand, as if in silent prayer, then, turning to the Clergyman, he said—

"Ah! sir, there is a change. I cannot tell what it is, but I feel I can speak to Him now."

For some time they sat together on that little pallet—Mr. Clydesdale the while teaching and exhorting him, and he praying and clinging to the words of his spiritual

councillor, inquiring the way of truth with all the earnestness and humility of a little child.

About half-past one o'clock the prisoner turned to the Clergyman and said—

"I have something further to communicate."

"By way of confession?"

"Yes. I feel it is my duty to do so. But as it concerns others as well as myself, it must never be made public unless you find it is absolutely necessary that it should."

The Clergyman having given his promise to keep this solemn trust, the prisoner at once entered upon the new confession. . . .

"You see I have been under the devil's influence from that moment," he said, as he concluded this fresh narrative of his sin.

"Well," said the Clergyman, "you had better write the letter you refer to, and leave the rest with me. I will see that your wishes are carried out."

The prisoner did as he was instructed, and put the document, sealed, into Mr. Clydesdale's hands.

"Tell him I have forgiven him," he said; "and tell him also that it was my last request that this act of justice should be done."

The unfortunate man sat down, covered his face with his hands, and continued for some time as if in silent prayer. Then there was a stir in the cell, and they knew the last moments had come. Somebody came out of the darkness with whom the prisoner shook hands. The final preparations were submitted to with much composure; when they were completed the little procession was formed, and it marched out of the cell, along the corridor, and into the Court-House, where the Magistrates who had charge of the execution of the sentence were seated on the bench. The Court was nearly filled

by a privileged assembly, who seemed eager to catch the first glance of the prisoner, who, accompanied by Mr. Clydesdale, now entered the dock. His face was very pale, but it was placid and resigned. His step was slightly faltering, but he was supported by the Clergyman's arm.

The senior magistrate, who seemed to be deeply affected by his position, inquired if he had anything to say. The prisoner replied promptly, and in a clear voice—

"I have only to acknowledge that I am guilty, and that my sentence is just."

This was the first public hint which had been given that the prisoner had confessed, and the frank and open avowal of his guilt caused great excitement in Court. But the procession had re-formed, and the condemned man was now face to face with the coarse, unsympathetic, staring multitude who had assembled there, from far and near, for no other purpose than to gratify

a vulgar curiosity, and be witnesses of the barbarous extinction of a human life.

* * * * *

Meantime, a very different phase of the sad drama was being enacted elsewhere, the *dramatis personæ* being Isabella Grieve and Annie Dawson, and the scene Annie's bed-room. Annie sat in the rocking-chair, her face slightly flushed with excitement, and Miss Grieve occupied a seat by her side and gazed into the fire, while large tears rolled down her cheeks and fell on her faded silk gown.

"Poor little dear," said Annie, with much tenderness in her voice, "they did not tell me it was dead."

Isabella could not reply, but the rapid flow of her tears showed that her heart was deeply touched.

"He must have been very cruel," continued Annie, tenderly. "Had it much pain, Miss Grieve?"

"No, it just slept away in my arms, and I held it quite tight, and would not believe when my mother told me it was dead; it had such a nice sweet smile on its face that I could not put it away. Then they laid it in its little coffin, and I watched over it, thinking it would awake and come into my arms again; but the men came, when I kissed the wee white lips again they were so soft and cold, and then the coffin was taken away, and I knew my baby was dead."

For some time the girls sat and wept together, for tears are often kindlier than words. Annie was the first to speak—

"You did not love him after that?"

"No; I could not love him. I hated him, and cursed him in my heart, because of the bitterness of my sorrow."

"We have both suffered very much," said Annie, sadly, "but our suffering is over, his is to come. Can you forgive him, Miss Grieve?"

Miss Grieve, after a little hesitation, "I did not think that I could ever do so, but it is so sad his dying this way, and your tenderness gives me strength. I shall try."

"They say he is repentant, and Mr. Clydesdale is hopeful of leading him into the right way; it will be so hard doing everything at the end. Might we not pray for him? Who knows but God may hear our prayer. Might we not do it, Miss Grieve?"

"Yes; but my heart is so hard, I don't know what to say. Oh! Miss Dawson, you are pure and good, and so much nearer Heaven than I am. God will hear you; just speak out to Him for us both, and I will follow you all I can, with my heart."

"Let us kneel here; it is near the last moment."

* * * * *

As they rose from their knees, the last stroke of three o'clock rang from the village steeple. Isabella Grieve was crying bitterly, but Annie kissed her with much affection.

"It is all over now," she said; "but I feel as if God had heard our prayer. Come, Miss Grieve, you will stay over the night with us; we shall both be the better for it."

CHAPTER V.

CHURCH BELLS.

"I DON'T think we should venture out to-day, Mother," said Thomas Elderson, on the following Sunday morning after breakfast, "the roads are slippery, and there's a gey bitter breath o' east wind."

"Na, Thamas, I maun gang tae the kirk the day, for it's a precious opportunity o' hearin' the Word wi' demonstration and power. Just think o' that puir sinner hanged on Wednesday. The Minister canna pass it owre lichtly, seein' that he was ane o' his ain flock. I kent fine there was something wrang that day o' the beerial, though ye scoffed at me wi' yer

infidel notions. But it a' cam o' a graceless faither, Thamas. Mind that, and think o' yer ain responsibility."

"Weel, weel, Mother," said the Smith, with a look of annoyance in his face, "if ye will gang tae the kirk ye had better get on yer things, for it's past ten o'clock already, and ye ken ye're nane o' the fastest walkers."

"Ay, ay, I winna be lang puttin' on my things, Thamas; and as for walkin', I hope ye may just gang as weel at my age; but that's aye the way ye treat me whenever I say a word for yer guid; I suppose ye'll be wantin' awa by yersel' to talk aboot pleughs and harrows, and Mour Safe business, wi' Jamie Wilson and John Howatson and a wheen mair, wha stan' claverin' i' the yaird as if the Sabbath was a market-day, and winna stir a fit till M'Whannel is at the hindmost verse of the first Psalm; man, it wad be a heap wiser

like if ye wad sit doon and speir the callants their Questions."

Mrs. Elderson, senior, passed out of the kitchen and proceeded to dress, while the Smith sat back in his arm-chair, and looked at his position as philosophically as he could through the fragrant clouds of tobacco smoke in which he endeavoured to wrap himself up. He was not quite pleased at his mother's waywardness. It was seldom she went to church now, and he knew his wife was anxious to get out to-day; but if his mother went, Mrs. Elderson, junior, must stay at home to look after the baby and the younger children. "She is getting desperate thrawn," he said to himself. "It looks as if she kent Janet wanted to gang oot the day, and as if she was set on keepin' her in." Thomas smoked more vigorously, and looked dreamily through the blue mist at the two boys, who, dressed and ready for

church, sat at the window trying very hard to commit to memory two double verses of a psalm which the old lady had imposed upon them as a morning exercise. On the other side of the fire, the eldest girl was teaching a chubby-faced, dark-eyed baby to walk, by holding it under the arms and allowing it to swing backward and forward on its own little plump white feet, repeating after its nurse something very like, "I'll catch, catch you." At his feet, a dark wiry child of three years, also with black eyes, was playing with an orange-coloured cat which lay dozing on a rug, coiled up before the fire like the leaf of an undeveloped fern.

"So grandma' is gaun to the kirk, after a'," said his wife, coming into the kitchen, with a meek smile on her face.

"Ay," said the Smith, taking the pipe out of his mouth with a smothered groan, "she's gettin' gey stiff and maisterfu'."

"Ah, yes; but, puir body, she's getting auld, Thomas; and we maunna cross her, though she is a wee fashious whiles. I fear she'll no trouble us verra lang, for she's gaun doon the hill unco fast. Let us humour her while she's here, and we'll no think the waur o' oursels when she's awa'."

Mrs. Elderson turned to the little staggerer on the floor, who was looking up at her, and, with a cheery recognition, she clapped her hands in the tiny thing's face, and, imitating its own prattling words, said, "I'll tatch, tatch oo, ta," then sat down contentedly by the fire, and took the child on her knee.

On the whole, the children were not dissatisfied that grandma' was going to church; for those of them who went with her were bribed not to sleep by her delicious "sour drops," and those who remained at home felt they were under a more genial and sympathetic rule.

"Now, Thamas, I'm no lang o' dressin', ye see," said his mother, coming into the kitchen with her large umbrella under her arm. "Folk that hae ony regard for the Means o' Grace winna stan' owre a lookin'-gless a' day; for the Lord kens fine when we think mair o' oorsels nor we dae o' Him, mind that, Jeanie lass," she said, addressing the Smith's eldest daughter, "and dinna be carried awa' wi' the falderals an' fancies o' this evil worl'. Come awa', callants, for the bell has been ringin' thir five minutes, and it'll no dae for *us* to be gaun in at the end o' the first psalm."

The Smith gave her his arm to the church door, where they met Mrs. M'Ilwham and Martha Deans. The women went in together, while the Smith and Mr. M'Ilwham took a turn round the graveyard. The pew jointly occupied by the two elders and Martha Deans was a large square space in the body of the

church, with a table in the centre, suitable for holding top-coats, plaids, and books, and, indeed, anything else that it was not convenient to hold in the hand or wear during the service. This pew was much more comfortable than the ordinary "long box," as the Smith called it, and was well suited for the delightful *tête-à-tête* which the women folk usually indulged in before sermon, especially when the colloquy was conducted by more than two. Mrs. Elderson sat well up in the corner, while Mrs. M'Ilwham sat close on the one side, and Martha Deans on the other, so that the three heads, with their large bonnets, were brought into very convenient proximity for a *sotto voce* gossip.

"Nae doot, he'll tell us a' aboot it," said Mrs. M'Ilwham, in a whisper, shaking her head seriously; "he was wi' him tae the verra last, ye ken, Mrs. Elderson."

"And they say he de'et happy," said Martha Deans.

"I dinna think Maister Clydesdale is the man to allow such a precious opportunity to pass without trying to bring the thing hame to the hearts and consciences o' his ain hearers," said Mrs. Elderson; "and for the sake o' the young and rising generation, Mrs. M'Ilwham, I hope he winna neglec' such an important duty."

"I hope no—I hope no," Mrs. M'Ilwham said, with much gravity.

"Eh, me!" continued Mrs. Elderson reflectively, "we didna jalouse, Martha, when you and me were at M'Clymont's schule thegither that this was to be the end o' Marian Rodger and her family; but truly the ways o' transgressors are hard."

"Clean cut aff!" said Martha, much moved by the painful recollection. "Did ye hear wha the farm fa's tae?"

"They say Davie Rodger had a far-oot relation in Canada," said Mrs. M'Ilwham; "but that's some years sin'; and it's hard

to tell if he may still be in life. Puir Davie! he didna think he was toiling sae sair for a friend he never saw."

"It's the auld story o' ill-gotten gear," said Mrs. Elderson. "If Davie Rodger had stappit a wee seldomer roun' his fields on the Sabbath, and a wee oftener to the kirk, things wad have been different the day. Wha's that i' the precentor's box?"

"Ye are blest wi' guid een," said Mrs. M'Ilwham, putting on her glasses. "Eh! that's that M'Ilree lad; he has been serving his time at the shoon wi' Willie Baird. I suppose he'll be singing for M'Whannel the day."

"What's wrang wi' M'Whannel?" inquired Martha Deans.

"Ye ken he was 'best man' at Miss Lee's marriage, and I reckon he maun come oot wi' them to the 'kirkin.'"

"Oh, I see."

"And I suppose Miss Mackenzie was 'best maid,'" said Mrs. Elderson.

Mrs. M'Ilwham closed her lips tightly and nodded her head significantly, as much as if she had said, "Ay, and it was a gey daft-lookin' thing."

At this moment the bridal procession marched down the aisle to Miss Mackenzie's pew. For the time, every voice in the church was hushed, and all eyes were turned on the bridal party. M'Whannel led the way, and Miss Mackenzie brought up the rear. In a short time, however, the eyes had made work for the lips, and the whispering began brisker than ever. The bride and bridegroom were all that young and beautiful wife and happy husband could be. Nelly—begging Mrs. Sheffeld's pardon—looked lovely under her white veil, her snowy feather, and orange blossoms. The large dark eyes had lost their restlessness, and seemed love-filled, satis-

fied and meditative, as if they were inwardly looking at that dear picture which was the subject of the satisfaction and the joy. There must have been a flush on that pretty, swarthy little face—at least the white veil was stained with delicate crimson immediately over each cheek. Ah! it was only the happy consciousness that the man she loved best of all the world was at her side as her husband, and that the fact was now seen by many eyes, and commented on by numerous lips. Nelly's personal appearance was too familiar to call for close scrutiny. The general verdict was that she was a "bonny bride," though some envious tongues added that her "beauty was helped by the gran' claes," and then all eyes were turned upon her husband, whose unfamiliar presence called for a closer criticism. Edward looked very self-possessed and manly that day. A man who is conscious of a good figure,

a blameless life, and an intelligence superior to that of those by whom he is scrutinised, can afford to do so. He was very attentive in showing his wife into the seat, and in the performance of various small acts—such as relieving her of her umbrella and her plaid, as well as putting a large Bible on the bookboard before her, and bestowing on her a charming smile, which was doubtless a very nice way of saying, "Can I do anything else for you?"—all—looked at in the abstract—mere trifles in their way, and considered beneath the manhood of some men, but trifles which, when multiplied and added together, make up the grand sum-total of a woman's happiness. Having discharged these small duties, he now set himself up, with a clear conscience, for the inevitable inspection.

"He's a weel-faured wight," said Mrs. M'Ilwham.

"He is that," remarked Martha Deans.

Mrs. Elderson simply nodded her head in approval of the criticism, which was saying a great deal, considering, as she had often expressed it, "that the lads now were mere callants compared wi' the buirdly men o' her time." The young ladies present, however, only being able to make contemporaneous comparisons, were more liberal in their admiration. Bailie Wilson's two daughters, who were both wearing out of date for want of suitable marriageable society, did not hear a word of the sermon that day through looking at the finely-formed face, the lovely sparkling black eyes, and the rich long curly hair; and young Miss M'Ilwham, on her way home, foolishly gave utterance before her mother to the unbecoming belief that "There wasna a beard like yon in a' the parish."

But what shall we say about our old friends Miss Mackenzie and Mr. M'Whannel? Why, simply that they both seemed ten

years younger than they really were, and that the former looked as if the eyes of the congregation, M'Whannel's included, were upon her during the whole of the service.

Meantime, the male portion of the congregation had gathered outside talking in little knots over the graves, each coterie having its own round of conversation, embracing an infinite variety of subjects, from the condition of the weather as affecting the young wheat crop, down to the scarcity of fodder and the low price paid for all dairy produce in consequence of the large importation of Irish stuffs into the market. Under the shelter of the session-house, Willie Mackinnon and Robin King, a couple of keen farmers, were engaged in doing something very like that for which the Master of the Church, eighteen hundred years ago, whipped the mercenary spirits out of the Temple.

"Ye didna sell the broon meer, Robin?"

said Mackinnon, with a feeling of thankfulness that his friend, who had been at the Fair on the previous Friday for the purpose of selling his mare, had not done so.

"Horses werena just gaun sae brisk as I hae seen," said Robin; "but a guid beast like her 'll keep."

"Na, she's no a bad beast; if it was Monday I wad be inclined to mak' ye an offer mysel'. What were ye seekin' for her?"

"Forty pound."

"That's a big price."

"No for a beast like yon," replied Robin, with the air of a man who has got an article that he can speak confidently about; "but, supposing it was Monday, what wad ye be inclined to gie?"

"Weel, aff hand, I wad say thirty-five pound."

"She's worth a hantle mair money," said Robin, shaking his head and closing his

lips firmly, and thrusting his hands to the bottom of his breeches pockets. "A hantle mair, Mackinnon ; she's as guid a draught horse as is i' the parish; and as for trotting, I'll trot her again' ony beast between here and Lanark Toon. Ye'll no rue gieing the ither five pound."

"Na, Robin, I ken what she can dae, but I winna gie another groat," said Mackinnon decidedly, observing that firmness was all that was now necessary to conclude the purchase. "Say the word, and I'll come owre the morn."

"Mak' it thirty-seeven pound ten."

"Na ; I hae offered the price o' the horse—tak' it or want it."

"Lord, Mackinnon, I fear we're forgetting this is the Sabbath-day," said Robin, with a faint smile and a sudden twist of the shoulders. "Hooever, come owre the morn ; we'll hae a dram at ony rate, and for that matter, ye may fetch the siller i' yer pouch."

By this time the bell had stopped; Mr. Clydesdale was in the pulpit reading the customary instalment of the morning psalm; the little knots throughout the churchyard were beginning to dissolve, and for five minutes there was a confused noise of heavy feet in the aisles as well as on the wooden flooring of the gallery, which was not over when Daniel M'Ilree had done singing the four verses, and the minister stood up, reverently, and, with clasped hands, asked them to join with him in prayer.

The service that day was plain and solemn, as usual—a good substantial sermon reasoned out under four heads, and applied at great length and with much earnestness. A long, pleading prayer, four verses more of a psalm, and the benediction, composed the Sabbath morning meal which the Good Shepherd of the parish had that day set before his flock to assuage

their spiritual wants. Yet there were appetites there which, when the feast was over, grumbled that they had not had enough—not, indeed, because there was any lack of wholesome food, but because the good man had not spiced the sacred dish sufficiently well to tickle an expectantly morbid palate.

"Did ye ever ken the like o't?" said Mrs. Elderson, as she adjusted the brown boa about her neck with some little show of temper.

"It's a sad miss," said Martha Deans, shaking her head ominously.

"Oh! a complete failure," said Mrs. M'Ilwham, speaking as gently as she could, for she knew Mrs. Clydesdale had not yet left her seat.

"Just to think there are sae mony young folk here," resumed Mrs. Elderson, "wha need to be cautioned again' ill habits and again' the beginnings o' godless ways, and

him to neglect this precious opportunity o' telling them about the end o' that wicked man——"

"Come on, Mother, the folk are maist a' oot the kirk," said the Smith, interrupting the conversation. "Guid day wi' ye, Mrs. M'Ilwham."

"Guid day, Thamas. I hope ye're a' ordinar weel."

"Thank ye, we're aye moving. I was vext to hear there was anither fa' i' th' butter; that'll tell sair again' ye wi' such a heavy dairy stock. Janet was pitying ye when she heard it."

"Ay, ay," said Mrs. M'Ilwham, "it's pu'ing us sairly doon, and the kye are sellin' for next tae naething; I declare it puts a body tae their wits' en' tae ken what tae dae; but they tell me it's thae Eerish farmers that's fillin' the market, because they canna get it selt at hame."

"Very like," said Thomas, "very like,

they dinna eat muckle owre there that they can sell. Mother, take Mrs. M'Ilwham's airm and bring her doon wi' ye ; she maun hae a bite o' something atween sermons."

Mrs. Elderson put her arm in Mrs. M'Ilwham's, and the two old ladies marched slowly off together, much to the comfort of the two lads, who were beginning to fear the searching cross-examination regarding the heads and particulars of the discourse on the way home.

"Whare is yer dochter, M'Ilwham?" said the Smith, as he and the farmer marched out of the gate together; "will she no come wi' us?"

"Oh, never heed her; she gangs tae the teachers' meetin' i' the vestry; it's a fine class that for young folk."

"So it is; oor Jeames gangs there tae. It's a great help tae them in breaking the lesson among the weans in the afternoon. Did ye hear hoo the folk at the Mill were the day?"

"I lookit in this morning; the auld man's no getting roun' sae fast, but the dochter is looking maist as weel as ever. She was very much struck when she heard o' Widow Wilson's death. I just happened to mention that the Doctor had now undertaken the entire cost of boarding and schuling the weans, and that he had sent Johnny tae the College."

"Had she no heard o' the death before?"

"No; but she seemed satisfied when she kent that the Doctor had agreed to look after the bairns."

"Nae doubt," said the Smith. "They were very kind to Mrs. Wilson at the Mill before they got into trouble. By-the-by, hae ye seen the Minister since Wednesday?"

"No, no to speak to."

"He is anxious to find Hobbs."

"Rodger's frien'?"

"Yes."

"I thocht he was in prison."

"So he was, but he got oot that day o' the execution, and hasna been seen since. I believe Rodger left an important letter wi' the Minister for him."

"A letter!"

"Ay, there's some mystery about it; but the Minister is doing a' he can to find him out."

"Ay, ay."

"Yes. So if ye hear onything aboot him ye might let Mr. Clydesdale ken."

"What's wrang, Mither? Can ye no open the yett?"

"Tuts, it has been aff the hinges for the last week," said Mrs. Elderson, sharply. "Ye'll mend a' body's yetts but yer ain, Thamas."

"Wait and I'll help ye," said the Smith with a benevolent smile. "Step ben, Mrs. M'Ilwham. Here, Jeanie, tak' the wean till yer mither gets us something to eat."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISSING LINK.

Herbert Rodger's later confession had imposed a duty on Mr. Clydesdale, the performance of which was more arduous than either he or the prisoner had expected. Herbert disclosed the fact that he had courted the Miller's daughter, in the first instance, purely for the sake of a fortune, of which in course of time she would be the possessor, but that latterly his heart had been drawn out to her in feelings of the truest affection. Regarding the amount and source of this fortune he could say nothing without injuring the interests of

others whom in this special matter he was bound under solemn covenant to protect. This confession served to open to the Clergyman's eye new depths of depravity in this erring heart for which he was not prepared; but it entailed no burden upon him further than the burden of secrecy, until the natural evolution of events should divulge the truth, and relieve him of his promise. This private confession, however, embraced another mystery, more subtle and in some respects more important still—the mystery of a great wrong, which it was now his duty to evolve, and which it was incumbent upon him also, so far as lay in his power, to repair. The first step in the performance of this duty was to find Hobbs. But this proved to be a more difficult matter than was at first anticipated, for Hobbs had disappeared without leaving the slightest trace behind him as to whither he had gone. Under

these circumstances a new actor was at once called upon the stage, in the person of Mr. Sheffeld, whose co-operation and support it was most essential to secure. Sheffeld had had frequent meetings and conversations with Mr. Clydesdale during the past few weeks; but their efforts, so far as the discovery of Hobbs was concerned, had as yet resulted in failure. They had several times been summoned to different police-stations throughout their own and the neighbouring counties to see parties who, to some extent, answered the description given; but it was only to find a fresh disappointment, and to discover that the person they sought was still mysteriously out of the way.

"What if it should all be a wild-goose chase?" said Sheffeld one evening after returning from one of these fruitless visits.

"In what respect?" inquired the Clergyman.

"Is it not possible that the whole thing may have been a fancy or a dream? His mind may have given way under the severe pressure of his position."

The Clergyman shook his head. "There can be no doubt about it," he said. "He was perfectly sane, and spoke with composure, and I believe also with true repentance. He said it was the beginning of his career of crime, and the act which gave Hobbs the mastery over him. Besides, you know, all the circumstances of the case clearly point to the truth of the confession."

"Yes, that is the remarkable thing. He could not have known anything about me otherwise."

"Of course not. I remember that afternoon when you and he arrived together by the coach, he took tea with us, and in the course of conversation he mentioned that you had come down the whole way with

him from London. Of course he did not know your name; but I remember when I told him who you were he started suddenly, repeating the name after me, with visible signs of agitation."

"He did?"

"Yes."

"It was a most curious coincidence that ride down from London together."

"Most curious. It is strange you did not learn his name."

"Very strange. Of course if he had hinted who he was I should have known him at once from my wife's letters, as she often mentioned him in connection with her friend Miss Dawson."

"No doubt; but I think the most striking circumstance of all is that you should have been called to give evidence in his favour. It is one of the most wonderful incidents I ever knew. There is something really touching in it."

"Poor fellow! there is indeed."

"Does Mrs. Sheffeld know?" inquired the Clergyman, after a pause.

"No; I think I had better not inform her yet. At present it would be very painful to her."

"Perhaps it is wise not to do so, at least until we find Hobbs. If the thing be true, it must come out then."

"By the way, did you see the agents?"

"Yes. I saw Mr. Fleming yesterday, and had a long talk with him. He was rather stunned at the thought; but, of course, he says nothing can be done without evidence."

"Was he sceptical?"

"Yes, as all lawyers are, until they have decided proof. He was very friendly, however, and agreed to afford every assistance in his power. Of course, he says we must get Hobbs."

"Did he make any suggestions?"

"No; he thinks we are sure enough to find him."

"I fear it is not going to be such an easy task," Sheffeld said, shaking his head doubtfully. "Wasn't he at one time in business in London?"

"I have been told he was, at least Rodger said so to Mr. Dawson."

"He may have gone back there."

"It is quite possible, but I should think it would be more difficult to find him there."

"We might advertise in the *Times*."

"A good thought."

"If he is known there, he will be sure to have his attention drawn to it."

"Would you offer a reward?"

"No, it would be too like a police notice. I should say, by communicating with you he will hear of something to his advantage"

"Very good."

And so it was agreed to advertise in the *Times;* but while this advertisement brought several letters from London, stating that Hobbs was also wanted there, it had not the effect the advertisers desired.

Meantime the rumour had got abroad that Hobbs had been seen in the neighbourhood of Glenara. This fact was divulged at one of the evening meetings of the Bird-in-the-Hand Tavern. The subject of conversation happening to turn on recent events, the Beadle remarked that Hobbs had made speedy heels oot o' the country, but that the Minister and Maister Sheffeld had a rod in pickle for him if ever he should come back.

"Oot of the country!" cried the Beamer, frowning heavily at his friend's credulity; "the man's oot o' the country nane."

"Weel, Wilson, I hope ye're sure o' what ye say," said the Beadle; "it'll be guid news to the folk at the Manse."

"Ay, I'm perfect sure o' what I say, An'rew, unless I misdoot my ain een."

"Ye saw him?" cried the Beadle, starting to his feet.

"Yes; I saw him nae farrer gane than last nicht. If I had kent the Minister wantet him I micht ha' grippit him by the collar o' the coat, he passed sae near me."

"My certie, that'll be news."

And so it was news, when next morning before breakfast the Beadle carried it to the Manse. The Beamer was at once summoned, and put through a searching examination.

"I was stan'in," he said, "at the sheddings o' the Crawfoot Road, wi John Thamson, the weaver, no far frae his ain hoose, talkin' aboot the plan he has in his head for a new fleein' machine, when he gied past; an' I says to Thamson, says I, 'That's Hobbs.' 'Rodger's frien'?' says he; for he only kent him by hearsay.

'The very same,' says I; so, as it was gloamin', we gied oot to the middle o' the road an' looket after him as far as we could see him; but I think he must hae gone owre the stile at the Hoolet Plantin', for we lost sicht o' him there."

"The Hoolet Planting!" said the Clergyman; "that path leads over to the 'Braes,' does it not?"

"Ay, an' it's a near cut owre tae the auld road abune Berry Lodge, an' a common enough track tae the cottar hooses on Merkland Farm."

"You are quite sure about the face?"

"Ay, perfect sure aboot the face," said the Beamer, shaking his grey head with an air which showed that there was not the slightest possibility of his being mistaken. "A man that has seen yon nose ance is no likely tae forget it in a hurry. I said tae my frien' at the time, says I, 'Thamson, that's a nose that neither you nor me could

afford; for, though we work tae keep up noses like that, we were born wi' the grun'-stane at our faces, an' tae a diet that can barely keep up the necessary heat aboot our hairts.' Na, na, sir, for though he was a trifle shabbier put on than I hae seen him, there could be nae mistake aboot the face."

That night the Clergyman rode out to Berry Lodge to communicate the news and to ascertain what course to adopt.

Mr. Sheffeld was not at home when he arrived, but his wife expected him every minute.

"He is just over," she said, "giving instructions about repairing some of the houses at Merkland Farm."

"What!" said the Clergyman, with some surprise, "has he purchased the farm?"

"Oh yes; have you not seen him since?"

"No; he told me it was likely to be in

the market soon ; but I don't think he had any thought of buying it then."

"Very likely not ; but I believe he got a bargain of it, and he considered it would be a good investment."

"He does not mean to work the farm himself ?"

"No ; he will continue to let it just as at present. I believe the farm and the cottar houses will bring a fair interest. Then he will have all the shooting and the fishing, which is a great matter with him. Seeing that it marches with our present ground, he thought it was a pity to let the chance slip."

"Certainly. I am very glad to hear it. Doesn't it march with Blair Farm on the other side ?"

"Yes, I believe it does. By the way, that puts me in mind that I owe Mrs. Clydesdale my warmest thanks for recommending Betty Brown to me. She is a capital servant."

"Ah, poor Betty! you will find her a little talkative, doubtless, but I think she is very faithful."

"Very faithful, indeed; but here is my husband," she said, rising to open the door as she heard his footstep. "Mr. Clydesdale has been waiting for you, dear."

Mr. Sheffeld led the way into the little back sitting-room which he had fitted up as an office for his own private use.

"So you have bought Merkland Farm," said the Clergyman, seating himself beside the large cheery fire.

"Yes; did my wife tell you?"

"I made bold to inquire about the matter, when she told me where you were."

"What do you think of it?"

"I believe it was a wise step."

"Ah, well, what do you think I heard just now?"

"I can't tell."

"That the place is haunted by a ghost!"

"A ghost!" cried the Clergyman, laughing. "That, I should say, is more than you bargained for."

"Rather," said Sheffeld, joining in the laugh.

"But the thing has a serious aspect; the cottars are nearly frightened to death."

"What is it like?"

"Oh, the common orthodox ghost—all white, you know, and the rest of it. I believe it keeps by the ruins and the wood."

"I fear it is some trick. Are you sure it is not one of Mr. Westfield's white sheep?"

"I hope it is."

"How long has it been going about?"

"For a week, less or more, it has appeared to about a dozen people altogether."

"Always at the same place?"

"Oh, at various places—it rambles a good deal. But the people are so much

afraid that they will not stir over their doors after nightfall."

"It is no doubt a very nice hoax. Was there any competition for the farm?"

"I understand an Edinburgh farmer was after it, but I really don't think he would condescend to any such trickery."

"Perhaps not; but you must track it up and re-establish confidence, or your interests will suffer. I have also news for you. Hobbs was seen last night."

"Hobbs?" cried Sheffeld, starting to his feet. "Where?"

The Clergyman then explained when and by whom he had been seen.

"But do you think there is no mistake?" Sheffeld inquired. "A case of mistaken identity, perhaps."

"No; I firmly believe it was he. Wilson gave a most lucid and characteristic description of him, which, I think, leaves little room for doubt. He cannot be more

than forty miles from here. If he had been to any of the coach offices he would have been detained."

"That is true," said Sheffeld, meditatively. "In all likelihood he is still in the parish."

"Do you know if he has any friends in this neighbourhood?"

"That is important," said Sheffeld, touching the bell. "Perhaps Betty Brown can inform us."

"You remember Hobbs, who used to stay with your late master at Blair Farm?" inquired Mr. Clydesdale.

"Owre weel, sir," replied Betty, her fingers instinctively feeling for the bottom hem of her apron; "but I wish I had never kent him, nor the maister either, for if I had never seen them I wadna have had such a sair memory the day."

"I suppose you have never seen him since he got out of prison?"

"No, sir; an' I hope and pray I may never see his face again, for there never was a day's luck aboot the hoose after he cam' t'it."

"Had he any friends coming about the farm after him?"

"Nane but shirra offishers, sir, that ever I see'd," replied Betty with some emphasis.

"But had he no associates?"

"No. Weel, noo when ye name it," she said thoughtfully, "there was a drunken schulemaster he used to tak' up wi'. They were fowls o' a feather, ye ken," Betty said, deferentially. "They were weel met, for they could baith tak' a guid dram."

"Does he live in the neighbourhood?" inquired Sheffeld.

"Ay, just aboot twa miles owre the braes. He teaches the Lime Pit Schule. He's weel kent as Major Cairns."

"Ah, Major Cairns," the Clergyman said.

"I know him very well. Do you think that a likely place for him to go if he should ever come to the district again?"

"I wad think it was—at least I dinna ken ony place else where he wad be welcome."

"That is a most likely clue," said the Clergyman, when they were alone. "The road through the Hoolet Planting would be the most direct way to the Major's house, and it was just at that point Wilson lost sight of him."

So they agreed to ride over together, on the following morning after breakfast, to see Major Cairns.

CHAPTER VII.

BERRY LODGE.

It was a beautiful March morning. The dull, frosty haze, which earlier in the day lay close to the river, and enveloped the Castle and the Priory Wood, had now disappeared; the sun began to loosen the thin rime of ice on the margin of the pools, and dissolve the white beads of hoar-frost which bespangled the Castle lawns. This, in fact, was the "first good day" of the season, and Mrs. Sheffeld, according to promise, had driven over to the Mill, for the purpose of taking Annie to Berry Lodge to spend the day. Annie

was not yet quite strong, though there were traces of returning bloom on her face; and if the eye lacked something of its former brightness and buoyancy, it was a face which betokened a wider human sympathy, and possessed a richer and fuller beauty. Her figure was more slender and her step less brisk, but there was now more grace and a sober womanliness in her manner. She had not yet been much out of doors. She had on three different occasions been allowed to take a little walk in the garden when the weather was fine, resting when she felt weary in the laurel arbour. On two of these occasions, however, the doctor had been with her, so that the exercise might not be overdone. But as she grew stronger a more extended license was allowed. She soon made frequent short pilgrimages into the Priory Wood, and ventured once as far as the Priory itself.

Mrs. Sheffeld had pled hard with the Doctor for liberty to take his patient out of the Lodge to spend the day, and he consented, on condition that she be brought back to the Mill sufficiently early to avoid exposure to the night air.

"There is not the least danger of her getting cold," Mrs. Sheffeld said, as the anxious mother tucked in the rug about her daughter's feet; "we have another fine hap here. See, Wishart will put it on for us. Yes, that is better. Now, Annie dear, are you not comfortable?"

"Very comfortable, thank you."

"You need not be afraid to trust her with me, Mrs. Dawson, I will take very good care of her indeed."

"I am sure you will," said Mrs. Dawson, "and I think the drive on a beautiful day like this will do her good. You will not stay late, Annie dear."

And so thus charged they drove off, and the mother stood at the door watching the two beautiful heads sweeping along above the hedges in the lane; while inside, notwithstanding the weakness of his leg, Philip, balancing himself on his staff, stood up looking after them till they reached the top of the brae, and thanked God that everything had turned out so well.

It was the first time Annie had been in the village since her illness, and as they drove along the street past the familiar doors she received many kindly salutations and numerous indications of the deepest respect and sympathy.

"Did you see Dr. Calder raise his hat to you?" Mrs. Sheffeld inquired.

"Yes," said Annie, with a more beautiful shade of crimson in her face, "I bowed to him. The Doctor has been very kind to us. I don't know how we shall ever repay him."

"And is it not gratifying to observe the people all so glad to see you again? See, the Smith is touching his cap."

"Yes; it is true what my father says about him. Mr. Elderson has a hard hand but a tender heart. It does one good to see so much kindness."

And so they passed out of the village down through the Cantyre avenues, where the dissolved hoar-frost was dripping from the overhanging branches of the trees. The sunshine was lying warm on the brown fields and amongst the young wheat; the air was fresh and invigorating. The hills at the head of the valley were clearly defined against a blue sky, dappled slightly with small fleecy clouds, while here and there, on the bosom of the hills, a wet rock glittered in the intense light, like a huge Koh-i-noor. Annie was charmed as they drove up the long avenue leading to Berry Lodge.

"This is the place we used to look at and admire," said Annie; "and now it is all your own."

"Yes, Annie, dear, it is very strange. I never expected this would be my home; but you will come out often and stay with me when you are well. It will be so pleasant for us both to wander over the green lawns and down by the linn and the pools where Edward goes to fish; it will be so like the old time, you know."

Annie's eyes filled with tears, but she did not reply. Mrs. Sheffeld had talked with much caution during the journey, lest she should give her friend pain by any unguarded reference to the past; but now the tears came, and feeling the impotence of words, she kissed her with sisterly tenderness and affection. So they drove up to the door of the quaint old house, and went in, without speaking a word.

"Now, Annie, dear, in the name of my

husband and myself, you are welcome to Berry Lodge," said Mrs. Sheffeld, seizing Annie's hand warmly as they came down to the front parlour after divesting themselves of their travelling garments.

Annie returned ready thanks, and offered her heartiest congratulations.

"And I hope to come often to see you when the summer weather comes round, and inspect your fine lawns and the flowers in the avenue that used to be so beautiful."

"Of course you will, and stay with us for a long time. Edward will be so proud of you, because he knows all about how we loved each other, and how kind you were to me when I was ill. But come, dinner will not be ready for some time yet; I must show you my marriage presents—this will not weary you?"

"Weary me!" said Annie; "who could ever weary with looking at marriage

presents?" So the treasuries were opened, and out of them were brought gifts, small and great, each one now possessed of a value which could not well find its equivalent in gold.

After dinner they strolled out into the warm sunshine, through the ancient high-walled garden, over the green lawn where the red-lipped daisies were just beginning to open; then, resting for a while on the summer-seat at the entrance to the wood, they passed down the narrow path leading through groves of snowdrops and banks of crocuses to the picturesque linn, with its pools and waterfalls. They returned by the cottar houses on Merkland Farm, and found tea awaiting them.

"Do promise to come out and stay a week with us so soon as the good weather sets in," said Mrs. Sheffeld, pressing Annie's hand affectionately on leaving.

"I fear father will not be sufficiently

well for that," Annie said regretfully. "The Doctor says another attack may take all the power from the side, and you know mother has had so much to do of late."

"To be sure, to be sure; but I sincerely hope it may not be so ill as to keep you from coming. It will be so very pleasant, you know; we could have the Doctor, and Mr. M'Whannel, and my aunt for part of the time——"

"Yes; it would be very nice," said Annie. "I should like it very much, and I hope it may not be so ill with my father as the Doctor fears."

"I hope not."

They parted, and Annie, as was promised, got back to the Mill in daylight, feeling invigorated and cheered by her brief excursion.

When Mr. Sheffeld returned that evening he found his wife in an unusual state of excitement.

"Oh, Edward, Betty Brown has been telling me such a strange thing," she said. "Oh, he must have been such a wicked, wicked person."

"Who, dear? What is it?"

"Herbert Rodger. You don't know about it, Edward, but my aunt remembers it all quite well. He had once a baby brother, who went amissing when a mere child."

"Yes; I have heard something of it. What about it?"

"She says Herbert engaged Hobbs to steal him away. Just think of stealing away a dear little baby of ten months, Edward. Oh, it was so heartless, so cruel; the poor child must have died."

"But, dear," said her husband, "you should not believe these stories. It is only the natural result of what has happened that people should talk. If she knew anything about this matter, I should

say she would have spoken earlier of it."

"But there is no doubt about it, Edward. She has a letter written by Hobbs which shows that he must have taken away the child."

"By Hobbs."

"Yes, I saw it myself; and she wants to see what you would advise her to do with it."

"When did she get it?"

"Oh, it is an old letter, written at the time the baby was taken away. She was over at Blair Farm yesterday for some clothes she had left there, and found it, I believe, on the library floor, amongst some other papers that had been turned out of Rodger's desk by the Fiscal."

"Well, I'll take a look at it after tea. Was Miss Dawson with you to-day?"

"Yes."

"What a beautiful day."

"We had a long stroll round by the wood and the linn, and home by Merkland Farm. She thought the linn was such a romantic place."

"Then she is pleased with your new home?"

"Oh, very much."

"Calder says he would like her to get a change of situation for a little, and the benefit of cheerful society. He says her mind must be taken away from old associations for a time, until she gets thoroughly strong. I told him he should try and induce the old people to send her out here for some time, and he has promised to do so. The fact is, I believe, the Doctor is in love."

"With Annie?" cried Mrs. Sheffeld, laughing.

"Yes; I accused him of it, but he only smiled, and told me I had as much reason to think he had been in love with you."

"Poor Annie!" Mrs. Sheffeld said, tenderly; "the Doctor would make her a good husband, but I fear a love like hers once extinguished will not be easily kindled again."

When tea was over, Betty Brown was brought in.

"I understand you have a letter belonging to your late master which you wish to consult me about," remarked Sheffeld, when Betty had been seated.

"Eh, yes, sir; it has been an awfu' business frae beginnin' to end," Betty replied, handing the document to her master; "but they couldna prosper, neither o' them, for it wasna only takin' the wean, but it killed the faither, though I needna trouble you wi't, sir, for it was lang afore your time."

"Oh! I know the main facts of the case. I suppose you were with them when the child was taken away?" Sheffeld said, as he proceeded to open the letter.

"Yes, I gaed there at the May term, and the wean was lifted in July. It was a sair time that at the farm, for, though they searched every place and did a' they could, the infant was never heard o' again."

Sheffeld leant back in his chair and read the letter :—

"Brighton, 15th August, ——

"My dear Rodger,

"You will see from this hurried note that I have arrived here all safe. Your little friend was not so troublesome as I feared. I have some gipsy acquaintances near Dover, whom I expect to be able to get to take him in charge. Meantime I'll require some cash, which you will please send by return of post, as I must smooth matters over with his future guardians—for a child of his tender age will require some nursing yet, though by-and-by I believe they will be able to turn

him to some account. The old people will get over it, no doubt. Give my respects to all my College chums. Tell them I have gone to London to commence business on my own account. Don't forget the cash.

"Yours very faithfully,

"JOHN HOBBS."

"How did this letter come into your hands, Betty?" inquired Sheffeld.

"Eh! sir, it was lyin' on the floor o' the maister's room among some accounts and other papers wi' the writin' upmost, and when I saw Hobbs' name I thought I wad see what it was aboot."

"It is, doubtless, very important," said Mr. Sheffeld, "but I fear you were wrong in removing it. The property and papers are in the meantime in the hands of the agents of the family."

"Maybe I was wrang, sir, but I kent

the lawyers wadna understand a letter like that, and wad maybe destroy it, and the mystery would never be cleared up; and, as there seems to be nae heir for the farm but far-oot frien's, if Hobbs was got I thocht he'd be able to tell whether the wean was dead or alive, and I've been in sair distress at the thocht o't for the last twa days. Just think o' a man killin' his faither and mither and daein' awa' wi' an innocent wean a' for the sake o' siller!"

"Yes, Betty, if this be true he seems to have been a very deliberate fellow. Do you suppose he would put the child out of the way for the sake of the money?"

"I ken o' naething else, sir, for i' the College he got into ill habits that vext his faither unco sair, and it was said the auld man threatened to cut him oot o' his will a'thegether, no that I think he ever meant to dae that, but just as it might be to frighten him into a better way o' leevin'."

"Well, Betty, I think you had better leave the document with me," said her master. "I should like to show it to Mr. Clydesdale, and I shall get him to give it over to the agents who have charge of the estate; he will be better able to give the necessary explanation regarding it than I am. I think, from this letter, there can be little doubt that Herbert Rodger fee'd Hobbs to carry off the child, but in the meantime you had better keep the thing perfectly quiet. If anything comes of it you will doubtless hear by-and-by."

Mr. Sheffeld walked over to the window and drew the curtains. The full moon was shining beautifully over the lawn and on the neighbouring hills.

"Come, dear, put on your plaid and let us take a short stroll. I never saw the moon so lovely as it is to-night."

They went out together into the moon light, she leaning on his arm, down the

gravel walk, past the high wall of the orchard, and then sauntered leisurely over the little bridge leading to the lawn. It was a charming night; with but a few exceptions, the stars were all quenched in the stronger light of the moon. Behind, stood the large house, with its long shadows—the windows touched with a faint rose colour from the lights within.

"Are you happy, dear?"

"Yes, Edward; very, very happy."

She clung closely to him, and they walked slowly across the lawn. The valley with its black woods lay beneath them, and here and there the silver sparkle of the river was seen glancing up through the bare woods. To the left the dashing noise of the water falling over the linn came to the ear through the stillness of the night air. They wandered across the lawn, and returned by the carriage road.

"Listen," said Nelly, when they had

reached the garden wall. "Do you hear the village bell—one, two, three. It is nine o'clock, Edward. I never heard it so distinctly before."

"Nor I," said Edward, looking at his watch. "M'Whannel will soon be here."

The Schoolmaster had arranged to join his friend in a fishing excursion on the following day.

"You saw him this morning?"

"Yes; I told him I wished him to come out to-night, so as to have a clear day of it to-morrow. He promised to leave as soon as the meeting was over. But come, dear, we must go in; you are cold."

It was very late before M'Whannel came.

"You see I have been preparing for to-morrow," Edward said, laying down the book of flies which he had been examining. "The linn is in first-rate condition,

M'Whannel. I shall be able to judge of the quality of your Scotch fish to-morrow, I hope."

"I think you will consider them pretty good in the main," said M'Whannel; "if they are small, you will always find them sweet."

"Ha! ha! that is very good, dear, isn't it?" remarked Edward, casting a sly glance at his wife. "A very true saying, M'Whannel; one can't get everything, you know. Little of it and good, is my motto."

Nelly blushed and joined in the laugh.

"But how did you get past the ghost at this time of night?" continued the master of Berry Lodge, merrily.

"You didn't see anything, did you?"

"Yes, I did."

"What!"

"I saw Wishart."

"Oh, he is determined to get to the

bottom of the matter; he has been watching pretty closely for the last week, but he has not seen it yet."

"He seems a strong-nerved fellow. We walked past the Ruins together, but of course we saw nothing."

"The moonlight, I should say, is against it."

"But it is quite cloudy now."

"Dear me, so it is," Edward said, going to the window; "two hours ago we had the most delightful moonlight stroll on the lawn. See how the moon is wading."

While they talked they heard the sound of rapid footsteps on the gravel outside. Edward raised the window, and saw some one running under the shadow of the garden-wall towards the front door. In a moment Wishart came in all out of breath.

"Well, Wishart, what is wrong?"

"I've seen it, sir."

"The ghost!"

"Yes, it passed out by the front archway, and moved along near the wood, but disappeared behind the western wall. I thought you might like to satisfy yourself."

"Quite right, Wishart. I will go with you. Have you your gun?"

"Yes, sir; both barrels are loaded."

"But, Edward!" pleaded his wife.

"It is all right, dear; there is not the least danger; and then, you know, we must get this nuisance put down. Betty Brown will wait with you till we return. Come, M'Whannel, you will go with us."

M'Whannel was evidently not quite sure about it, but this remark helped his decision. In a few minutes Edward was ready. He went over to where his wife sat, and whispered a few words in her ear, and then they all left the house together.

The night was still very calm, but overhead thin vaporous clouds were driven

rapidly across the sky, obscuring the brightness of the moon.

"Now, Wishart, you will take the lead," said Sheffeld. "You have a firm hand: I will give you the first shot. Be sure you take good aim before firing, or the game is lost. I have only one shot in my gun, but I shall keep it for supreme need."

They kept close by the wall, and walked on in silence until they had passed the wood.

"You are sure it was not a sheep, Wishart?"

"Quite sure, sir. It was about the size of a man, but looked very white against the dark ground. Now, keep your eyes on the Ruins."

They had reached a point on the road where the Ruins could be distinctly seen, and all eyes were turned in that direction. They passed on slowly to the top of the brae, where the old and new roads join.

"What do you say to it now, Wishart?" asked Sheffeld. "Must we go back again?"

"Just rest a little; we are not seen here. I think I had better go down first by myself. You can watch from your hiding, and come to me if any help is needed."

"Very good."

Wishart set off with a slow heavy foot.

"He is a cool fellow, that," M'Whannel remarked.

"Very; he says if it'll not shoot he'll speak to it, though he has little faith in its supernatural origin."

"Does he not imagine it is Rodger?"

"He says if it is not human it must be Rodger."

"What is that?" M'Whannel started, for the silence was suddenly broken by a sound overhead. They both looked up. There are moments when even the vibration of a pendulum becomes an unbearable

noise; and this was only the croaking of a disturbed crow in the branches overhead. Edward, being the calmer of the two, was the first to arrive at a true definition of the sound. There was a long pause. Wishart had now disappeared, and the fall of his footsteps was gradually becoming less distinct; by-and-by the sound died away in the distance, and there was intense stillness. In a short time Wishart's footsteps were again heard, and they knew he was returning.

"By Jove! yonder it is," cried Sheffeld, instinctively setting his gun at full cock.

"Y-e-s," said M'Whannel, with an involuntary shudder, seizing Sheffeld by the arm. "See, it is moving off from the Ruins."

"Yes; listen, Wishart is running. Look, he is in the park. He is making hard for the Ruins."

The apparition was now about half-way

between the ruins and the wood. Then it stood still.

"It is moving back to the Ruins," said M'Whannel.

"Yes; but he will intercept it."

The figure again halted. There was a flash, followed by a sharp crack, which, notwithstanding the whiteness behind it, was distinctly seen.

"Wishart is shot!" cried Sheffeld, excitedly.

No! he had only dropped on his knee to take aim, and next instant the ghost fell. When Sheffeld and M'Whannel came up, Wishart had the white covering removed, and was bending over the prostrate figure of—John Hobbs!

CHAPTER VIII.

A MYSTERY SOLVED.

Hobbs having been removed to Berry Lodge, Wishart was despatched for the Doctor, while Sheffeld and M'Whannel endeavoured to stop the blood which was flowing freely from the wounded man's side.

"Have you much pain?" inquired M'Whannel, as he pressed a large piece of cotton cloth, many times folded, to the wound.

"No; but raise my head a little, I am very faint."

"Is that easier?"

"Yes."

"It was so foolish of you to expose yourself to this danger," said Sheffeld, administering a little brandy. "You must have known that a man who acts as you have done becomes a legitimate target for any one who has courage enough to draw a trigger."

Hobbs did not reply. He was either unable or did not care to speak.

"You must have had some motive for what you did," resumed Sheffeld, after a pause. "Had you any design on the property?"

"No."

"Did you not wish to injure its value?"

"No."

"What then?"

"I am not free to tell."

"Not free to tell? Don't you know you are in my power?"

"Yes," said Hobbs, faintly and with apparent pain; "but—there are others."

"Others for whom you acted as agent?"

"Yes—but—but do not ask me to tell you more—I—I am—too——" He tried to gasp out the sentence, but failed in the attempt.

"A little water, M'Whannel—quick, I think it is only a faint." Sheffeld dipped his pocket handkerchief in the water and sponged the face and brow of the wounded man. "I did not think he was so weak—mix a spoonful of brandy and water."

For a few minutes they stood over him in great suspense. The mysteries which he only had the power to solve seemed sealed for ever.

"I fear Wishart's aim was too sure," remarked M'Whannel.

"I wish the Doctor would come. I hope he may not go in our hands; see, he is rallying."

Hobbs gave a faint sigh and opened his eyes.

"Take a little of this," Sheffeld said, putting the brandy and water to his lips. "It will keep up your strength till the Doctor arrives. I fear you have been badly hurt."

"I am weak," said Hobbs, in a whisper, "very weak."

"It is a long way from here to the village," Sheffeld remarked by-and-by as he looked at his watch; "the Doctor cannot reach us for some time yet. In case you should get worse before he comes, have you anything to say?"

"I think not."

"Nothing you would like to get off your mind?"

After a long pause—looking earnestly in Sheffeld's face, "No, nothing but what might as well remain unsaid."

Hobbs breathed heavily, and they sat in

silence looking in his face. During this pause the Doctor arrived, and proceeded to examine and dress the wound. When he had finished, Sheffeld met him in the lobby with an inquiring look.

"He has had a narrow escape, but it is not fatal."

"Not, at least, so far as the wound is concerned; he is, however, very weak from loss of blood. I have extracted the bullet, and, unless inflammation ensue, I see no reason to apprehend a fatal result. What took the fellow's head?"

"I cannot tell; there is some mystery about it."

"He seems perfectly sane."

"It is not insanity. In fact, there is some plot in which there are others involved as well as himself."

"Did he say so?"

"Yes, he admitted as much, but indicated that he was only the agent."

"Some conspiracy to blow up Berry Lodge, Sheffeld," said the Doctor humorously. "Another gunpowder plot!"

"Upon my word I feel rather curious about it."

"Well, seriously, I don't wonder at it. Did he refuse to tell you the object?"

"Yes; or rather he was about to do so when he fainted, and I did not resume the conversation."

"Ah! well, if he recover, as I expect he will, we shall get it all from him yet. I suppose you have not informed the police?"

"No."

"You must do so as early as possible; get them to search the Ruins and the Wood. Something may come out of their investigation."

As Dr. Calder predicted, the injury sustained by Hobbs was not of a mortal character. He was very weak, but in the

course of a few days the dangerous symptoms had so completely disappeared that the Doctor considered there would be no risk in making an effort to clear up the mystery with which Hobbs' name was associated. In the interim, a discovery had been made by the police at the Ruins which shed some light on the mysterious conduct of the wounded man. In the centre of the inner court, behind the western wall, the searchers observed a small round stone which presented the appearance of having been recently removed. On endeavouring to lift this stone they found that it was held in its place by a large weight suspended at the end of a chain. Having cut the chain, they removed the stone. The huge subterranean chambers, into which this was an opening, had a suspicious smell of the smoke of charred wood, and inside were found numerous instruments connected with the

process of illicit distillation, a practice at that time very extensively carried on in Scotland. Several outlets were found to these chambers in the adjoining wood, on the margin of the old road, by which the manufactured spirit could easily be removed to market; but the fires were out, and the place was deserted. On further investigation, it was ascertained that several strangers had been seen recently, skulking about the neighbourhood, by the tenants on Merkland Farm, and it was remembered that Dr. Calder and Wishart had met three or four strange men hurrying towards Glenara that morning on which Hobbs was shot. This fact gave an apparent reasonableness to the supposed spiritual manifestations of the past few weeks. Hobbs, however, would divulge nothing; they might punish him for the foolish part he had played—that he was quite prepared to bear; but he

would not tell the reason why he had played it.

On a clear, sharp morning, a week after the unfortunate occurrence at the Ruins, Mr. Clydesdale and Mr. Fleming drove up to Berry Lodge, and were shown into the library, where Mr. Sheffeld was waiting to receive them.

"So you have found the missing link in the evidence after all," said the Lawyer, when he was seated.

"It seems so," Sheffeld replied, "though I fear he will not say a word more than he can help."

"Does he still maintain silence regarding his connection with the smugglers?" inquired Mr. Clydesdale; "I have just been telling the story to Mr. Fleming."

"Oh, still as reticent as ever."

"That was a most curious performance of his," Mr. Fleming remarked. "I am quite at a loss to see how the interests of

these nefarious traders could be advanced by such means."

"If he had any connection with these men, it certainly has not turned out profitable for them," said Sheffeld. "Wishart's belief, however, is that they wished to frighten away the traffic from the old road, so that their business might be carried on with less risk."

"Ah! there may be something in that; but he will doubtless talk more freely by-and-by. Has he said nothing about the other matter?"

"Not a word."

"Did you refer to it?"

"No; I thought it had better be done advisedly. I remember, however, the morning of the accident, before the Doctor came, I feared he was dying, and asked him if he had anything he would like to get off his mind, and he replied with

some hesitation, that there was nothing but what had better remain unsaid."

"Oh, he did?"

"Yes, I thought there was some regard for my feelings in the tone of the reply."

"Ah, doubtless," said the Lawyer, laughing, "and his own also. I only hope the evidence we get from him may be sufficiently explicit; if you are ready, we had better see him at once."

Hobbs was lying with his back to the door when they entered his bedroom, but he turned suddenly as the footsteps approached, and eagerly scanned his visitors.

"You need not be alarmed," said Sheffeld; "Mr. Clydesdale and Mr. Fleming have only come to have a little talk with you. I suppose you are somewhat better to-day?"

Hobbs replied in a half-repressed groan, which was meant to be an answer in the affirmative.

"I suppose you will remember me?" Mr. Fleming asked blandly, proceeding to take off his gloves as he spoke.

"Yes, sir, I remember you."

"And you know Mr. Clydesdale also?"

"Yes, I have met Mr. Clydesdale."

"Well, we have been anxious to find you for some time past, although I am exceedingly sorry that our meeting has been brought about in such an unfortunate manner. But, I presume, you had a more important object in view than simply that of endeavouring to terrify the poor people about here?"

Hobbs did not reply.

"A man of your education would never think of doing such a thing unless it were to serve some important aim. I presume you have heard that the smugglers have been found out?"

"I did hear of the discovery of some

smuggling operations in the neighbourhodd," said Hobbs, cautiously.

"Yes. Now, tell us frankly, were you in league with these men?"

"I have already declined to answer questions on this subject," said Hobbs, impatiently.

"Ah, yes, but you have been guilty of a criminal offence, and if you inform on them you know you may save yourself."

"You are taking too much for granted, sir," said Hobbs, "when you speak as if I had admitted a connection with these men. If the part I have acted be a criminal one, as you say it is, then I am responsible for it, and must bear the punishment."

"Well, well, I shall not press this matter," said the Lawyer, endeavouring to look as comfortable as possible over his disappointment. "This is simply a question by the way, arising out of the

turn of the conversation. The real object of our visit has reference to quite a different matter." The Lawyer paused to give a professional cough, and Hobbs looked eager to know the purport of the new revelation.

"I presume you have heard that Rodger made a full confession before he died?"

"Yes; I believe he admitted having poisoned his mother," said Hobbs, trying to appear unconcerned.

"Ah! he did; but there was more than that." The Lawyer indulged in another professional cough.

"More?" reiterated Hobbs, raising his head from the pillow and balancing the upper part of his body on his elbow.

"Yes; he had once a brother; a baby, you know."

"I believe he had."

"Very good; and he engaged you to steal him away."

"Me?"

"Yes; and you removed him to Brighton, as I see from a letter of yours written to Rodger after you had completed the journey."

Hobbs stared wildly at his interlocutor, but did not utter a word.

"Then you handed him over to a gang of gipsies. Then he was taken notice of by a gentleman in the eastern district of London, and educated. Then he entered the office of Ward and Co. in the Strand, where he afterwards became a partner, and now he turns up as Mr. Edward Sheffeld of Berry Lodge, Glenara. A most wonderful history, no doubt, but all the phases of which, of course, you know to be perfectly true."

Hobbs fell back on the pillow and breathed heavily, while the Lawyer kept his eyes steadily upon him and paused for a reply.

The Lawyer had *his* triumph now.

"Then what do you want?" asked Hobbs, huskily.

"Justice, simple justice," said Mr. Fleming, frankly. "We have no desire to be severe on you, for God knows the end of this unfortunate drama has been sad enough. Here is a letter which Rodger addressed to you, and put into Mr. Clydesdale's hands that morning of the execution; it will show you what he desired should be done. We all know the purport of it, but I shall take the liberty of reading it to you."

Mr. Fleming broke the seal, and read as follows:—

"The Tolbooth, Wednesday Morning.

"My dear Hobbs,

"I have not an hour to live, but I write you a line to say that I have made full confession of all my sins, and trusting to the atoning merit of my Saviour, I

shall die happy. I have told Mr. Clydesdale all about Mr. Sheffeld; he is the heir to Blair Farm, and it is my last earnest wish that you would aid in righting—so far as it can now be righted—this great wrong. The motive for the commission of the crime was, I admit, a most inadequate one, as I have lived to see; but justice must now be done, and it is my last desire that you should help in tracing the various steps in the evidence in order to prove that he is my brother.

"I have told all about my motives for desiring to marry Miss Dawson; but out of respect for W——'s position, I have not said anything about the will—that must be allowed to come out in its own time. The warders are waiting while I write, so I must close. I have only time to say that I forgive you for any share you have had in bringing me to my present position, and I hope you may find

pardon from God, and be led into a purer and better life. The only care I have on my mind now is, that my brother whom I have so cruelly wronged, may be put in possession of what is justly his own; and my last desire is, that you would help in bringing about an acknowledgment of his claim. The last moments have come, and I must now bid you a long farewell.

"Yours truly,

"HERBERT RODGER."

When the Lawyer had finished he handed the letter over to Hobbs, who perused it for some time in silence. Then, folding it slowly, he placed it beside him on the pillow.

"I suppose," said Hobbs, after a brief silence, "what you want me to do is to guide you through the successive stages of evidence?"

"Simply the first stages; the latter are clear enough. Are the people still alive to whom you gave the child—the gipsies, I mean?"

"Yes; at least the woman who nursed him. She has now a little hardware shop near Temple Bar."

"Her name?"

"Mrs. Jones."

"She kept the child till he was three years old?"

"Yes."

"Until Mr. Middlemas took him in charge?"

"Yes."

"Did she know of his success in life?"

"Perfectly."

"And watched him through the various stages?"

"Yes."

"You know Elizabeth Brown?"

"The Housekeeper at Blair Farm?"

"The same."

"I do."

"Was she serving at the farm when the child was taken away."

"I believe she was;—at least, she has told me so."

"Did you observe any peculiar mark on the child's arm?"

"No; I had no opportunity of ever seeing any such mark. Mrs. Jones will doubtless be able to speak to that."

"Ah, yes, of course."

Mr. Fleming wrote down all this evidence carefully.

"Well, I shall not trouble you further to-day," he said. "Meantime, I must communicate with Mrs. Jones; and when I get her reply I shall see you again."

CHAPTER IX.

A WRONG REDRESSED.

On the morning of the fourth day after Mr. Fleming's visit to Berry Lodge, Mr. Sheffeld went out to take a short walk before breakfast, and, with the instinct of a true fisher, wandered up to the linn to see the effect of the previous day's rain on the water. When he returned he found Betty Brown in a state of great perturbation of spirit. Hobbs had mysteriously disappeared during the night, and not the slightest trace of him could be found.

"I just missed him at eight o'clock," she said, "when I gaed in wi' the breakfast.

But I jaloused there was something wrang, for when I went to the back door it was only on the sneck, an' the hindmost thing I did last nicht was to put in the bar, but I had nae thought it wad be him, sir. Eh! an' he'll be sicna fricht wi' his bluidy claes!"

Betty and her master proceeded to search the house.

"Deed he winna gang far, sir," said Betty when, after completing the search inside, they discovered the trace of foot-marks in the fresh mould of the garden. "I am perfect sure he winna gang far, for the creatur could barely stan' on his ain feet, let abee rinnin' a race frae the grip o' justice."

Notwithstanding the perfect assurance of Betty Brown, Hobbs was not found dead by the wayside, nor could he be discovered by the most diligent and laborious search. From the nature of the communication,

however, which Mr. Fleming received from London, it was found that Hobbs' presence was not necessary to the establishment of Sheffeld's claim; so that in the process of time, and after a careful examination of evidence, it was admitted and ultimately confirmed. M'Whannel was the first to bring this information to Glenara, and Miss Mackenzie's were the ears into which it was first poured.

"Eh! but the works o' Providence are strange," said Miss Mackenzie that July afternoon on which the intelligence was conveyed to her. This remark was meant to apply, not specially to this new revelation, but to the whole case from beginning to end.

"Very," said M'Whannel, looking meditatively into a neat bouquet of cut flowers which graced the centre of the table.

"Wha telt ye?"

"I met Mr. Fleming on his way to Berry Lodge with the news."

"An' they hae managed it without Hobbs, after a'?"

"So it seems."

"Ay, ay."

Miss Mackenzie walked over to the window and rolled up the blind. The garden was in its prime of flower; the apple trees were well loaded, though the caterpillar had done serious damage to the smaller fruit. Jenny was standing in the middle of a plot of roses diffusing a beneficent spray of water from the rose of a large watering-can, which she swung vigorously about in all directions, in order to make up for the scarcity of natural moisture. For a moment Miss Mackenzie stood regarding this operation with painful interest; every swing of the tails of Jenny's gown was making sad havoc

amongst the full-blown flowers. In ordinary circumstances, Miss Mackenzie would have knocked fiercely on the window pane, following up this note of warning by a threatening gesture with her closed fist; but in the present instance she opened the window smartly, and putting out her head, with a look which was somewhat out of harmony with her words, she gently reminded Jenny that she would "man' the waterin' better if she stood on the walk." Having made this remark, she turned and found M'Whannel still gazing, in deep abstraction, into the flowers on the table.

Miss Mackenzie made several unsuccessful attempts to engage him in conversation. It was her own private opinion that his regard for her was not so deep now as it had been. She had marked this change of manner in his last visit, and a little even in the one before, but now it was more observable than ever. She

was not aware that she had been uncivil to him in any way; at least, she had not meant to be so. Indeed, her respect for him had been growing; but it was always the case with men—whenever one shows that one has any regard for them, they cool down and turn away as if the conquest were too easy, or as if they had done all they ever intended to do. Perhaps Mr. M'Whannel was a man of this sort; perhaps, after all, this was the real secret of his bachelorhood. It was true, she had never heard of his having had any sweethearts, or of his having deserted any; but some men were hard to know. Girls did not always tell when they were broken-hearted—that was a trouble which had many names. For herself, nobody should ever know the depth of her disappointment—she would cover it up quietly, and find a grave for it somewhere in her heart, and try and laugh over it,

but she would never believe another man —never. Miss Mackenzie took a white seam from the small work-table before her, and sat down on the sofa, under the shade of the curtains, to hide her feelings; but as she would not wear "glasses" before M'Whannel, she only pricked her fingers, and gave herself fruitless pain.

"You might take that seat owre at the window, Mr. M'Whannel," she said, after a considerable break in the conversation; "you'll get a waff o' the roses frae the wa' ootside."

"Thank you," M'Whannel said, as he drew in his chair to the work-table, "this kind of thing is much more interesting to me."

"Deed ye'll no get muckle tae interest ye there," said the spinster, with a sprightly cast of her head.

"I am very fond of needlework," said M'Whannel, looking awkwardly into the

work-basket, which was loaded with an infinite variety of articles, "there are many historical associations connected with the needle."

"Ay, nae doubt," said Miss Mackenzie, with an inward feeling that the Schoolmaster was beginning to look more like himself.

"Examining a lady's work-basket is like going over some classic ground for the first time, about which one has read a great deal. What is this, Miss Mackenzie'?'

"What would you think it is?" she inquired good-naturedly.

"A needle of some sort, I should suppose; at least judging from the eye, though it is unlike most instruments of the kind I have seen."

"Weel, I daursay; that is what is called a casing needle."

"Oh, indeed; it is not used for the finest seams, I should say." This remark was

made with a look of unconscious gravity on the part of the Schoolmaster, and Miss Mackenzie thought he was beginning to get very nice and very funny.

"I have often thought I should have a class for sewing and knitting in the school," said M'Whannel, after a pause; "Mrs. Clydesdale has spoken to me about it several times."

"So ye should; it is mair needed for country lassocks than readin' and writin'."

"Do *you* think it would be advisable for me to undertake such a thing?"

"Weel, it's worth thinkin' about, at any rate."

M'Whannel again became thoughtful, and Miss Mackenzie continued to stitch away at her fingers.

"May I make bold to look at your seam, Miss Mackenzie?" he said by-and-by, pushing the table a little to one side.

"Eh, no; it's a horrid coorse thing,"

cried the spinster, starting with alarm at the thought of the Schoolmaster seeing what a mess she was making of it without her glasses.

"I am sure it will be beautiful." M'Whannel made an effort to catch it, but in a moment she whisked it round her hands and hid it behind her on the sofa. For an instant the Schoolmaster paused, then a youthful impulse came upon him which he could not resist, and starting to his feet he went awkwardly forward in quest of the seam.

"Ye'll no see't, na," said Miss Mackenzie, with flushed decision.

"Will I not?"

"No."

He stood for a moment in uncertainty as to how he should proceed; to sit down after rising so boldly would seem stupid —he would take the risk of being considered rude.

"Ye winna get it."

"But I will."

"Oh, Mr. M'Whannel!"

For a couple of minutes the struggle raged fiercely, victory, like a frightened dove, now fluttering over the one head, now over the other. By-and-by, when the contest was over, they both sat down, breathing heavily.

"Ye didna get it, ye see."

"But I got something better."

"Did ye," said Miss Mackenzie, with a look of nervous gratification on her face, which M'Whannel feared was an indication of displeasure. Then thrusting the crumpled cloth into her pocket, she proceeded to adjust her hair.

"Yes," remarked M'Whannel, "it was infinitely better than the seam."

"Was it?" retorted Miss Mackenzie, sulkily tucking up a stray lock of her hair.

"I expected better behaviour from a sensible man like you."

"You know the old song, Miss Mackenzie—

'Some say kissing's a sin,
But I think it's nane ava.'"

"Eh! get awa' wi' yer auld sangs. It wad ha' looked gey daft like if Jenny had been in."

"You might have showed me the seam, then."

"It was na worth showing ye. Ye'r a determined man."

When Jenny returned, Miss Mackenzie had the dishevelled hair all properly braided, and the anti-macassars squared on the chairs and sofa; but M'Whannel had again grown mysteriously thoughtful. Miss Mackenzie toned down her apparent severity, and seemed almost to have forgotten the gross impropriety of which he

had been guilty; but his manner did not improve; and when shortly after she instructed Jenny to get the tea ready, and invited him to remain, he started to his feet, and said he must go, though for five minutes after making this announcement he stood looking thoughtfully at a coloured print on the wall, in which little David, in a red coat, was seen cutting off the head of the yellow-armoured Goliath with a tremendous sword.

"I don't think I hae given him ony cause for offence," the spinster said, as she returned to the parlour after seeing him to the door. "I believe it's a' because I didna show him the seam." Then mentally she reviewed the whole struggle from beginning to end. How could that be the cause, when he confessed that he had got something "infinitely better than the seam?" Miss Mackenzie lingered over this thought, trying to recall the feelings of

the moment. Was that not what he was after all the time? What could *he* care for a seam? When Jenny came in to spread the white table-cloth for tea she expected to be severely handled about the roses, but found her mistress gazing up at David and Goliath with a dreamy smile on her face.

"Maister M'Whannel has forgot his gloves," remarked Jenny, as she removed the flowers from the table.

"Ay, so he has," said Miss Mackenzie, going over and picking them up; "that's a pity. Ye needna hurry wi' the tea, Jenny."

She sat down at the window, and looked out. The dreamy smile again returned, then it wore off, and she became more serious. The old suspicion came back. Was he, after all, only a maker of conquests, a trifler with human hearts? For some minutes she indulged this reflection.

"At ony rate he'll no trifle wi' me," she said, starting to her feet with a firm look on her face.

She walked over to the work-table and lifted his gloves. Taking the one out of the other, she wondered if his hand were much bigger than hers. Then she thrust her small bony hand into the wide glove, and discovered that the tips of her fingers came through at several points.

"It is so like a bachelor," she said, with a smile. "He maybe thinks I canna shoo, but if *I* had him he wadna gang wi' gloves like that." Putting on her glasses, she sat down and performed the necessary repairs; then she folded them carefully, and parcelled them up in silk paper.

"Jenny, see wha's at the door."

The girl attended to the instructions and returned to say that it was Maister M'Whannel, whom she handed into the parlour.

"Ye forgot yer gloves, Mr. M'Whannel."

"Yes, Miss Mackenzie, that is true," said the Schoolmaster, closing the door, "but I fear I shall lose my senses also, if I don't get cured of this queer trouble that has come over me."

"Eh, trouble! ye never telt me ye were in trouble," said Miss Mackenzie, sympathetically.

"No, I didn't tell you, though I confess I came up for that purpose."

"What's wrang wi' ye?"

"The fact is—there is no use of me humming and hawing about it, Miss Mackenzie—I am in *love;* in love with you, and for God's sake don't give me a bad answer, for this is the awfullest business ever I was in in my life."

For a moment Miss Mackenzie's sight failed her, and her head swam with a new joy. Could it be possible that the man whom she had but a few minutes ago set

down as a trifler with human hearts had, after all, turned out to be her best friend? Miss Mackenzie took M'Whannel's outstretched hand, and they sat down on the sofa together—but the reader would not have patience to hear what passed, for to all but the parties concerned much of the romance and the beauty were taken from the scene by the weight of years.

CHAPTER X.

AT THE MILL.

The attack with which the Miller was threatened, and which Dr. Calder feared might deprive him of the power of his side, fortunately did not come on; indeed, it was not apprehended now, for Philip was gaining strength every day, and was able to walk through the house in tolerable comfort, with the slender aid of a staff. During the Miller's protracted illness, Dr. Calder had been regular in attendance upon him, always once, but sometimes more frequently, every day. These visits, however, had long ago lost their profes-

sional aspect, and the Doctor was now looked upon as a true and valuable family friend. To Dr. Calder himself the task had become something else than a monotonous duty. It was his custom latterly to finish this work of visitation before reaching the Mill, in order that his stay there might not be shortened by the pressure of other engagements, for there was no hearth in the neighbourhood so homely and attractive, nor was there any society in which he could find such genuine pleasure; now, however, that Philip's health was improving, the reason for these visits was fast passing away, and he felt that if they were to be continued some pretext not connected with physic or surgery would require to be sought out.

It required no keen observer to discern what the special element of attraction in these friendly visits was; even the Miller and his wife were not without some faint

glimmerings as to the cause of this devotedness; but they had resolved to await the natural course of events and observe the strictest care over their words and actions.

At length, however, the Doctor's visits grew less frequent. He had either not found a pretext for their continuance or he was afraid to make his purpose prematurely known. By this time Annie's health was quite confirmed. The melancholy which threatened to remain after her recovery was now gradually passing away, the old cheerfulness of disposition and buoyant step began again to be recognized. The only new features observable as the result of her past suffering were a more perfect womanliness, and greater firmness of will. Her standing prescription was plenty of fresh air, and out-door exercise, in walking, and visitation. She felt much improved by a short sojourn which she had just made with her friend Mrs. Sheffeld at Berry

Lodge, where she enjoyed the benefit of healthful exercise and cheerful society to the full. Here she had met Dr. Calder and young Mr. Clydesdale, who had returned to Glenara during the vacation; and the enjoyment was not a little heightened by the presence, and at the expense, of Mr. and Mrs. M'Whannel, who had been invited to that beautiful retreat to spend the first days of their matrimonial joys. On returning to the Mill, Annie found that there was much sewing in arrear, and for some days she confined herself to the task with unremitting energy.

"I have locked your work-box to-day," said her father, one morning after breakfast, as he held up the key, with a triumphant smile.

"But you must let me finish what I have on hand, father," Annie said, endeavouring to get the key. "I have only a very small

bit to do of the flounce of mother's dress, and then I shall have done."

"Well, well; the dress is in no great hurry, it can stand well enough for a day. I want you to help me to pull a basket of apples for Dr. Calder."

"For Dr. Calder?"

"Yes. I promised to send him up a small basket-full off that tree with the hanging branch. He says there are none of his apples with a flavour anything like them. I will need you to take care of me, you know; for Sandy has gone in to the Mill to give them a hand with Mr. Sanderson's corn."

Annie put on her hat, and they passed across the yard together into the garden. It was a charming day. The air was calm and balmy. The annuals were in full flower, and the garden presented a very cheerful aspect. The smaller fruit had been gathered, but apples, pears,

and peaches were all in fine condition. At the roots of the trees a shower of over-ripe fruit had fallen upon the brown earth, and here and there over the flower-beds and upon the gravel-walks were scattered a few premonitory sere leaves. The laurel arbour was still glossy and green, but the knots of honeysuckle with which, a month ago, it was perfumed and adorned were all dead now, marring the living beauty of the fine shapely green leaf of the laurel. The sun was very warm, but while it mellowed the fruit and deepened the shades of colour on the marigold and the dahlia, it also painted the leaves with the first tints of decay. The Castle woods lay perfectly still in the morning calm, and passively submitted to the inevitable ruin which the autumn sunlight was working upon them. Above the topmost branches a gathering of appre-

hensive crows, accompanied by a number of smaller birds, were wheeling and making a most unmelodious, though doubtless very significant noise. Beyond the garden wall a large rowan tree, clad with rich clusters of bright red fruit, stood out picturesquely against the dark background of the neighbouring woods, imparting point and beauty to the landscape. Though Annie had submitted to the confinement of the workroom for the past few days, it had only been as a matter of duty, not of preference; and now that she was in the open air beneath the comfortable sunlight, and surrounded by such affluence of natural beauty, she felt how kind her father had been in thus compelling her to break the monotony of her work. Annie set the chair beside the hanging branch, a spray of which had once caught in her hair, and which even now awoke

sad but somewhat subdued memories. There was a robin chirping somewhere above her in the higher branches.

"Will you hold the basket, father?"

"Yes, unless you want me to tell the Doctor that you have done the whole thing yourself."

"Oh no," Annie said, with a slight blush, "I don't want you to tell the Doctor anything about it, for I am sure he will not care." Annie proceeded to pull the fruit; and though her father had given her no instructions, it might have been observed that she took great care to pull only the largest and the ripest.

"They are very beautiful this year, father."

"Yes, that is quite a wonderful old tree, Annie. My father planted it forty years ago, and yet it seems to bear better and better every season."

"Forty years ago," said Annie, thought-

fully; "that is a long time. Of course the Doctor's trees are not so old as that."

"Bless you, no; it is not over a dozen years since the house was built. There are none of his trees properly ripe yet, though I believe in the course of a few years there will not be a better fruit-garden in all Glenara."

Annie picked away at the ripe fruit.

"Did he ask you to send up some apples, father?" she inquired some time after.

"No, but I believe it will please him."

"Has he any peaches?"

"No."

"Would you not send a few of them? They are very nice."

Annie removed the chair, and Philip carried the basket. The wall of peaches was indeed a sight worth seeing. They were very ripe and juicy, plump and dimpled, possessing tints of the most beautiful and delicate hue.

Annie selected half a dozen of the richest on the wall.

"Don't you think the Doctor will be pleased with these, father?"

"I think he will: at least he ought to be, for you have made an admirable selection. I am sure he will not find fruit equal to that in the parish."

"No, but he has been very kind to us all. I am sure you would not grudge the Doctor the best thing you have in the garden."

"I would not, indeed, Annie: we can never repay him for what he has done for us."

Annie arranged the peaches in the basket, while her father laid his staff against the wall, and tied up a straggling branch, which was loaded with a heavy burden of fruit.

"I am glad you brought me out," she said, "it is such a beautiful quiet morning."

"Yes; you will have plenty of staying in the house by-and-by. You see how the fiery hand of autumn has been on the woods."

"I was just observing that; they look lovely to-day. You can hardly distinguish the brown wall of the Castle from the surrounding trees; but aren't these rich clusters on the rowan trees very pretty?"

Annie took the chair in the one hand, and the basket in the other, and they walked on slowly, chatting the while, past the greenhouse and the sundial, towards the garden gate, where they met Mrs. Dawson, who relieved Annie of the burden of the chair, and they all went in together.

After dinner, Annie strolled out alone into the Priory Wood. The day was sultry and warm, but under cover of the great lime and chestnut trees the air was balmy and cool. The little brown pathway was still as frolicsome as ever,

now winding on the margin of the river, then far up the bank amidst overgrown bushes and under low hanging branches of hazel—here interrupted by a stile, and there extinguished amongst extensive patches of white sand. There was little water in the river, in consequence of the continued drought, but what it did contain sparkled merrily over break and fall or meandered by pebbly banks, gurgling a low monotonous song.

Annie was not impervious to the memory of recent events. She could not look upon these familiar scenes, and hear the song of the birds and the music of the water, without recalling certain passages of her past life; but they were mellowed and toned down by the lapse of time, and the bitter ordeal through which she had passed. The feeling in her heart was that of humble gratitude that she had herself been brought out of the furnace;

but with this was mingled a tender regret —which excluded all considerations of personal injury—that one with whom she had been so intimately associated should have fallen thus ignominiously at her side. Annie's reflections, however, were now perfectly safe, and did not bring her much pain. The old haunts, while recalling a mystery of bitter and sad experience, were still dear to her, and embraced the scenes of her most agreeable meditative rambles. She did not care to have any one with her now ; the mute voice of the landscape had a sympathy with her moods which she could not find in human utterance. The brown leaves fell at intervals on her path as she passed through the Wood, and the blackbird piped liquid melody from his leafy perch overhead.

When she reached the Priory the yellow light of sunset was beating upon the top of the irregular wall overlooking the river,

and gilding the massive ruin upon the opposite bank. Sitting down upon the broken wall, she watched the changing lights on the Castle lawns and over the thick woods; then she sauntered down the rude steps, across the rustic bridge, past the dripping water and the green lichens, to the lower terrace, where delicate ferns grew in cool recesses of the rock. Here she sat awhile on the rustic seat in silent meditation, while the evening shadows darkened over the river, and the sun sank behind the woods on the Chapel Hill. By-and-by she retraced her steps, and passed over the rude ravine into the Priory Wood. As she did so, she was startled by the sound of footsteps behind her. On looking back she saw a dark figure walking smartly past the outer wall of the Priory; then it passed over the ravine; then it entered the Wood, and while she still lingered, looking timidly

behind her, Dr. Calder's eyes encountered hers with a pleasant recognition.

"Good evening, Miss Dawson; I did not expect I should have the pleasure of meeting you here," the Doctor said frankly. "Are you going home?"

"Yes; I have just been taking a short walk—obeying your orders, you know," said Annie, with a faint smile.

"That is very right. I see you are getting stronger."

"Oh yes, thank you, I am quite well now," Annie said, briskly. "Are you going to the Mill?"

"Yes; I have just been making a call at Howatson's over the hill, and took a near cut through the fields in order to run down and see your father before going home. How is he?"

"He seems to be gaining strength very rapidly. He can walk a little now wanting the staff."

"Ah, that is satisfactory. I was engaged till late yesterday, and did not get over."

"He wanted to see you very much."

"There was nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Oh no; but you have learned him bad habits. I believe he will get ill again if you don't come and see him sometimes. He missed you very much."

They walked on for some time in silence. When the Doctor had helped Annie over the stile, she said—

"I am sure you have a strong claim upon our regard for what you have done for us."

"Oh, it is not worth naming," said the Doctor, lightly.

When they reached the Mill they found the Miller leaning upon his staff at the door. The large box-wheel was silent, and the workers had all gone home for the day.

"I found your daughter in the Wood, and, you see, I have brought her home."

"You did right, Doctor; I am glad to see you."

The Miller took him by the hand, and led him into the parlour.

"I was just telling Miss Dawson," the Doctor said before leaving, "that my visitations must soon come to an end. You really don't require me any more."

"I do indeed, Doctor. I shall miss you very much. You really must come frequently and see me."

"He has promised me that he will come and see you as a friend, father," said Annie, interposing.

When the Doctor was at the door, he returned to say that he was greatly delighted with the basket of fruit.

"Well, I had little share in the matter; I only held the basket. My daughter

pulled it, and is responsible for the character of the fruit you received."

"I am glad you told me this," the Doctor said; "for the thought of its coming direct from Miss Dawson's hand gives it an additional charm."

Annie blushed, as the Doctor bade good night and went away.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER BIRTHDAY.

THE thirty-first of October was clear and dry, and, as it had not rained for several days, the roads were in excellent condition. Philip Dawson had been engaged all the forenoon putting the "gig" into proper order, testing the harness, and trimming the pony's mane, for in the afternoon they had all to drive out together to Berry Lodge to celebrate Annie's birthday, and keep up the annual festivities of Hallowe'en. The Miller was very proud that he could now move about without the aid of his staff, and seemed to delight in testing this new power by a more than necessary activity.

"Bring out the rugs and the cushions, Sandy," he said, as he fastened a new washer on the axle. "That's the thing; be sure you strap them securely down. Put that heavy rug at the back. Now you can wheel her round to the door, and yoke the pony in half an hour."

Philip went in to dress. When he returned to the parlour he found his wife and daughter awaiting him.

"Are you a judge of the weather, Sandy?" inquired the Miller, as they came out.

"Haw-haw!" Sandy laughed modestly; "I think it's no bad weather ava."

"Ay, that is true enough, lad; but can you tell me what kind of weather it is going to be?"

"Haw-haw! No, sir, I hae nae skill, but they say ye'll get it a' i' the almanac."

The party having got seated, Sandy led the pony past the lade and the dam, and

then turned its head into the loaning, when Philip cracked his loaded whip, and the smart-footed creature sprang off between the hedges at a brisk trot. The sun was well on towards the west, where colossal cloud chambers hung with purple and crimson drapery, ornamented with gold, were prepared for his reception. The outline of the Castle and Priory were now clearly distinguishable amongst the fibrous network of the leafless woods, and the topmost points of the broken and irregular walls were ablaze with a beautiful yellow light. On one side of the river the amber water rippled over lovely banks of golden sand; on the other the stream was of a cold leaden hue, relieved here and there by the silvery sparkle of a fall, while the high sloping banks, sodden and cheerless, rose against the light, and stood in the sombre depths of their own gloom.

"The Priory Wood is very cheerless

to-day, mother," said Annie, as she looked on the cold wintry banks.

"Yes, Annie, dear, there can be no great charm in the woods at this time of the year; but see what a bright green is on the grass behind the garden; that is beautiful for the linen. If this sun continues to the end of the week, the linen should be as pure as snow."

"Do you see the lovely light on the top of the Priory wall?"

"Yes; the Priory is very clearly seen to-day. It seems to me as if the leaves were falling earlier now than they used to do, but I suppose it is because the years are running on so fast."

While they talked the pony had been pulled up, and Philip was speaking with somebody in front.

"Annie," said the Miller, looking over his shoulder at his daughter, "here is a parcel for you."

"For me," said Annie, looking at her mother with large eyes.

"Yes. Thank you, my lad, this is all right," said Philip, handing a small square, hard parcel to Annie. Then cracking his whip and clicking with his tongue in driver fashion, by way of encouragement to the pony, it again set off at an easy trot.

"Another birthday present," said Philip, smiling.

Annie trembled as she looked at the address.

"What is the matter, dear?" inquired the mother, gazing anxiously in her daughter's face. "Who is it from?"

"I don't know."

"Why do you tremble?"

"It is the old hand of write."

"The same as last year?"

"Yes, the old shaky, unfamiliar hand."

"That is strange." Mrs. Dawson put on her glasses and examined it.

"Miss Annie Dawson, Glenara, Scotland, N.B."

"Never mind the address," said Philip, impatiently. "See what it is. Here is my knife, Annie, open it. Wo—o" and he brought the pony to a sudden stand-still.

Annie took the knife nervously in her hand, and cut the cords. Then came numerous folds of thick brown paper, then several layers of tissue, then a beautifully ornamented morocco case, and at the core a sparkling gold watch with a yellow halo around it, formed by the frequent encirclement of a handsome chain.

For a moment Annie looked thoughtfully at the brilliant sight, then, as if the whole thing had been a phantom or a dream, a grey mist came into her eyes, and for a brief season there was a total eclipse.

Mrs. Dawson took the gift tenderly out of her daughter's hand, and examined it with careful scrutiny. Experience helped

her to master her surprise. On the back of the outer case of the watch there was a grove of tracery, amidst the intricacies of which an inscription was concealed. By this time Philip, who had laid past his whip, was looking over his wife's shoulder with a puzzled expression on his face.

"Can you not make it out?"

"No. It is to Miss Annie Dawson—something," said the mother, turning it every way to catch the light, "but I can't find the rest of it. Here; try if you can make it out."

Her husband took the watch awkwardly in his hand, and thrusting it gradually back until he got the proper focus, he read. "To—Miss—Annie Dawson—from—an—unknown friend."

"The very same as the note in last year's parcel," said the mother, clasping her hands.

"Yes," said Philip, "precisely the same.

Cheer up, Annie, you have more friends than you think of. I can tell you this unknown friend of yours is a handsome chap. Here Annie, dear, you are worthy of it, and may the time which it measures for you be as full of happiness as you deserve!"

Annie took it in her hand. The mist had now cleared away, and there was no doubt of this precious treasure being her own; but the pleasure it afforded her was not unmixed, for, in addition to the mystery of the gift, it brought back many memories which she had hoped might never return.

Her father could not mistake the cause of the girl's tears, but it was no time for words, he took the chain and put it gently round her neck; then resuming his seat, he shook the reins encouragingly on the pony's shoulders and drove off.

Twilight was fast deepening upon the landscape as they drove up the avenue,

past the garden wall, and into the deep shadow of the large house. As had been predicted, Mrs. Sheffeld was greatly pleased with Annie's present, and her praise enhanced its value very much.

"Your unknown friend has been very kind to you," said Nelly, with her old, happy, girlish laugh. "You may know him some day, Annie. People who can afford to be so kind anonymously must surely be very good friends when they are known;" and so they were led into the large apartment, where tea was set, and where a considerable number of the party had already gathered.

The evening was spent in a quiet but very comfortable manner. The company being principally composed of married people, most of the youthful games were left out of the programme, though old M'Ilwham, who declared he would not think it was Hallowe'en ava unless he

kissed somebody, insisted on having a single game at forfeits; affording much amusement to the company and causing much chagrin to the Schoolmaster by taking the latter gentleman's wife into the lobby to count the stars.

In the course of the evening, Sheffeld and the Doctor went out together for a short stroll. The new moon, like a silver sickle, was just rising over the woods above the linn, and the stars were shining with unusual brightness. They passed over the bridge, on to the road leading to the uppermost fall of the linn.

"I say, Sheffeld, isn't Miss Dawson looking well to-night?"

"She is, indeed. I could not help remarking that as I looked at her from the head of the table."

"Upon my word, she is irresistible." The Doctor spoke with much more warmth than was natural to him.

"But why don't you tell her your mind?"

"Man, I have not the courage to do it so soon. She might think me a heartless fellow."

"Of course, there is something in that; but, tell me, Calder, do you know anything about that watch and chain?"

"What watch and chain?"

"Honestly, now," said Sheffeld, laughing.

"Upon my word, I don't know what you mean."

"She got a handsome gold watch and chain sent her to-day. A birthday present, you know."

"Who from?"

"That is the mystery. The inscription on it is, 'To Miss Dawson, from an unknown friend.'"

"Is that possible? Who do you think the unknown friend can be?"

"I have not the slightest knowledge, if

it was not yourself. Indeed, Nelly and I had both suspicions of you."

"My dear fellow, your suspicion is perfectly groundless."

"Well, it is something of a good joke."

For awhile they walked on in silence, then entering upon an earnest conversation they walked back over the dry crisp grass of the lawn. When they returned, Mrs. Sheffeld's full-toned, high-set voice was wailing out the rich notes of "The Flowers of the Forest," accompanied by a fine ripple of melodious chords on the piano.

"You really must not allow the chance to slip, Doctor," said Sheffeld earnestly, as they reached the foot of the steps.

"No, Sheffeld, I can see there is considerable force in what you say. The fact is, I shall take your advice."

With this decision, Sheffeld opened the door, and they passed in.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BETROTHAL.

It was snowdrop-time, and with the first impulses of spring a delicate, downy, beautiful life-bud, containing the mystery of an immortal soul, appeared at Berry Lodge, and found warmth and nourishment and protection in the tender encirclement of snowy arms. Surely it is pardonable pride which comes with the birth of a first-born; if not, and if such pride be a sin, then the young parents at Berry Lodge must have been very great sinners indeed.

"Isn't it a pretty wee dear, Edward?" said Nelly, looking lovingly up at her husband, with her large earnest eyes full of

the tiny creature that lay upon her knee in its great robe and scarlet square.

"I am sure there never was a prettier child, my darling," the father said, as he leant his left hand gently on his wife's shoulder, and looked fondly at the little sleeper.

"And to think, Edward, it is all our own." Their eyes met in one full steady gaze, and for the moment they were perfectly happy.

"And such long black hair," said Nelly, passing her hand tenderly over the velvety head.

"Is it common for babies to have long hair?"

"Oh no," said the young mother, laughing at his great ignorance, "it is quite an uncommon thing." And then there darted into both minds at once the thought that possibly this was the one child for which the weary ages were sighing and waiting.

"Miss Dawson says it is your very picture about the brow and nose," remarked Nelly, after a pause.

"Does she?"

"Yes; but I think the mouth and chin are yours also."

"But there is no mistaking the large eyes," said the happy father with much enthusiasm. "These are worth all the other features put together. I mind the first time I looked in your face, I saw nothing but the eyes."

"Oh, Edward!"

"It is quite true. What does your aunt say?"

"Oh, she is very prosaic. She says you can't tell who a child is like till it grows up; but she has no skill of children, you know."

"Of course not," said the husband, shaking his head pityingly. "Ah, just look at that lovely honeysuckle knot of fingers,"

he continued, taking the small white hand with its pink nails in his strong grasp. "It is like the fluttering of a butterfly in one's palm—feel it, dear."

"Yes, it is so nice ; but oh, Edward——" here the young mother paused and looked behind her to make sure that there was nobody in the room, and that the door was really shut—"you never saw such charming rose-buds of toes." Nelly stooped in search of the entrance to the long, white, collapsed tunnel of a robe up which, after diligent searching amongst innumerable wrappings of snowy flannel, the little wanderers were found, not many inches from the top of the richly-embroidered gown.

"Wouldn't it have been nearer, to have gone in by the top?" said Edward seriously, while the search for the toes was yet proceeding.

"Oh, Edward dear, who ever heard of

such a thing?" Nelly said, too eager to smile.

"It is doubtless one of the conventionalities of the nursery, but I think a person should always take the nearest and easiest way of doing a thing."

"There they are," said the mother, triumphantly, as she undid the last roll of flannel, and displayed the ten chubby pink and white toes. "Did you ever see anything like that?"

"Never," cried the delighted father, touching the small buds gently with his finger, in order to prove whether they were really flesh and blood, and not wax. "Upon my word, that is the loveliest sight I ever saw."

While this examination was going on an indignant squeak was heard at the other end of the long robe, and on looking up they saw the honeysuckle hands battling desperately to remove the thick folds of

the scarlet square which had fallen over the delicate face.

"You have hurt it, dear," said Edward in alarm, but without the slightest idea of what was wrong.

"Oh—oh—my—little—dear—did—your—mamma hurt—you then—oh—oh." Nelly raised the small half-strangled thing in her arms, and, putting her lips against its cheek, began to rock herself to and fro in true motherly fashion, while the little pipe played the most charming shrill music in her ear.

"Please, mem, this is the Doctor," said Betty Brown, opening the door in the midst of the infantile hubbub.

Sheffeld went forward and met his friend.

"I am delighted you have come, Doctor."

"Why, what is wrong?"

"Really I cannot tell. It is a most un-

reasonable baby. We were not touching it, Nelly, were we?"

The fond mother did not reply, but still rocked the child in her arms, with her lips to its cheek, singing the song about her "little dear," with a preponderance of "O's" in it.

"Perhaps it is a—a—a—colic or something," Edward said; "but it is well you have come, for of course you know all about these things."

"It is a mercy I have come—for—upon my word, you're a precious pair. Don't you see the whole weight of that heavy flannel square is pressing on the child's throat; either lift up the square or undo the ribbon at the neck. Now, Edward Sheffeld, Esquire, husband and father, don't you see that?"

Mrs. Sheffeld was somewhat chagrined at this awkward occurrence, but joined in

the laugh which ensued after her baby's cries had been stilled.

"You are sharp to the hour, Doctor."

"Yes, I always make it a point to be punctual with my engagements."

"When did you see the people at the Mill?"

"Last night.'

"I suppose they are eager for Miss Dawson's return?"

"Yes; they cannot do without her any longer. They authorized me to insist on her return."

"There is no need to insist," said Nelly, smiling, "for here she is, dressed and all ready. I believe she is glad to get away."

"You must not say that, Mrs. Sheffeld," Annie said quietly, after shaking hands with the Doctor; "I really have enjoyed my stay very much, but you know I promised faithfully to return to-day."

"At any rate we must be grateful for the

time you have stayed," said Sheffeld, "for I don't know how the blessed baby will do without you."

"I am sure I don't know," said the Doctor, "if what I have just seen is a specimen of the nursing in store for it."

"I say, Calder," and Sheffeld drew the Doctor aside by the button-hole—"you really must not name that again."

Calder, however, would bind himself by no such promise, but told the story to Miss Dawson, who joined heartily in the laugh at the expense of the "novice nurses," as the Doctor was pleased to designate them.

"I am sure I shall weary very much to see the little darling again," said Annie on leaving, "but you will send us word now and then how you are getting on." Annie kissed the small coral lips.

"You will take good care of her, Doctor?"

"You need not fear."

The Doctor gave Annie his arm, and they marched out into the gravel walk, where the Doctor's carriage was waiting.

It was a beautiful afternoon. The sun was shining brightly, and the buds on the dark hedges were beginning to yield to the latent forces of spring. There was a fine buoyant feeling in the air and in the sunshine. The lark was heard, though it could not be seen, and the blackbird wooed his mate musically amongst the branches.

"Would you prefer walking home by the Priory?" inquired the Doctor, as they neared the end of their journey.

"Yes, I should like that very much," said Annie earnestly, "the snowdrops will be very beautiful;" and so they alighted at the footpath leading into the wood, and arm-linked Annie and the Doctor moved lingeringly into the shadow of the tall trees.

* * * * *

Twilight was settling over the landscape as they reached the Mill. There was much confusion in Annie's manner, and an unusual flush on her face, but she retired almost immediately to her own room. The Miller thought the Doctor had never grasped his hand so firmly or continued to shake it so affectionately as he had done that night. In fact, the Doctor had never been seen in such an ecstatic condition before, and, but for a timely and wise exercise of control, he might have indulged in the unseemly frolic of kissing the Miller's wife, which exercise, once begun, it is doubtful whether he would not have kissed the Miller's servant, or, for that matter, even the Miller himself.

"How did you leave the people at the Lodge?" inquired the Miller.

"Oh, capitally."

"And the baby?" interrogated the Miller's wife.

"In first-rate condition, present and prospective, if they don't murder it with kisses. Come, Mrs. Dawson, let me help you to a seat."

"And you will stay a while with us, Doctor?" suggested the Miller.

"Of course I will; in fact, but for the impropriety of the thing, I could stay all night with you. But, come, we must have a talk on a subject that is equally interesting to us all; for Miss Dawson will not come down until we are done."

The Doctor paused, as if to give them time to divine the mystery. The mother suspended the darning at which she was engaged; and, folding her hands, looked solemnly in the Doctor's face; while Philip, hopeful but yet uncertain of what was coming, lay back in his arm-chair.

"Well, I shall not make a long story of it," the Doctor said. "Will you give me your daughter to be my wife?"

Philip held down his head, and for a moment Mrs. Dawson trembled, until reassured by the earnestness of the Doctor's face.

"What does Annie say?" asked the Miller, by-and-by.

"I may tell you that my happiness entirely depends on your decision."

"Well, Doctor, so far as I am concerned, I shall not stand in the way of your happiness. You have asked the most precious gift we have to bestow, but if it were ten times more valuable I would admit that you are worthy of it. What do you say, my dear; will you have the Doctor for a son?"

"He has already been more than a son to us," replied the mother, the tears coming into her eyes while she spoke. "If Annie is willing, nothing more needs to be said, for there is no one so worthy of her as the Doctor has proved himself to be."

"There is only one drawback, Doctor, said the Miller, diffidently.

"What is that?" inquired the Doctor, looking eagerly in the Miller's face.

"She has no fortune. At the best we were poor, but this unfortunate accident——"

"I beg that you will not name such a thing to me," interrupted the Doctor. "Your daughter is an ample fortune in herself; and my present income will be quite sufficient for all our wants."

"My wife, of course, will not allow her to leave without the necessary nick-nacks."

"As to that, you may please yourselves; but I beg you distinctly to understand that I have already prepared for her a comfortable home, and whatever she requires I am able and willing to give her."

When Mrs. Dawson went upstairs to congratulate her daughter, she found her seated in the rocking-chair, crying.

"What is wrong, Annie dear?" cried the mother, kissing her tenderly; "are you unhappy?"

"No, mother; I am very happy."

"Well, dear, cheer up; you told him you would have him, did you not?"

"Yes, mother; he has been so kind to us, and he spoke so kindly to me, that I could not help it. You are not angry with me?"

"Angry! Annie, dear; how could you think of such a thing? The Doctor is worthy of you."

"Then father and you have given your consent?"

"Yes; we have done so most heartily. Come, your father and the Doctor are waiting for you."

Annie dried her tears, and followed her mother downstairs, with a happy beating at her heart. Philip stood up and gave her the kiss of congratulation.

"Now, Annie, my dear, kiss your future husband."

The Doctor sprang to his feet and took what it seemed to be embarrassing on Annie's part to give; and as they sat down side by side in front of that cheery fire, the Miller, in a grave voice, uttered an earnest "God bless you," while the mother, with a happy heart and choking utterance, put in a ready and serious "Amen."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WEDDING DAY.

THE primroses were in the lanes, and the hedges were knotted with undeveloped blossoms when Dr. Calder and Annie Dawson were married. There are several old people in the village still, who remember the occasion perfectly well, for there never had been such an expenditure of enthusiasm over any private wedding either before or since. The Mill was closed all day, and the liberated millers had clambered upon the high sloping roof, and, notwithstanding the risk to limb and life, had let loose a couple of large flags

together with a number of smaller banners in the breeze; while in front of the Mill, immediately above the topmost landing of the outside stair, a long stripe of coloured cloth, surrounded by evergreens and flowers, bore the inscription in large white letters—

"God bless them: may they be happy!"

Nobody had ever heard the village bell ringing forth such a merry peal as came from its brazen throat that morning; for though the Beadle owned that "merriages paid better nor beerials," it would be an injustice to that functionary to say that the fee inspired those rapid musical tones which danced joyously after each other out of the steeple, over the river, down through the valley, and ultimately echoed back from the Castle and the Priory and the neighbouring hills, to swell the nuptial music in the village. He would give the rope to nobody that morning—not even to

M'Ilree, who frequently took the monotonous duty off his hand at burials.

"Na, na, Daniel, lad; ye'll get tryn't sometime again. Rin doon, like a man, tae the 'Bird i' the Hand,' and fetch me up a *farl* o' cake and a *daud* o' cheese, for I hae got her intil the richt swing, and, maunna let her cool; but I ha'na had a bite for the last twa hours. Rin, Daniel, lad, for this is glorious wark; although it's an awfu' business for takin' the meat oot o' a man."

Every one knew that Mrs. Elderson, senior, was against marriage bells. She held that the custom was an importation into the country which her Covenanting forefathers would never have lent their sanction to; but she had a reason of her own, which she considered perfectly conclusive.

"The vessels o' the Lord's hoose should be puttin' tae nae unsanctified use," she

would say, "for it's like expectin' a minister tae greet at a funeral, pray i' the kirk, an' dance an' fiddle wi' twa sticks whenever a marriage takes place i' the parish."

"Isn't that noble ringin', mother?" said her son, with a provoking smile, as he stood in the kitchen trying to cover his hard, grimy hands with a pair of buff-coloured leather gloves, before going down to take part in the ceremony at the Mill.

"Ye winna get much credit by teasin' yer mither that gate, Thamas," she said after a pause; "but man, it's like ye, for yer aye contrar tae onything guid; though as tae marriage bells, if ye will ring them, their graceless tones were never jingl't owre a worthier pair; for though I aye thought Philip had been owre sair on his brither Allan in sweerin' again' him at the trial, the Lord has dealt better wi' him i' the end nor he deserved; but tak' you care, Thamas, for the Lord's mercy is in

His ain hand, an' there's a limit even tae grace."

The marriage ceremony was celebrated at the Mill, the service being conducted by Mr. Clydesdale; and amongst those who sat down to dinner afterwards were Mr. and Mrs. Sheffeld, Mr. and Mrs. M'Whannel, the Clergyman and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. M'Ilwham, and Thomas Elderson, who, in consequence of sickness at home, had come singly.

Annie looked charming in her lavender silk, covered with white lace, and the rich knots of orange-blossom amongst her hair. Her cheeks were flushed, and she seemed very happy as she looked up at the fine, ingenuous, manly face of the figure at her side, with whom she had just cast in her lot "for better, for worse;" and he, was he not proud of her?—so much youth, and beauty, and innocence, all his own—though, in the midst of his pride, a look of tender

sadness came into his face when he thought of all she had suffered, and the cruel bitter drama that had rendered it possible for her to be his.

Perhaps, however, the most unmixed happiness of all was enjoyed by the Miller and his wife; for as they looked upon this beauty and manliness so near akin to themselves, which had now joined hands in token of already joined hearts, it surely was pardonable forgetfulness to feel that for the time the past was shut out and that the present was the supreme moment of their lives.

Meantime busy hands were piling the bonfies outside. Thomas Elderson the smith and Samuel M'Nee the cartwright had closed their workshops at noon in honour of the occasion, and the workmen, thus set free, co-operating with the workers at the mill and other volunteers—amongst whom were the Beamer, the Shoemaker,

Ballynahinch, and John Thomson, of flying-machine notoriety,—set about the work with a persistency and a good will which enhanced the value of their intentions. It was a fine sight to see these bonfires burning on the broad wall of the Priory and on the highest point of the Chapel Hill. The rock and the ruins seemed all aflame. The red light, revealing the moving figures, flared over the neighbouring banks, the river, and the Priory Wood; then, as if to cast the sublunary illumination into the shade, the full moon, with queenly step, paced up into the cloudless sky, and filled the valley with a most beautiful light.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONCLUSION.

It was a quiet afternoon towards the end of May, exactly four years after the celebration of the important ceremony of last chapter. The progress of time had made little perceptible change in the material aspects of the village. The disabled plough and the broken harrow still lay in front of the Smithy; and the unshod wheels and great iron hoops, with other lumber, which had for years lain against the front walls of the Cartwright's workshop, remained precisely in the same position as that which they occupied on

the day of Annie Dawson's marriage. The old faces were still observable in the street; though several of the residents whose names have been before the readers of this history had been taken through that open churchyard gate to come out no more. Dr. Calder and Mr. Clydesdale had met, and were engaged in close conversation on the footpath in front of the Manse. There seemed to be something more than usually interesting in their talk, at least in that of Dr. Calder, who for some time was the principal speaker.

"It is astonishing!" said Mr. Clydesdale, raising his right hand, and bringing it down forcibly on the open palm of the left, with a look of wonder on his simple, honest face. "That is the very thing of which poor Rodger spoke before going to the scaffold; but as he was anxious that it should not be named, apparently for fear of injuring the person from whom he

had got the information, I kept the matter strictly to myself."

"Do you think that was his object in desiring the marriage?"

"No doubt of it."

"Did the letter go to the Mill?"

"No; the agents seem to have been aware of recent changes—it was addressed to my wife."

"Mr. and Mrs. Dawson would be greatly surprised?"

"We have not yet told them."

"Not yet?"

"No; we have arranged that they spend the afternoon with us. It will be a surprise for them."

"That it will. How long is it since Allan went away—it is an old story now?"

"My wife thinks it is close on thirty years."

"I suppose Philip thought he was dead?"

"Oh yes; it is over twenty years since he heard of him. He was then in California, where, I presume, he made his money."

"Then he must have remained single till his death."

"Yes, so it seems. He must have loved her very much."

"Very much; it will touch them both when they hear of it. How long has he been in London?"

"I cannot tell; though, from certain circumstantial evidence, he must have been there for at least eight or ten years."

"All that time, and not to send Philip a single line! One would think the lapse of years would have sufficed to tone down the bitterness and efface the love."

"That is true; but there are some hearts from which, when an impression is once made, it can never be erased."

As Dr. Calder passed up the garden

path leading to his own door, his knees were clasped by a chubby boy of three years, who looked up earnestly in his face, and asked—

"Danpapa not tum?"

"No, my little man, but he will soon be here," the father said, setting him upon his shoulder.

As he approached the window a baby face was flattening a white nose against the pane in its eagerness to catch sight of the owner of the familiar footstep; while a well-known figure, still graceful and neat, but stouter now, with a face plump and beautiful as ever, supported it from behind. The doctor paused to snap his finger-nail sharply on the window immediately opposite the small white nose, which was rapidly withdrawn in mock terror by the protector inside; while the little Jehu on the shoulder, with restless foot, cried appealingly—

"'Et me tit it, papa."

Then they passed in.

"Do you know," said his wife, as he deposited the youthful rider on the sofa, "I have just heard that Johnny Wilson has taken his degree?"

"It is quite true. He has got on amazingly; but he was always a smart boy. I have written him to come out and take my place while I go to London. He can do all the ordinary practice, you know."

"But he is so young."

"I shall get Dr. Abernethy to look into the more important cases till I return. I think, dear, I have solved a mystery since that letter came to-day."

"What mystery?"

"The mystery of the birthday presents."

Annie compressed her lips and held her breath. "That must be it," she said by-and-by, "The Unknown Friend."

"Yes; and you know they all came by

the London coach——; but here is grandmamma and grandpapa. Run, Willie, and take grandpapa's hand."

The Doctor and his wife met the old people at the door.

"I declare, Doctor, your rhododendrons will far beat mine."

"I shouldn't wonder," said the Doctor; "but come away in and put off your things. Annie and I have important news for you."

"Important news!" said Philip, after he had laid aside his staff and hat, and Mrs. Dawson had been relieved of her shawl and bonnet.

"Yes; come away and sit down; you will be astonished at them. Here, grandmamma, take this chair at the window." The Doctor handed Philip the letter, which he commenced to read with a curious smile on his face. By-and-by the smile passed away; and as he went slowly down the one page and turned over to the

next, a look of blank astonishment had taken its place.

"God save us! what is this?" said Philip, looking up in the Doctor's face as he finished; then, as if the inquiry could only be answered by the document in his hand, he turned again to the letter.

"I told you you would be astonished."

"What is it, dear?" inquired the mother, who was intently watching her husband's face.

"My brother Allan has just died, and left Annie twenty thousand pounds."

"Twenty thousand pounds!" repeated his wife, in utter dismay. "Allan, whom we long ago mourned as dead?"

"The same, my dear. He has remained single through all these years, and, to show how true his love was, has left his hard-won fortune to her who bears your name."

For a few moments there was silence; but who can tell what feats of minute

remembrance were performed in this brief interval, or what tender feelings were touched by the memories which were now awakened! When at length Philip looked up and exclaimed, "Poor Allan!" a couple of large tears were gleaming in his eyes.

"Come," said the Doctor, offering Mrs. Dawson his arm. "Willie, take grandpapa's hand; we will talk the matter over at tea."

THE END.

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